

# March 2026

## Third Place Challenge

### What is a Third Place?

A **Third Place** is a social environment outside of home (first place) and work (second place) where individuals can relax, connect, and build a sense of community. It plays a vital role in mental health by reducing loneliness and foster belonging, which can improve overall well-being and lower risks of chronic diseases. Examples include gyms, churches, coffee shops, book clubs, biking groups and more.

In 2024, 48.6% of Jackson County residents felt lonely often, sometimes or occasionally. A sense of belonging and sense of community connection can reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Community connection can also help reduce the risk of serious chronic diseases and illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, dementia, depression and anxiety. Connectedness can also help individuals manage their stress, anxiety & depression as well as encourage healthy eating habits, increase physical activity and improve quality of sleep (CDC, Social Connectedness, 2025).

This month, explore and identify your **Third Place** to enhance social connections and well-being by following the weekly prompts. Each week write down a reflection for the given prompt.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Identify potential third places that could serve as regular spots for relaxation and social interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visit and assess the identified places to see if they meet personal and group needs for a third place.	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Engage deeply with the chosen third place and reflect on the experience!	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Decide on which third place(s) to commit to and plan ongoing engagement.	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Visit and engage at your chosen third place location during this week.	29	30	31				

Please submit completed challenge through interdepartmental mail to **Jenifer Pressley** at the Cullowhee Recreation Center by **April 10th**