

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

HELENE AFTERMATH



A rescue team paddles down the Swannanoa River on Sunday. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina. **TRAVIS LONG/THE NEWS & OBSERVER**

Support arriving by plane, mule

Death toll tops 130 as clearer picture of devastation emerges

By Jeffrey Collins
Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Desperate residents isolated by washed-out roads and the lack of power and cellular service in western North Carolina lined up Monday for fresh water and a chance to message loved ones that they are alive, days after Hurricane Helene tore through the Southeastern U.S. and killed more than 130 people.

Government officials and aid groups were working to bring basic supplies by airlift, truck and mule to the hard-hit tourism hub of Asheville and its surrounding mountain towns.

At least 132 deaths in six states have been attributed to the storm — a toll that climbed Monday as a clearer picture emerged of the devastation it inflicted on an area stretching from Florida's Gulf Coast northward to the Appalachian Mountains in Virginia. The North Carolina county that includes Asheville reported at least 35 deaths, while dozens were killed in Georgia and South Carolina.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper predicted that the toll would rise as rescuers and other emergency workers reached areas isolated by collapsed roads, failing infrastructure and widespread flooding.

Many main routes into Asheville were washed away or blocked by mudslides, including Interstate 40, and the city's water system was severely damaged, forcing residents to scoop creek water into buckets so they could flush toilets.

In one neighborhood where a

Turn to Helene, Page 5

Illinois residents racing to assist in hurricane's wake

Responder: 'It was cool to see ... the humanity come out in people in a time of need'

By Peter Breen and Karina Atkins
Chicago Tribune

What was supposed to be a weeklong trip to Asheville, North Carolina, for a Chicago band to record a studio album morphed into an emergency outreach operation after Hurricane Helene slammed into the southeast U.S. last week.

The "party jam funk" band, Sneezy, became trapped in the North Carolina foothills by closed highways and fallen trees after the powerful Category 4 storm swept through overnight

Thursday and early Friday. The seven-person band sheltered with their manager, the owner of a local music establishment with a kitchen that still had power after the storm.

The manager opened the venue to the community, and the band pitched in to make pizza, cheeseburgers and chicken nuggets. Hours after the music hall opened Saturday, a line of hungry residents wrapped around the building, said keyboardist Danny Bauer, 32, of Logan Square.

"We would kind of take turns serving food and then like playing music to help people feel safe

■ The devastation left by Helene prompted Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump to change their plans. **Nation & World**

and calm," Bauer said. "It was really wild. I didn't even make any pizza. I just stood there and handed people slices of pizza, and they were crying — just like people were so overjoyed just to have hot food."

One woman walked 20 miles to the hall because her town had been destroyed by the flooding and she figured someone in Ashe-

ville could help her, Bauer said. A wedding party also arrived after the hurricane canceled their ceremony. The couple decided to say their vows in their Airbnb Friday night.

"I hopped on the keyboard and I played all the wedding songs, all the popular dancing wedding songs I know, so the bride and all her bridesmaids got to dance," said Bauer, who arrived back in Chicago early Monday.

Government officials and aid groups have been working to deliver basic supplies by air, truck

Turn to Help, Page 10



Katherine, Elliot and Amy Davies sit down for lunch at Portillo's River North restaurant on Sept. 24. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Dog days ahead for Portillo's?

Amid aggressive expansion plans, can it grow and stay true to roots?

By Talia Soglin
Chicago Tribune

Ten years ago, Dick Portillo decided it was time to sell his hot dog empire.

He quickly had two dozen suitors on his hands as well as some skeptics, including Eric VanderSchaaf. A Downers Grove native then in his 20s, VanderSchaaf believed so strongly that ownership of the beloved chain

should stay in the area that he launched an online crowdfunding campaign to "Keep Portillo's Locally Owned!"

Portillo put the kibosh on VanderSchaaf's plan and sold his namesake chain for a reported nearly \$1 billion to Boston-based private equity firm Berkshire Partners. He wanted large-scale, national growth for his company, and Portillo saw that future with Berkshire. The private equity

firm took the reins from Portillo in 2014, and in 2021 took the company public.

Ten years after that private equity sale, Portillo's stands 88 restaurants strong, with an ambitious plan to expand far beyond its Chicagoland home base. Over the next two decades, Portillo's hopes to grow nearly 1,000% to more than 900 outposts

Turn to Portillo's, Page 4

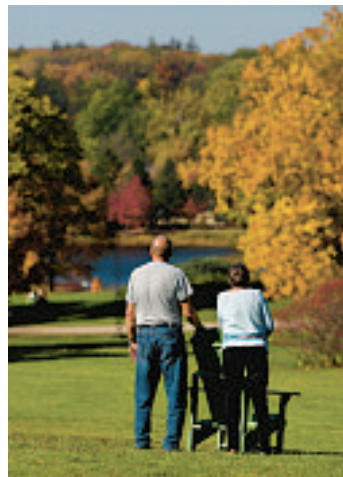
Fall foliage impacted by changes in weather

Will recent drought affect the timing, vibrancy in Illinois?

By Adriana Pérez
Chicago Tribune

Several weeks of abnormally dry weather might dull hopes for bright, fiery foliage across the region this fall. However, the Midwest might still have a last-ditch chance of stealing the spotlight from popular leaf-peeping destinations such as New England and the Rocky Mountains if enough rainfall returns moisture to the soil over the next few weeks.

Many factors come into play to determine the intensity and timing of peak fall foliage in higher latitudes, including the shortening of days as the Earth turns on its axis and its tilt moves the Northern Hemisphere away



Jim and Donna Plonczynski look at the trees at The Morton Arboretum in 2023. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

■ Best spots in Illinois for viewing fall foliage, **Page 2**

from the Sun. Slowly but surely, leaves halt the production of green pigments from sunlight, revealing their true colors of reds, oranges and yellows.

Weather also plays an important role, further complicated by climate change, which is increasing average fall temperatures and making weather patterns more

Turn to Foliage, Page 2

INSIDE

Reds legend Pete Rose dies at 83

Baseball's career hits leader undermined his Hall of Fame dreams by gambling on the game he once embodied. **Chicago Sports**

