

### Sherrill Furniture announces donation for Hurricane Helene relief efforts

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 251 Words OpenURL Link

Sherrill Furniture Company announced a charitable initiative during this year's October Furniture Market. The company will donate \$200,000 or 5% of gross sales, whichever is greater, from all orders placed during the market.

According to a news release from the company, Sherrill Furniture has already made donations and will be releasing funds through the end of October. These donations have benefited, and will continue to benefit, disaster relief efforts in western North Carolina communities.

The donation is structured to provide critical support where they are most urgently needed. Sherrill's commitment comes in response to devastation caused by Hurricane Helene and the enormous challenges faced by these communities, ensuring assistance is provided to meet high-priority needs.

"Our roots are in these communities, our neighbors, our friends and our furniture family are here, and we want to help them in a meaningful way," said Charles Sherrill, CEO and owner of Sherrill Furniture Company. "Our people have always been the heart of this company, and we want them to know we are here for them — during the good times and the tough times. This donation is our way of saying, 'We stand with you.' We believe that by supporting local organizations directly, they can respond swiftly and efficiently to the most pressing needs on the ground."

Sherrill Furniture invites customers and partners to join in this effort by participating with Sherrill in the October Furniture Market and supporting this vital cause.

For over 75 years, Hickory-based Sherrill Furniture Company has been a leader in American-made, custom-crafted furniture.

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# Morganton's greenway, ball fields, parks ravaged by flooding. It may take millions to repair.

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Chrissy Murphy cmurphy@morganton.com | Section: News | 692 Words OpenURL Link

As Hurricane Helene approached, Morganton parks and recreation officials moved equipment like mowers and golf carts to higher ground at Catawba Meadows Park.

Andrew Tallent, assistant director of Morganton's parks and recreation department, said staff expected flooding similar to Hurricane Frances in 2004. Flood water was about 2 feet deep in the field house near the ball fields in 2004.

Flood waters ended up being more than 7 feet deep after Hurricane Helene swept through as a tropical storm. The flooding filling the concessions stand with water and ruined the room where brand new baseball and softball equipment was stored. Mowers, golf carts, Gator utility vehicles and maintenance machines were flooded and now won't start. The ball fields were left covered in silt.

Bleachers were thrown on top of dugouts. Fencing around the fields was mangled by the water and debris. Sinkholes swallowed some of the ground around the fields.

Morganton Parks and Recreation Director Bryan Fish said the smell was rancid when staff first made it into the flooded park. He said the combination of the contaminants in the water plus the wet food from the concessions stand sent a putrid odor throughout the building.

Catawba Meadows wasn't the only park that took a hit.

On the Catawba River Greenway, sand covers the path in some parts. An ice machine was carried from the Town Tavern area all the way to the greenway at Catawba Meadows, where it still sat nearly two weeks after the storm. Trees fell on different parts of the greenway. Bridges and boardwalks over or near the river have been damaged.

Pieces of the greenway boardwalk behind the River Village shopping center were torn apart and mangled, moved by the flooding and current.

The water was so high and powerful at the Catawba River Soccer Complex, next to the greenway and behind the Ingles grocery, the soccer goals were lifted over the fencing, which was also battered.

"I was devastated, probably a little emotional," Fish said. "But the times we're in right now? Yes, the ball fields are not in great shape and are going to need some work, but there's people who have lost homes and possibly family members to the storm. So in comparison, it's not as bad as some other people may have it."

Fish estimated repairs for Catawba Meadows could cost millions of dollars. City Manager Sally Sandy said the city's insurance, including flood insurance, plus FEMA funding would help but it will take time before the city knows exactly how much repairs will cost.

Now, the city is in the cleanup phase. Fish said city staff have been suiting up in gloves, masks and boots to clean out the buildings hit hard by flooding.

"It's been a full team effort," Fish said.

It could be months before Catawba Meadows can be reopened.

The city has reopened the following parks:

Freedom Park (Independence Boulevard)Martha's Park (Collett Street)Martin Luther King Jr. Park (Alphabet Lane off Bouchelle Street)Skate park (King Street near Collett Street)Carbon City Park (Carbon City Road near

Until the other parks can be fully assessed for safety, the city asked people to stay out of the parks and off the greenway. Sandy said the storm damage could be dangerous.

"We know how important our facilities are for people, so we're going to do our best to make this as short a time as possible. But it is going to take some time, and we ask for people's patience. ... We don't need to add more tragedy to this event," Sandy said.

She said once the damaged parks and the greenway have been evaluated, the city will look at reopening each park in phases. There may be opportunities to volunteer to help with cleaning up the parks sometime in the future, Sandy said.

Seeing the dedication of city employees and community members has been a light in a dark place throughout the storm, Sandy said.

"I could not be prouder of the city of Morganton employees and their response to this disaster, or more grateful to all of the outside help and our community's offers of help," Sandy said. "In the face of the devastation, those are the sides of this that let you know how much good is still out there."

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## Bandys student served food to rescue crews in Marion in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Miya Banks | Section: Local | 1127 Words OpenURL Link

Amidst the devastation of Hurricane Helene, one of the most striking things 16-year-old Wyatt Spencer witnessed was the desire of people to help one another.

"I saw hundreds of people who just lost everything, but the only thing they wanted to do was help the other person who lost everything else," Spencer said.

Spencer also noted the devastation he saw while volunteering in areas hit by storm. He said he saw pictures on the news and, to a degree, knew what to expect. Seeing it himself put the damage into perspective.

"After seeing the community and the devastation up there on a first-hand level ... I knew I had to come back and help for as long as I could," Spencer said. "There's so many people in need."

He added, "There's people that don't know what they're going to do in the next stage of their life. And to some people, seeing you walk over with the cold drink, hot food and a smile on your face is the best part of their day. And you don't know how much longer it could be before they get that again."

Spencer said he was born and raised in Catawba County. He is an 11th-grade student at Bandys High School.

Spencer said he has volunteered in Spruce Pine, Burnsville, Red Hill, Bat Cave and around Lake Tahoma in McDowell County.

"No one asked him to do this," said Spencer's mother, Kristen Crawford. "(And) he didn't ask my permission. He said he was going."

Spencer said on an average day of volunteering, he would wake up at 3:45 a.m. to 4 a.m. and drive to a location over an hour away. He said he would get home around 11 p.m., sleep and repeat.

Three hours of sleep was a good night of sleep, Spencer said.

Crawford said she cannot put to words how proud she is of Spencer, though she is concerned about his mental health at times with everything he is witnessing.

"But he loves it, and he keeps going back for more, and he feels a calling for it," Crawford said.

Spencer said he plans to continue volunteering.

Spencer shared his experiences in an interview. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What made you want to volunteer?

It kind of started with my girlfriend's dad, Stephen Parker. He's a state trooper. I heard he was going up there with the N.C. Troopers Association and the North Carolina Fraternal Order of Police. As soon as I heard he was going up there, I knew immediately I wanted to go after seeing what had been done to the places up there. I knew I wanted to go and help people in need.

What was the most striking thing you saw?

The biggest thing I saw was the community coming together. I mean, I've seen a lot of bad, but through all the bad, I've seen a lot of good. I saw hundreds of people who just lost everything, but the only thing they wanted to do was help the other person who lost everything else. I met a couple who lost their house, and pretty much everyone they knew was presumably missing. We tried to bring them supplies one day, and even though they were running low on stuff, they wanted to pass it on to the next person. They said, 'We have enough to get us by for now, give it to the next person.' And even seeing rescue crews. You name a state, they were there. There was just so much good in a time of bad.

What type of volunteer work are you doing?

I served food to any rescue crews, any emergency personnel, because we were staged at the McDowell County emergency operations center, and we were serving around 1,500 meals a day for the first few days for emergency personnel and anybody in the community who needed them. And then, as the week went on, we slowed down a little bit. We probably got around 1,000 each day. I started out doing that.

And then I wanted to get more physically involved. I started doing supply runs for people that had no access to anything and started taking food to crews who were in places where they were working 18-20 hour days but weren't getting fed anything throughout the day. What I would do is, I would load up with hot food and cold drinks and take that to them while they were in the field.

Later in the week, I started doing some more hands-on stuff and went up towards Red Hill. We cut some roads up and cleared some driveways and stuff for people who, nobody had really got to them yet. Luckily, they were fine and they had plenty of supplies. But we made it to where they could get out of the driveway for the first time in 10 days.

What values have you grown up with?

Leadership is probably the biggest one, especially in a world like today where everybody kind of wants to see what the people around them are doing. Going ahead and taking charge and showing people the way we should be doing stuff instead of letting them try and figure it out on their own. That, and we need to help the people around us. Definitely caring. My mom owns Endeavors Pediatric Therapy in Statesville, that has a huge role in caring for kids in the community. So, caring is one of the biggest things. Also hardship. Like, not letting something stop you. Keep going and keep pushing until you get the results you want.

What makes you happy or gives you joy?

One of the biggest things that really made me happy and gave me joy is helping people, especially in the past week. Nothing made me feel better than coming home every single day knowing I helped as many people as I could within a community that just lost everything. Even the first responders in the field that had been working for 15 hours, it made them so happy just to have a hot meal in their hands. Whereas somebody that just lost their house, their cars, everything, and they're living in a shed that's 10 foot by 10 foot now, you bring them a case of water and a bag of snacks, and they're more than excited to see you. That's something that makes me happy. Success also makes me happy. Like, achieving a goal definitely makes me happy.

What motivates you?

I want to inspire people, and I want to be seen as a leader within my community. I want people to look up to me and really see what our generation can do. I feel like our generation is really looked down on. We make a lot of bad choices, but I want to show the world there's always hope for the future generations.

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## Climate change costs more than gas, sweaty T-shirt

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 682 Words OpenURL Link

I was mowing my lawn in Myrtle Beach, South Caro-lina, as Hurricane Milton's outer bands and the tornadoes it brought with it began to lash Florida last week. Though the lawnmowing was trivial compared to the lashing, a slight inconvenience alongside a pending catastrophe, I couldn't help linking the two because of climate change. In all my years as a homeowner, I don't remember mowing my lawn this consistently this late in the season. I took out the lawnmower, edger and clippers a couple of weeks ago as well. The hedges had regrown to heights they usually reach at the end of spring.

All it cost me was a few dollars of gas money and a sweaty T-shirt. No biggie. But a change in the climate, even a modest one, could be costly to places such as Myrtle Beach. Despite the draw of Broadway at the Beach, the SkyWheel and Ripley's Believe it or Not!, weather remains the top reason some 20 million people flock here every year. Sitting on the beach taking in the beauty of the Atlantic becomes less palatable without mild, stable weather.

The good news is that the fight to persuade people we are undergoing change is over. NASA says there is "no question that increased greenhouse gas levels warm Earth in response," even if scientists may not be able to say definitively that my lawn is changing or Milton's historic strength was directly caused by climate change because climate is more than just individual weather events.

Nearly 80% of South Carolinians now believe climate change is real, according to Winthrop University polling. That's higher than the national average of about 72%.

The bad news is that fewer of us are in agreement about its causes and what should be done, or if climate change is an urgent matter at all. While 55% of North Carolina residents believe recent extreme weather events are related to climate change, only 47% believe it's an emergency, according to High Point University polling. That's even while knowing rural areas are most vulnerable, which Hurricane Helene has unfortunately just illustrated in devastating ways.

In Florida, the gap is starker. While 90% of Floridians believe climate change is real, less than half would be willing to pay \$10 a month to strengthen that state's infrastructure to weather hazards.

In Congress, when Democrats talk about climate change or "green" projects, many Republicans criticize them. Only 13 House GOP members voted for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which represents the country's biggest investment in the climate change fight. More needs to be done, but President Joe Biden signed it into law just a couple of years after President Donald Trump spent his time in office rolling back such eff orts.

It's akin to knowing an out-ofcontrol freight train is screaming down the track. Instead of working to either try and stop it or get people out of the way, we're stuck arguing if it's really an emergency worth the sacrifice of short-term political wins or a few extra dollars to equip those who can mitigate the damage with the tools they need.

The truth is we've been forking over extra dollars anyway. Some of it has been in the form of having to mow the lawn and cut the hedges a few extra times, the kind of thing that feels small but will add up over time. We've even accepted the occasional house on the North Carolina coast falling into the Atlantic because of rising seas as a curiosity rather than calamity.

In other ways, it is easier to see that the freight train that is climate change has already arrived. In recent years, a variety of storms and other natural disasters around the nation have caused damage that is approaching nearly \$100 billion annually — the highest it's ever been.

While we can't say with absolute certainty that the damage from Helene and Milton is a direct cause of climate change, we'd be fools to believe it isn't, and bigger fools to let partisanship stop us from committing to doing something serious and sustained about it.

Bailey writes for The Charlotte Observer: charlotteobserver.com.

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## Lies, liars and lying are threatening our democracy

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 726 Words

OpenURL Link

At a recent campaign rally in Michigan, former president Donald Trump claimed that "Kamala has spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants."

Could it possibly be true? This is the sort of question Duke University's Bill Adair and a team of student reporters have been asking themselves for 17 years as they've fact-checked politicians and other public figures for the PolitiFact website that Adair created in 2007. The answer, of course, is no.

As William Shakespeare might have said, it is a lie "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The truth is that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has two distinct funds. One is to help cities temporarily house migrants. An entirely separate \$20 billion fund was created by Congress for disaster relief. This one is running low because of the number and scope of disasters this year, but the two funds are not interchangeable, nor is either being used for purposes other than those intended.

During and after Hurricanes Milton and Helene, has been present and working to help victims, largely to the acclaim of state and local leaders.

At a news conference to address Helene's damage to parts of the state, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, said federal assistance had "been superb." He mentioned that President Joe Biden, Transportation Secretary Pete Butt-igieg and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell had each called to off er support.

This is what one would expect from federal officials during a crisis, and it wouldn't require highlighting but for Trump's intentional lies.

As a rule, I'm not one to use the words "lie," "lying" or "liar." Their power to destroy someone's reputation is too great for comfort. But Trump has forced many of us, including Adair, to abandon the soft-pedaling etiquette of euphemism and to say what is factual. Lying, for Trump, is so refl exive that he needn't bestir his fourth-grade vocabulary to seize headlines and malign those he finds inconvenient to his purposes.

Will things ever change? Not soon, says Adair. Unfortunately, lying pays dividends in today's universe of partisan television, radio and social media, and for a complicit political base manipulated by sophisticated and sometimes immoral consultants. Fact-checking lies has had to become an industry, but it can't possibly keep up. What's needed is more fact-checking, which means more money and more staff, and for Americans to demand that the lying stop.

Over the years, Adair and his revolving teams of students have created a methodology and a "Truth-O-Meter" for assessing the accuracy of a given statement. Rankings from "true" to "false" to "pants on fire!" are assigned based on findings, which are explained and sourced on the website.

Adair is quick to note that political lying began long before Trump. President Richard Nixon lied about the Watergate burglary out of self-preservation. President Bill Clinton lied about "sex with that woman, Monica Lewinsky," because he was in very hot water.

In a sense, Trump is the inevitable benefactor of a culture of lies that has become normalized through passive acceptance of lying as the nature of politics.

Adair explains in his new book, "Beyond the Big Lie," that politicians every day try to score points with key constituencies: voters, party leaders, infl uencers and media figures. "A decision to lie is a simple math equation: I am likely to score enough points with this lie that it will outweigh any consequences it might have from voters/donors/the media."

Adair states that Republicans lie more than Democrats do, according to a statistical analysis detailed in the book. He spends several pages explaining how "facts" are selected for scrutiny, but it basically comes down to whether something just doesn't sound right. For example: Does it sound right that Harris "stole" FEMA money to house illegal migrants rather than help hurricane victims?

Actually, no — which is why PolitiFact gave Trump a "pants on fire!" rating for telling this easily disprovable lie.

Voters concerned about truth and the consequences of lying might want to check with PolitiFact at least as often as they check the polls. They'll learn that Trump, contrary to what he recently told Hugh Hewitt, has never been to Gaza. And that Harris' claim that unemployment is at a historic low for all groups of people was rated only "half true." It's good to know the truth, even if you don't like it.

### Parker writes for The Washington Post.

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# Hickory's Riverwalk bridge closed indefinitely due to storm damage

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff reports | Section: Government Politics | 121 Words OpenURL Link

Hickory's Riverwalk bridge is closed until further notice due to damage caused by Hurricane Helene, according to a press release from the city of Hickory.

The bridge trailhead and parking lot at 1580 Old Lenoir Road NW will also remain closed, the press release said.

The Riverwalk section that goes over the water is closed due to damage caused Sept. 27 by the remnants of the hurricane, the press release said. A section of handrailing was damaged by debris and must be replaced, the city said.

"At this time, the reopening date is unknown," the press release said.

Other parts of the Riverwalk trail, including sections that are elevated over land and the paved greenway within Rotary-Geitner Park, are open, the press release said.

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# Democratic NC governor candidate Josh Stein makes stop in Hickory Tuesday

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Billy Chapman | Section: Elections | 510 Words OpenURL Link

Democratic candidate for governor and current North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein made a campaign stop at Morning Star First Baptist Church in Hickory on Tuesday afternoon.

"I'm running for governor because I love our home state and I believe in its promise," Stein said to a room of about 80 people. "If we work hard, where you come from should never limit how far you can go."

Stein said he was on his way to Boone and surrounding counties to help with recovery efforts from damage caused by Hurricane Helene.

Stein laid out his platform at the event, saying teacher pay, protecting reproductive rights, public safety and protection of personal freedoms were among his top priorities.

"Governing is not that complicated, it's just not," Stein said. "It's about putting people first and then fighting for them."

Stein cited his record as attorney general as among the reasons he is qualified to serve as governor.

Stein said he reduced the backlog of untested rape test kits and helped secure \$50 billion from opioid companies by leading a bipartisan coalition of state attorney generals.

North Carolina is expected to receive over \$1 billion as part of settlements against pharmaceutical companies associated with manufacturing and distributing opioids.

Stein also addressed some of the controversies surrounding his Republican opponent, current Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson.

"The vision of our opponent in this race, the lieutenant governor, is one of division, violence and hate," Stein said.

Stein cited a CNN story that reported Robinson made controversial and offensive comments in an online forum in the early 2010s.

Robinson has denied the allegations in the CNN story. Earlier Tuesday, Robinson announced he was suing CNN for defamation.

"There's not a person in this room who needed that CNN story to know that that man was wholly unfit to be governor," Stein said to applause and cheering.

Supporters who showed up for the event echoed Stein's statements about top priorities.

Marcella McCombs, a military veteran, said protection of women's reproductive rights was a top issue for her.

"Personally, I don't think you should ever be able to tell somebody what to do with their body," McCombs said. "Keep your guns, we'll keep our uterus and we'll be all right. ... I fought for people's rights and let's keep them. When people start taking people's rights, it's awful."

Doug Auer was direct with his answer on why he was voting for Stein.

"The other guy is just a disgusting human being," Auer said. "He's (Stein) a man of high integrity, understands government, believes in government. He's right on the issues."

Aubrey Gregory had another reason for voting for Stein.

"I'm voting so my two daughters know I did everything I could to preserve their rights," Gregory said.

Stein concluded the campaign event with a message of fighting for the future of North Carolina.

"The stakes could not be higher. The choice could not be clearer," Stein said. "Two competing visions: ours (is) positive, forward-looking, welcoming. It's about fighting for every person, creating opportunity for every person, and tapping the potential of every person so that together we can build a brighter, better future for every one of us."

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## Bandys student served food to rescue crews

October 15, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: MIYA BANKS mbanks@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News | 1141 Words OpenURL Link

#### NOTABLE NEIGHBOR WYATT SPENCER

Amidst the devastation of Hurricane Helene, one of the most striking things 16-year-old Wyatt Spencer witnessed was the desire of people to help one another. "I saw hundreds of people who just lost everything, but the only thing they wanted to do was help the other person who lost everything else," Spencer said.

Spencer also noted the devastation he saw while volunteering in areas hit by storm. He said he saw pictures on the news and, to a degree, knew what to expect. Seeing it himself put the damage into perspective.

"After seeing the community and the devastation up there on a first-hand level ... I knew I had to come back and help for as long as I could," Spencer said. "There's so many people in need."

He added, "There's people that don't know what they're going to do in the next stage of their life. And to some people, seeing you walk over with the cold drink, hot food and a smile on your face is the best part of their day. And you don't know how much longer it could be before they get that again."

Spencer said he was born and raised in Catawba County. He is an 11th-grade student at Bandys High School.

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"No one asked him to do this," said Spencer's mother, Kristen Crawford. "(And) he didn't ask my permission. He said he was going."

Spencer said on an average day of volunteering, he would wake up at 3:45 a.m. to 4 a.m. and drive to a location over an hour away. He said he would get home around 11 p.m., sleep and repeat.

Three hours of sleep was a good night of sleep, Spencer said.

Crawford said she cannot put to words how proud she is of Spencer, though she is concerned about his mental health at times with everything he is witnessing.

"But he loves it, and he keeps going back for more, and he feels a calling for it," Crawford said.

Spencer said he plans to continue volunteering.

Spencer shared his experiences in an interview. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What made you want to volunteer?

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What was the most striking thing you saw?

The biggest thing I saw was the community coming together. I mean, I've seen a lot of bad, but through all the bad, I've seen a lot of good. I saw hundreds of people who just lost everything, but the only thing they wanted to do was help the other person who lost everything else. I met a couple who lost their house, and pretty much everyone they knew was presumably missing. We tried to bring them supplies one day, and even though they were running low on stuff, they wanted to pass it on to the next person. They said, 'We have enough to get us by for now, give it to the next person.' And even seeing rescue crews. You name a state, they were there. There was just so much good in a time of bad.

What type of volunteer work are you doing?

I served food to any rescue crews, any emergency personnel, because we were staged at the McDowell County emergency operations center, and we were serving around 1,500 meals a day for the first few days for emergency personnel and anybody in the community who needed them. And then, as the week went on, we slowed down a little bit. We probably got around 1,000 each day. I started out doing that.

And then I wanted to get more physically involved. I started doing supply runs for people that had no access to anything and started taking food to crews who were in places where they were working 18-20 hour days but weren't getting fed anything throughout the day. What I would do is, I would load up with hot food and cold drinks and take that to them while they were in the field.

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What values have you grown up with?

Leadership is probably the biggest one, especially in a world like today where everybody kind of wants to see what the people around them are doing. Going ahead and taking charge and showing people the way we should be doing stuff instead of letting them try and figure it out on their own. That, and we need to help the people around us. Definitely caring. My mom owns Endeavors Pediatric Therapy in Statesville, that has a huge role in caring for kids in the community. So, caring is one of the biggest things. Also hardship. Like, not letting something stop you. Keep going and keep pushing until you get the results you want.

What makes you happy or gives you joy?

One of the biggest things that really made me happy and gave me joy is helping people, especially in the past week. Nothing made me feel better than coming home every single day knowing I helped as many people as I could within a community that just lost everything. Even the first responders in the field that had been working for 15 hours, it made them so happy just to have a hot meal in their hands. Whereas somebody that just lost their house, their cars, everything, and they're living in a shed that's 10 foot by 10 foot now, you bring them a case of water and a bag of snacks, and they're more than excited to see you. That's something that makes me happy. Success also makes me happy. Like, achieving a goal definitely makes me happy.

What motivates you?

I want to inspire people, and I want to be seen as a leader within my community. I want people to look up to me and really see what our generation can do. I feel like our generation is really looked down on. We make a lot of bad choices, but I want to show the world there's always hope for the future generations.

Miya Banks is an education reporter at the Hickory Daily Record.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

MIYA BANKS mbanks@hickoryrecord.com, 'Bandys student served food to rescue crews', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 15 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3970B675CFB08>



## High Point officer's K9 partner survives emergency surgery

October 15, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: JIMMY TOMLIN ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER | Section: News | 587 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH POINT — In the midst of one disaster, a High Point police officer and his K9 partner nearly experienced another one.

Kira, a veteran member of the High Point Police Department's K9 unit, required emergency surgery Sunday after her handler, Lt. Zach Wilkins, realized she had bloat, a life-threatening condition that requires immediate medical attention.

That was scary enough, but even worse, Wilkins and Kira (pronounced "KY-ra") were in Biltmore Forest — a small town on the outskirts of hurricane-ravaged Asheville — where a team of High Point officers was assisting the town's police force in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Where were they supposed to go?

"My first thought was, this is a disaster area, nothing's going to be open," Wilkins said Tuesday.

Sure enough, the first veterinary office he tried was closed.

"I quickly Googled 'emergency vet near me,' and there was one less than half a mile away," Wilkins said. "Somebody was looking after her."

Wilkins put Kira in the car and sped toward Asheville's Veterinary Emergency Group (VEG), calling the 24-hour practice on the way to let them know he was coming and to explain the urgency of Kira's condition.

"I carried her in, and they were ready to roll as soon as she hit the table," he said. "They were extremely accommodating, and their professional knowledge base was outstanding. They were amazing."

With Wilkins nervously watching through a window, Kira underwent a two-hour surgery to untwist her twisted stomach, which is what happens when a dog gets bloat. The twist cuts off oxygen and blood flow to the stomach and other organs, jeopardizing the dog's life if not treated quickly.

"If it's not caught within about 15 minutes, there's a 90-% mortality rate," Wilkins said. "I didn't think she was going to make it, to be honest with you."

To his relief, though, Kira did survive, thanks to the professionalism and care of the VEG staff. Even after the surgery, staff members — despite having just endured perhaps the worst natural disaster in North Carolina history — went above and beyond to care for Kira.

"After the surgery, they put her in a kennel to rest, but they couldn't get her heart rate down," Wilkins recalled. "So they pushed a couple of chairs together for her — actually, a chair and a small couch — and covered her up with a blanket, and that got her heart rate down. A nurse was sitting there with her the whole night."

Kira came home Tuesday and is resting comfortably.

"She's on some very strong pain medications, because her incision is 18 to 20 inches long," Wilkins said. "She's going to be in her crate at the house for a little while, but she's slowly getting there."

After her recovery, though, Kira — a 9-year-old Belgian Malinois — will be retired from the police department because of a vertebrae condition discovered by the VEG staff.

"She's a hard-working dog and it's tough to get her to slow down," Wilkins said, "but retiring her now will give her a better life."

Wilkins, who has worked with Kyra for about two years, will keep her until she's fully recovered from her surgery, he said. Then she'll be returned to her previous handler, Lt. Derrick McNeal, who had worked with her for several years before he was promoted to another unit.

On its Facebook page, the police department expressed its gratitude to the VEG staff.

"Even with so much happening around them, this veterinary team showed a great deal of kindness and care," the post read. "From the bottom of our hearts, thank you."

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### • Citation (aglc Style)

JIMMY TOMLIN ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER, 'High Point officer's K9 partner survives emergency surgery', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EE14ADB10D50>



### Rierson Farms to host fall festival

October 15, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: TIMES STAFF| Section: Thomasville Times | 143 Words OpenURL Link

THOMASVILLE — Rierson Farms in Thomasville wants all of Davidson County to feel welcome on the farm on Saturday for its fall festival.

Local vendors will show and sell handmade items, and there will be pumpkins for sale, raffles to win gift baskets, face painting and fairy hair.

Also, Goose and the Monkey Brew House will sell craft beer, Bridgett's Kitchen will sell smoked meat food plated, and other vendors will be there.

Farm owners Zach and Monica Rierson also are using the fall festival to to help western North Carolina residents affected by Hurricane Helene. They ask attendees to bring canned food and coats for Marshal, Burnsville, Spruce Pine and other communities.

"Our efforts are based on a marathon mentality as these areas are years from a sense of security again, and they will need us for weeks and months to come," Zach Rierson said.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

TIMES STAFF, 'Rierson Farms to host fall festival', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EE14FAA52730">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EE14FAA52730</a>



# Old Fort polling location changed due to Hurricane Helene damage

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Mike Conley| Section: Elections | 254 Words OpenURL Link

One polling precinct in Old Fort has changed due to damage caused by Hurricane Helene at the end of September.

On Election Day, on Nov. 5, the polling place for Old Fort No. 2 would have been Old Fort Wesleyan Church. But due to Helene damage, both Old Fort No. 1 and No. 2 voting will take place at the Old Fort Depot on Nov. 5, McDowell County Elections Director Kim Welborn said.

The Old Fort early voting location was also eliminated due to Helene damage. Early voting will now only be held at the McDowell County Board of Elections, Welborn said at Monday's McDowell County Board of Commissioners meeting.

Welborn said she and her staff are grateful the Board of Elections building did not get flooded or experience leaks during Helene. More election workers will be brought in to handle the crowds of people coming to vote early, she said.

"When the doors open on Thursday, we will be ready to go," Welborn said.

Early voting in North Carolina begins on Oct. 17 and ends on Nov. 2.

In McDowell County, early voting will be held 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on three Saturdays, Oct. 19, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2. All early voting will be at the McDowell County Board of Elections, 2458 N.C. 226 South, Marion.

Wellborn said all 100 counties in North Carolina can accept absentee ballots for another county. This is aimed to help voters displaced by Helene who still want to vote in their county's election.

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### • Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Conley, 'Old Fort polling location changed due to Hurricane Helene damage', *McDowell News, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EDA23A6ECD20">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EDA23A6ECD20</a>



# Old Fort business used to shuttle cyclists to trails. Now it's focused on cleaning up after Helene.

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: MIKE CONLEY nconley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: Business | 982 Words OpenURL Link

Before the remnants of Hurricane Helene hit McDowell County, a newly formed business in Old Fort was working to make it easier for the cyclists to hit the trails in the area. Now, the company is shifting gears from transportation to trail-clearing in the wake of the storm.

Started in 2023, Mountain Top Shuttles is a transportation service based in Old Fort for cyclists and their bikes. The business is owned and operated by Jeremy Poore and Molly Morningglory.

After the town of Old Fort and its surrounding area was devastated by Hurricane Helene, Mountain Top Shuttles has turned its focus to repairing area trails and cleaning up some of the damage that remains. The couple is committed to helping the town rebuild from the damage.

"Mountain Top Shuttles is both a shuttle service and trail construction/maintenance business," Poore and Morningglory said in a statement. "During the next six months, we are pivoting to 100% trail construction and maintenance."

Poore and Morningglory started the shuttle business in 2023 with the goal of making McDowell County's trails accessible.

Working on trail access in western NC

The remnants of Hurricane Helene left enormous devastation to Old Fort, its businesses, the surrounding mountains and the trails cyclists enjoy. Poore and Morningglory have now shifted focus to repairing the damaged trails and helping the town rebuild.

Poore and Morningglory said in the two weeks since Helene hit on Sept. 27, they have completed more than 140 hours of volunteer work in town using heavy equipment to clear roads, parking lots, driveways and trees for Duke Power, FEMA, the town of Old Fort and local residents.

"Based on National Forest and Blue Ridge Parkway closures, there is no access for shuttling mountain bikers at this time," Poore and Morningglory said. "Our intention is to have most access and trails restored by March 2025. At that point, or sooner, we intend to again offer shuttle services."

To make this a possibility, the business started a GoFundMe campaign to pay the costs for opening the trails.

"So far, we've raised \$6,395, including funds from an anonymous donor, which translates to over 200 paid hours of trail maintenance at the government rate of \$31.80," Poore and Morningglory said in a statement. "This will ensure that we can continue to operate our business while directly working on Pisgah National Forest trails."

How the shuttle service started

In 2018, Poore visited a town in California that was once a gold mine town.

"After the mines dried up, so did the town," Poore said. "Much later, mountain biking entered the scene and the town came to be known for its long downhill trails."

There, Poore rode the mountain bike trails with the help of transportation services that took rider to the trails.

Years later, Morningglory finished graduate school at Clemson University in 2022. She and Poore wanted to move back to western North Carolina. Morningglory grew up in Old Fort and her parents once owned a building at the junction of Main Street and Catawba Avenue, where a park stands today. Poore's family live in Hendersonville, where he grew up.

The couple visited Old Fort and met with Jason McDougald of Camp Grier and the G5 Trail Collective. McDougald spoke to the couple about efforts to build trails in Old Fort and plans to rebrand Old Fort as a destination trail town.

The effort resonated with Poore, who was an avid biker and had led backpacking trips near Old Fort, he said.

The couple moved to Old Fort in late 2022. The pair developed the concept for Mountain Top Shuttles by emulating the mountain bike services in Downieville.

The business was born on Jan. 1, 2023 as a shuttle service for mountain bikers and a trail construction and maintenance company, according to Poore and Morningglory.

"I conceived of Mountain Top Shuttles as a way to make the trails around Old Fort, NC, more accessible," Poore said on the website for the business. "These trails are steep and deep! Sometimes we don't have all day to ride or to climb 5,000+ vertical feet. Sometimes we just need to get out there and choose our own adventure. Whatever your riding pleasure, you gotta get up to get down."

Hitting the trails around Old Fort

Before Helene, Mountain Top Shuttles would pick up bike riders from all over the country in downtown Old Fort near Seeker Coffee. Riders would enjoy coffee and pastries while Morningglory and Poore loaded bikes and prepared for the trip up the mountain, the couple said.

The most popular shuttle was a trip up Heartbreak Ridge. The nearly 14-mile trail took riders along the Blue Ridge Parkway near the base of Mount Mitchell State Park all the way down to Camp Grier Road, three quarters of a mile from downtown Old Fort, according to Poore and Mornningglory.

Before the storm, Mountain Top Shuttles often took up to 50 riders a week up the mountain, the couple said.

"Since the business was designed as an accelerator for the town of Old Fort, all marketing includes local eateries, breweries and the local bike shop," Poore and Morningglory said.

In addition to shuttles, the business includes building and maintaining trails, something the pair are focused on now.

Mountain Top Shuttles frequently led volunteer workdays with the G5 Trail Collective and was selected to build the section of trail from lower Catawba Falls to the upper falls earlier this spring.

Poore is also the coordinator of the McDowell Technical Community College Trail School. The trail construction program has served local land managers, trail maintainers and trail builders since 2021. Poore became the program's first coordinator in January 2023.

In just a short time before the storm, Old Fort and Mountain Top Shuttles got more recognition from those within the mountain biking community. Before Helene struck Old Fort, the business had its first rider from British Columbia, Canada on the shuttle.

"That makes our first international visitor specifically coming to Old Fort because they saw a YouTube video about Heartbreak (Ridge) and our shuttle," Poore said.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

MIKE CONLEY nconley@mcdowellnews.com, 'Old Fort business used to shuttle cyclists to trails. Now it's focused on cleaning up after Helene.', *McDowell News, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C397DBDD8163F8>



# 2 DEAD, 3 MISSING

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 695 Words OpenURL Link

#### HURRICANE HELENE AFTERMATH UPDATE

On Sunday, the latest Helene response update from McDowell County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) stated there are two people confirmed dead and three active missing persons cases under investigation in McDowell.

As for confirmed fatalities, McDowell has had one death with one additional death pending investigation, according to the news release.

As of noon on Sunday, McDowell County has investigated 717 local reports through the McDowell County Helene Hotline and 785 reports through 211. Each report has been thoroughly reviewed.

"Our team is working tirelessly to provide updates and support to affected families," the news release said.

"We continue to receive requests for welfare checks and supply deliveries to isolated homes," reads the news release.

### Shelter operations update

McDowell County continues to support residents in need of shelter during ongoing recovery efforts. As of Sunday, one shelter remains operational at the McDowell County Senior Center at 100 Spaulding Road, Marion. This shelter will remain open 24/7 and be available to any citizen requiring sheltering assistance.

County officials emphasize that there is no intention to close this shelter. The shelter will remain operational for as long as necessary to meet the needs of the community.

For additional information or assistance, residents are encouraged to contact the shelter at 828652-3241.

### FEMA updates

Disaster Recovery Centers have opened in Buncombe, McDowell, Caldwell and Jackson counties to help North Carolinians in disaster affected counties. Hours are from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Sunday. More centers will be opening soon. Find a center nearest you at FEMA.gov/drc.

The McDowell County disaster recovery center is at the McDowell County Senior Center, 100 Spaulding Road, in Marion.

### Need help? Call hotline

For those in need of assistance with chainsaw work, mud-out services, or other storm recovery efforts, call the McDowell County Helene Hotline at 828-652-3241. A team is ready to help connect you with volunteer resources to support your recovery. If Helene has caused damage to your home or belongings, it is crucial to document the damage for reimbursement purposes. Be sure to take photos before beginning any cleanup efforts, make a list of damaged or lost items, and gather receipts. Citizens can also visit www.mcdowellcares.org and click on "Homeowner Assistance" to request help online.

Free mobile health clinic opens in Old Fort

A free mobile health clinic is now open in Old Fort to support the community's medical needs following Hurricane Helene. Located at 25 W. Main St., Old Fort, the clinic operates daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., providing convenient access to health care services for residents. The clinic is equipped to offer a range of medical care, ensuring that those affected by the storm have access to the support they need during this challenging time.

Comfort stations in Old Fort and Woodlawn

To support residents facing utility outages and isolation, Comfort stations have been set up in the Old Fort and Woodlawn communities. These stations are designed to provide essential services and support during this challenging time. The locations and services offered are as follows:

Old Fort Baptist Church

Location: 203 E Main St., Old Fort

Services provided: Showers, laundry and bathrooms.

New Horizon Baptist Church

Location: 5878 U.S. 221 North, Marion

Services provided: Shower, laundry and bathrooms. These comfort stations aim to provide much-needed relief to those experiencing prolonged utility disruptions. Residents are encouraged to use these resources and to share this information with neighbors who may require assistance.

Food and water distribution centers as of Sunday

- Restoration Church, 2344 Ashworth Road, Marion, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Glenwood Baptist, 155 Glenwood Baptist Church Road, Marion, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- New Manna Baptist, 225 E. Court St., Marion, 10 a.m. to noon and 4-6 p.m.
- Centro Unido Latino Americano, 79 Academy St., Marion, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- First Baptist Church of Marion 99 N. Main St., Marion, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Cherry Springs (Old Fort) 6 Bull Walker Road, Old Fort, Sundays 2-6 p.m. and Wednesdays 4-7 p.m.
- First Baptist Church of Old Fort, 203 E Main St., Old Fort, noon to 6 p.m.
- Camp Grier, 985 Camp Grier Road, Old Fort, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.
- Tom Johnson's Camping Center 348 Resistofl ex Road, Marion, weekends 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

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## McDowell County's restaurants feed the hungry during Hurricane Helene crisis

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: MIKE CONLEY nconley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: Food Drink | 749 Words OpenURL Link

As a native of McDowell County, I have tried to support community businesses whenever possible and that certainly applies to our restaurants, many of which are locally owned and employ our friends and neighbors.

Our local restaurants struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic when everyone was told to stay home, but through innovation and dedication almost all persevered. Around us, there are other cities and towns where their local restaurants closed their doors for good during COVID.

Now, our local restaurants are confronted with another enormous challenge. When Hurricane Helene swept through here as a tropical storm, thousands of people were suddenly isolated and without electricity, running water and food. Some people lost their homes.

That's when many of our local restaurants stepped in to provide a meal to their fellow McDowell County residents. These restaurants did this after throwing out spoiled food and replenishing what was lost. I saw this firsthand at some businesses, but there are more restaurants that stepped up.

#### Free food for Helene victims

Located on U.S. Highway 221 Business in Marion, Smokey Que's barbecue restaurant jumped into action and set up a plan to provide free food for friends and neighbors. Folks lined up in vehicles to get free meals of barbecue and beans at Smokey Que's. The free food lasted for four days from Tuesday, Oct. 1, through Friday, Oct. 4. Owner Caleb Parker said a total of 6,000 meals were given away. Some churches used this food to feed others at their locations.

"We had to be, what I feel like, was one of the first responses to get it where the churches would be able to set up PODs (points of distribution)," said Parker. "We wanted to be that first in there to be able to help people so that when the churches come behind us they could fill the gap after us."

Smokey Que's did something similar during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, the business provided 5,500 meals over a six-week term in 2020.

"We have always wanted to give back, and when there is a need we have tried our best to fill the gap the best we can," said Parker.

Smokey Que's is just one example among many.

After getting the electricity back and replenishing what food was lost, Bruce's Fabulous Foods in Marion served a free meal to those in need.

"If you need food, please drive by or walk by and we will have it ready to hand to you. ... We will serve until we run out," the restaurant said in a Facebook post. "We love our community, this is our way to be here for y'all as you have been here for us."

The Blanton House partnered with Westmoreland Funeral Home to host a free community food drive-thru on Wednesday, Oct. 2, and Thursday, Oct. 3. The staff of the Blanton House gave out free meals of chicken or shrimp and grits in the funeral home's parking lot. "It is our honor to be able to help our community during this trying time," The Blanton House said in a Facebook post.

Refinery 13 taproom hosted free hot meals and community dinners where folks have brought in home-cooked food for patrons to enjoy during this time.

In storm-ravaged Old Fort, Davis Country Store & Café is serving free breakfasts, lunches and dinners in the town that was especially hit hard by Helene.

The business also started a GoFundMe page for Old Fort's recovery.

As of Wednesday, the page has raised \$34,878 out of a \$500,000 goal.

Although it did not give away free food, one local restaurant was able to stay open for business early in this crisis and accepted debit cards when almost no one else could.

The McDonald's on West Henderson Street in Marion was among a handful of places where diners could get something to eat after Helene knocked out power. The staff at this McDonald's found themselves with an onslaught of hungry people seeking something hot for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The staff of the McDonald's did an exemplary job serving the hundreds of customers whose cars wrapped around the building and the long lines inside the eatery. Their patience and ability to serve all these folks was exceptional.

"They are all working hard to make sure everyone is taken care of," said Patrick Joyner of Hickory. "It's a group effort by everyone to serve the customers."

Joyner and his wife Heather co-own the McDonald's restaurants in Marion as well as other locations.

Those are just a few examples of local eateries helping our community and I am sure there are others.

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## Repairing roads, water, sewer top relief priorities

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal | Section: News | 1104 Words OpenURL Link

Paying for repairing roads, highways and water and sewer infrastructure are the top priorities for the bulk of the \$273 million "rainy-day" funds approved Thursday for Hurricane Helene relief efforts in western North Carolina.

Gov. Roy Cooper signed into law Thursday House Bill 149, titled "Disaster Recovery Act of 2024," which represents the first round of disaster relief funding. The state House and Senate voted unanimous Wednesday for HB149.

Those priorities represent the realities of helping affected western N.C.communities to return to normal life, according to legislators and Cooper administration officials.

The rainy-day fund exceeded \$4.75 billion before Helene. Legislators have established a limit on how much rainy-day funds can be spent at any one time.

"Recovery for Western North Carolina will require unprecedented help from state and federal sources, and this legislation is a strong first step," Cooper said in a statement.

"Hurricane Helene caused catastrophic damage, but also showed the resiliency of North Carolina's people and its communities, and we must continue the bipartisan work to help them build back strong."

About \$250 million is going to state agencies and local governments toward relief and recovery operations in the 25 affected counties that include Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes.

Essentially, funds appropriated to the N.C. Emergency Management agency will serve as upfront cash flows that are expected to be reimbursed at up to 100% from the federal government, primarily the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

About \$100 million in state funding already has been designated toward disaster relief efforts, including N.C. Department of Transportation efforts toward repairing or new construction of private roads and bridges.

Cooper said that "significant progress is already being made to reopen roads, restore electricity and repair water and communications systems."

Most of the energy and communications repairs are being done by private companies, such as Duke Energy, Pike Electric and mobile and internet providers.

"This initial investment is helpful in satisfying federal matching funds requirements and cash flow to help ensure maximum impact," Cooper said.

"In coming weeks and months, damage assessments will continue and the governor will work with state and federal appropriators to identify the significant funding that will be required to rebuild communities devastated by this storm."

Next legislative session

A second one-day session focused on disaster relief efforts is scheduled for Oct. 24.

State Emergency Management officials are expected to provide before that session the results of an accelerated

preliminary damage-and-needs assessment so legislators can determine the next amount to withdraw from the rainy-day fund.

The typical damage-and-needs assessment takes between six to eight weeks to conduct and present to the legislature, A more thorough assessment likely will be presented to the legislature after the Nov. 5 general election.

However, the availability of drones and other technological advancements has helped to speed up the assessments.

The assessment is designed in part to determine what damages FEMA will pay for and what disaster relief expenses the state will have to pick up. State officials, both with the Cooper administration and the administration of the next governor, will negotiate with FEMA officials on those expenses.

Funding also will be dedicated to "unmet basic needs" for affected communities, such as providing shelter and warmth as the cooler nights of fall arrive.

"There is not a specific earmark of any of these dollars for a specific program," said Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham.

When asked about why the legislature is not providing more from the rainy-day fund, Berger said, "This is not all of it, not by a long shot."

"We don't want to get too far ahead of the federal government on that because we don't want to supplant those federal dollars with state dollars if we're not required to."

House speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, said legislators know "this is just a drop in the bucket to what's going to be the total cost."

"We're well over \$10 billion, and it's going to be higher than that. This will (be) multiple years that this (recovery) process has to be dealt with at the state level and the federal level."

### Non-financial details

A legislative staff analysis of HB149 shows how legislators are providing guidance to board of elections in the 25 affected counties for handling the upcoming Nov. 5 general election.

Most of the affected counties are conservative leaning outside Buncombe, Mecklenburg and Watauga.

About \$5 million will be provided to county boards of elections for voter outreach and communication efforts.

Absentee ballots for voters in the 25 counties can be returned to any county board of elections, early voting sites or precincts, as well as establishing a hotline for displaced voters from the 25 counties.

Berger said there will be "additional flexibilities for appointing election judges and poll workers, including from outside a particular county," such as state employees without taking leave from their jobs.

HB149 contains language providing direction for how school systems in the 25 affected counties can adjust their 2024-25 calendars.

HB149 allows public schools to excuse days missed for schools that closed during September and October related to Hurricane Helene damages.

### Other elements include:

• Expands the amount of authorized remove instruction time for schools in the 25 affected counties for the

remainder of the school year.

- Treats employees and contractors of public school units as having worked on days deemed completed and provide funding to replaced lost compensation of school nutrition employees.
- Requires the state Department of Public Instruction to report on calendar flexibility and compensation provided.
- Waives requirements for students enrolled in educator preparation program to complete clinical internships over a certain amount of time if they were scheduled to complete the internships in December.
- Extends the deadline for bonuses to be paid out to qualifying principals in affected counties.

Berger said HB149 will suspend into at least March 1 the post-COVID-19 pandemic law that requires the Council of State to renew every 30 days a governor's executive orders on declared emergencies.

The bill will waive temporarily driver's license renewals in those counties, along with certain environmental regulations, such as burning, road construction and wastewater, to accelerate the recovery process.

There will be small business loans made in conjunction with Golden Leaf Foundation that will be reimbursed through FEMA.

"There are thousands of businesses in this region that have been severely damaged or destroyed," said Sen. Warren Daniel, R-Burke.

"They're struggling to figure out whether they will ever be able to rebuild and reopen. Local residents and the state economy depend heavily on the businesses in Western North Carolina, especially small businesses.

"It's the General Assembly's duty to provide them help during their darkest hour and we are intent on doing just that."

The law also includes the Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 Fund for Brunswick and New Hanover counties, as well as language to fund the relief needs for the Nash County tornado that caused damage in Rocky Mount.

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RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal, 'Repairing roads, water, sewer top relief priorities', *McDowell News, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C397DC18A13CA0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C397DC18A13CA0</a>



## Hurricane brought out best of NC

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 675 Words OpenURL Link

As we mourn the deaths and grapple with the destruction inflicted on our state by Hurricane Helene, I submit that the storm has brought out much that is good about North Carolina — and much that is vile about social media.

I'll start with the positive.

Residents of the mountain counties most affected by Helene have fought heroically for their lives, their families, and their neighbors, often against long odds and terrifying threats. They haven't fought alone. Others from across North Carolina and beyond flocked in to help.

We've only just begun to collect their stories of prudent planning, daring rescues, and dogged determination. These tales feature the likes of Hendersonville's James White, who led more than a dozen neighbors sheltering in his home to safety with ropes and life jackets, as well as Eddie Hunnell, recently moved to North Carolina from Colorado, who leapt into the swollen New River to save a stranger, Lesley Worth, separated from her husband by the raging stream.

At larger scale, hundreds of churches, charities, companies and volunteer networks sprang to the assistance of their fellow Carolinians. So did law enforcement, fire and rescue teams, and emergency-response personnel from counties, municipalities, state agencies and other public authorities.

On the ground, we've seen a great deal of cooperation across jurisdictional and political boundaries. Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, for example, sent North Carolina Forest Service staffers familiar with the rugged terrain to guide National Guard units into position. On Oct. 7, Democratic and Republican appointees on the State Board of Elections voted unanimously to empower local boards in 13 hard-hit counties to modify the locations and hours of early-voting sites and other election procedures — but only by bipartisan votes of those boards, a prudent constraint to reassure a jittery public.

Democratic mayors have worked closely with Republican county commissioners to coordinate relief. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, lawmakers from both parties — all have pitched in to comfort victims, survey damage, coordinate responses, and convey timely, accurate information to the public.

That's not to say there haven't been miscues and disagreements. Tillis and Budd questioned the pace at which military personnel from Fort Liberty and other bases were deployed into the devastated counties after the storm. Others have criticized the adequacy of response by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

While it will take some time to sort out all the claims and counterclaims, it's not too early to label these issues as legitimate topics for debate.

Unfortunately, much of the "debate" unfolding on social media over the past week has been anything but legitimate. Whether spreading wacky conspiracy theories about lithium mines and weather control or uttering grotesque slanders about Kamala Harris and Joe Biden intentionally "letting" Republican voters "drown," a host of very-online, supposedly conservative provocateurs and hacks have made a bad situation immeasurably worse.

Here's what a real conservative leader, state Sen. Kevin Corbin, had to say. "PLEASE help stop this junk," wrote Corbin, who represents North Carolina's eight westernmost counties. "It is just a distraction to people trying to do their job."

"Folks, this is a catastrophic event of which this country has never known. It is the largest crisis event in the history of N.C. The state is working non-stop. DOT has deployed workers from all over the state. Duke [Energy] has 10,000 workers on this. FEMA is here. The National Guard is here in large numbers."

Some incendiary memes are likely the product of misunderstandings, such as emergency officials redirecting volunteers away from dangerous roads or relief agencies refusing certain donated items they aren't equipped to store or distribute. Others may well be the result of bad calls made in good faith, in stressful conditions, by officials with incomplete information or inadequate training.

Can policymakers properly second-guess such decisions after the fact? Of course! That time will come. Right now, our immediate challenges remain rescue and relief — challenges our fellow North Carolinians have met with magnificent resilience.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member. His latest books, Mountain Folk and Forest Folk, combine epic fantasy with early American history (FolkloreCycle.com).

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## McDowell restaurants step up

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: MIKE CONLEY nconley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: News| 775 Words OpenURL Link

#### Editor's Note

The following is a column by reporter Mike Conley about how McDowell County's restaurants stepped up to feed people after Hurricane Helene hit the area.

As a native of McDowell County, I have tried to support community businesses whenever possible and that certainly applies to our restaurants, many of which are locally owned and employ our friends and neighbors.

Our local restaurants struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic when everyone was told to stay home, but through innovation and dedication almost all persevered. Around us, there are other cities and towns where their local restaurants closed their doors for good during COVID.

Now, our local restaurants are confronted with another enormous challenge. When Hurricane Helene swept through here as a tropical storm, thousands of people were suddenly isolated and without electricity, running water and food. Some people lost their homes.

That's when many of our local restaurants stepped in to provide a meal to their fellow McDowell County residents. These restaurants did this after throwing out spoiled food and replenishing what was lost. I saw this firsthand at some businesses, but there are more restaurants that stepped up.

### Free food for Helene victims

Located on U.S. Highway 221 Business in Marion, Smokey Que's barbecue restaurant jumped into action and set up a plan to provide free food for friends and neighbors. Folks lined up in vehicles to get free meals of barbecue and beans at Smokey Que's. The free food lasted for four days from Tuesday, Oct. 1, through Friday, Oct. 4. Owner Caleb Parker said a total of 6,000 meals were given away. Some churches used this food to feed others at their locations.

"We had to be, what I feel like, was one of the first responses to get it where the churches would be able to set up PODs (points of distribution)," said Parker. "We wanted to be that first in there to be able to help people so that when the churches come behind us they could fill the gap after us."

Smokey Que's did something similar during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, the business provided 5,500 meals over a six-week term in 2020.

"We have always wanted to give back, and when there is a need we have tried our best to fill the gap the best we can," said Parker.

Smokey Que's is just one example among many.

After getting the electricity back and replenishing what food was lost, Bruce's Fabulous Foods in Marion served a free meal to those in need.

"If you need food, please drive by or walk by and we will have it ready to hand to you. ... We will serve until we run out," the restaurant said in a Facebook post. "We love our community, this is our way to be here for y'all as you have been here for us."

The Blanton House partnered with Westmoreland Funeral Home to host a free community food drivethru on Wednesday, Oct. 2, and Thursday, Oct. 3. The staff of the Blanton House gave out free meals of chicken or shrimp and grits in the funeral home's parking lot. "It is our honor to be able to help our community during this trying time," The Blanton House said in a Facebook post.

Refinery 13 taproom hosted free hot meals and community dinners where folks have brought in home-cooked food for patrons to enjoy during this time.

In storm-ravaged Old Fort, Davis Country Store & Café is serving free breakfasts, lunches and dinners in the town that was especially hit hard by Helene.

The business also started a GoFundMe page for Old Fort's recovery.

As of Wednesday, the page has raised \$34,878 out of a \$500,000 goal.

Although it did not give away free food, one local restaurant was able to stay open for business early in this crisis and accepted debit cards when almost no one else could.

The McDonald's on West Henderson Street in Marion was among a handful of places where diners could get something to eat after Helene knocked out power. The staff at this McDonald's found themselves with an onslaught of hungry people seeking something hot for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The staff of the McDonald's did an exemplary job serving the hundreds of customers whose cars wrapped around the building and the long lines inside the eatery. Their patience and ability to serve all these folks was exceptional. "They are all working hard to make sure everyone is taken care of," said Patrick Joyner of Hickory. "It's a group effort by everyone to serve the customers."

Joyner and his wife Heather co-own the McDonald's restaurants in Marion as well as other locations.

Those are just a few examples of local eateries helping our community and I am sure there are others.

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## Hurricane relief advice: Donate money

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC)
Author: SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com | Section: News | 794 Words
OpenURL Link

Send money, not water.

That's the advice Catawba County United Way Executive Director Mark Bumgarner offered Wednesday for people wanting to aid people in the portions of North Carolina ravaged by Hurricane Helene.

At one point, the Catawba County United Way had four drop-off sites for donations. As of Wednesday, all sites have been closed to donations.

Bumgarner said donations were stacked to the ceiling in every room of the Catawba County United Way office building. Volunteers would send out the donations. As soon as the mountain of items disappeared, new donations would arrive to take their place.

"We are actively turning people away with donations now. Not because we want to but because we have to,"
Bumgarner said. On Wednesday, there were still piles of items throughout the Catawba County United Way offices.
Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way also has two warehouses full of items such as toiletries,
nonperishables and bottled water.

Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way sent supplies in small amounts to pocket communities near Marion and Hendersonville that still needed help on Wednesday.

"There is the possibility that we may need to warehouse things for just a small amount of time until the need develops again, or we see if the need develops again," Bumgarner said.

Bumgarner said the response made him proud to live in Catawba County.

Bumgarner said he appreciates that people still want to help. He said the best way to help now is to send money. Bumgarner said checks can be brought to Catawba County United Way. Monetary donations can also be given to the United Way of North Carolina, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Samaritan's Purse.

"If you're not sure about who a legitimate partner is, feel free to call us and we'll give you tools for you to research organizations for yourself before you make a donation," Bumgarner said. The Catawba County United Way can be contacted at 828-327-6851.

The office is at 2760 Tate Blvd. in Hickory.

McDowell County

McDowell and Burke counties are recovering from flooding. McDowell County suffered devastating flooding, especially in Marion and Old Fort, during Hurricane Helene.

Burke County experienced major flooding as well in Morganton and Glen Alpine. Areas along the Catawba River were ravaged by the intense overflow.

McDowell County has stopped accepting donations of supplies, according to the county's Hurricane Helene information website mcdowellcares.org.

Money can still be donated to McDowell County by visiting mcdowellcares.org.

#### **Burke County**

Burke County has stopped accepting donations, too. "Our donation room is full of surplus supplies, and the number of individuals seeking assistance through donations continues to decrease now that power is rapidly restored," Burke County officials said in a news release.

Burke County said their donation center at 2128 S. Sterling St. stopped taking donations at 8 p.m. on Tuesday. The county said donations can be restarted at any time if the need arises.

"Thanks to your incredible outpouring of support, the community is saturated with clean water, food, hygiene supplies, blankets, and other items," Burke officials said. "Burke County will continue to warehouse the surplus supplies and to serve as a western North Carolina resource hub."

If Burke County citizens need help getting supplies, they can still contact one of four fire departments: George Hildebran Fire/Rescue, Longtown Fire Department, Enola Fire Department, Brendletown Fire/Rescue station 1 or the Jonas Ridge Fire Department.

"The community is returning to work, school and their daily responsibilities," Burke County said. "This requires relief efforts to transition from short-term, life-sustaining efforts to a more long-term relief strategy that supports housing, food and economic insecurities."

Anyone who wishes to donate money toward relief in Burke County can send money to the Community Foundation of Burke County. The group set up an emergency relief fund to provide grants to local nonprofits providing resources for housing, food and economic insecurities created by hurricane Helene. As of Monday, the fund had raised more than \$100,000. The fund will provide grants of up to \$10,000, according to the foundation's website.

#### **FEMA rumors**

"There's things out there like FEMA is confiscating items or supplies, there's no truth at all to that," FEMA spokesperson Nate Custer said, referring to a rumor that FEMA is taking donated items and not disbursing them to affected communities. "We always say, particularly for people outside the affected area, a cash contribution is the most effective way (to help)."

Custer said people should give to the Red Cross or other established organizations. Custer also said well-intentioned deeds may not be helpful.

"People get a pick-up, get a few neighbors, get a few supplies in a truck and head on down to western North Carolina," Custer said. "That's difficult with the roads, they're not sure where to go, there's a problem in not knowing exactly where to drop those (donations off)."

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory daily record.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C397DC272F18F0>



## Climate change costs more than gas, sweaty T-shirt

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 680 Words OpenURL Link

I was mowing my lawn in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as Hurricane Milton's outer bands and the tornadoes it brought with it began to lash Florida last week. Though the lawnmowing was trivial compared to the lashing, a slight inconvenience alongside a pending catastrophe, I couldn't help linking the two because of climate change.

In all my years as a homeowner, I don't remember mowing my lawn this consistently this late in the season. I took out the lawnmower, edger and clippers a couple of weeks ago as well. The hedges had regrown to heights they usually reach at the end of spring.

All it cost me was a few dollars of gas money and a sweaty T-shirt. No biggie. But a change in the climate, even a modest one, could be costly to places such as Myrtle Beach. Despite the draw of Broadway at the Beach, the SkyWheel and Ripley's Believe it or Not!, weather remains the top reason some 20 million people flock here every year. Sitting on the beach taking in the beauty of the Atlantic becomes less palatable without mild, stable weather.

The good news is that the fight to persuade people we are undergoing change is over. NASA says there is "no question that increased greenhouse gas levels warm Earth in response," even if scientists may not be able to say definitively that my lawn is changing or Milton's historic strength was directly caused by climate change because climate is more than just individual weather events.

Nearly 80% of South Carolinians now believe climate change is real, according to Winthrop University polling. That's higher than the national average of about 72%.

The bad news is that fewer of us are in agreement about its causes and what should be done, or if climate change is an urgent matter at all. While 55% of North Carolina residents believe recent extreme weather events are related to climate change, only 47% believe it's an emergency, according to High Point University polling. That's even while knowing rural areas are most vulnerable, which Hurricane Helene has unfortunately just illustrated in devastating ways.

In Florida, the gap is starker. While 90% of Floridians believe climate change is real, less than half would be willing to pay \$10 a month to strengthen that state's infrastructure to weather hazards.

In Congress, when Democrats talk about climate change or "green" projects, many Republicans criticize them. Only 13 House GOP members voted for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which represents the country's biggest investment in the climate change fight. More needs to be done, but President Joe Biden signed it into law just a couple of years after President Donald Trump spent his time in office rolling back such eff orts.

It's akin to knowing an out-of-control freight train is screaming down the track. Instead of working to either try and stop it or get people out of the way, we're stuck arguing if it's really an emergency worth the sacrifice of short-term political wins or a few extra dollars to equip those who can mitigate the damage with the tools they need.

The truth is we've been forking over extra dollars anyway. Some of it has been in the form of having to mow the lawn and cut the hedges a few extra times, the kind of thing that feels small but will add up over time. We've even accepted the occasional house on the North Carolina coast falling into the Atlantic because of rising seas as a curiosity rather than calamity.

In other ways, it is easier to see that the freight train that is climate change has already arrived. In recent years, a variety of storms and other natural disasters around the nation have caused damage that is approaching nearly

 $$100 ext{ billion annually} - ext{the highest it's ever been.}$ 

While we can't say with absolute certainty that the damage from Helene and Milton is a direct cause of climate change, we'd be fools to believe it isn't, and bigger fools to let partisanship stop us from committing to doing something serious and sustained about it.

Bailey writes for The Charlotte Observer: charlotteobserver.com.

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## Lies, liars and lying are threatening our democracy

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 723 Words OpenURL Link

At a recent campaign rally in Michigan, former president Donald Trump claimed that "Kamala has spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants."

Could it possibly be true? This is the sort of question Duke University's Bill Adair and a team of student reporters have been asking themselves for 17 years as they've fact-checked politicians and other public figures for the PolitiFact website that Adair created in 2007.

The answer, of course, is no.

As William Shakespeare might have said, it is a lie "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The truth is that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has two distinct funds. One is to help cities temporarily house migrants. An entirely separate \$20 billion fund was created by Congress for disaster relief. This one is running low because of the number and scope of disasters this year, but the two funds are not interchangeable, nor is either being used for purposes other than those intended.

During and after Hurricanes Milton and Helene, FEMA has been present and working to help victims, largely to the acclaim of state and local leaders.

At a news conference to address Helene's damage to parts of the state, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, said federal assistance had "been superb." He mentioned that President Joe Biden, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell had each called to offer support.

This is what one would expect from federal officials during a crisis, and it wouldn't require highlighting but for Trump's intentional lies.

As a rule, I'm not one to use the words "lie," "lying" or "liar." Their power to destroy someone's reputation is too great for comfort. But Trump has forced many of us, including Adair, to abandon the soft-pedaling etiquette of euphemism and to say what is factual. Lying, for Trump, is so reflexive that he needn't bestir his fourth-grade vocabulary to seize headlines and malign those he finds inconvenient to his purposes.

Will things ever change? Not soon, says Adair. Unfortunately, lying pays dividends in today's universe of partisan television, radio and social media, and for a complicit political base manipulated by sophisticated and sometimes immoral consultants. Fact-checking lies has had to become an industry, but it can't possibly keep up. What's needed is more fact-checking, which means more money and more staff, and for Americans to demand that the lying stop.

Over the years, Adair and his revolving teams of students have created a methodology and a "Truth-O-Meter" for assessing the accuracy of a given statement. Rankings from "true" to "false" to "pants on fire!" are assigned based on findings, which are explained and sourced on the website.

Adair is quick to note that political lying began long before Trump. President Richard Nixon lied about the Watergate burglary out of self-preservation. President Bill Clinton lied about "sex with that woman, Monica Lewinsky," because he was in very hot water.

In a sense, Trump is the inevitable benefactor of a culture of lies that has become normalized through passive

acceptance of lying as the nature of politics.

Adair explains in his new book, "Beyond the Big Lie," that politicians every day try to score points with key constituencies: voters, party leaders, influencers and media figures. "A decision to lie is a simple math equation: I am likely to score enough points with this lie that it will outweigh any consequences it might have from voters/donors/the media."

Adair states that Republicans lie more than Democrats do, according to a statistical analysis detailed in the book. He spends several pages explaining how "facts" are selected for scrutiny, but it basically comes down to whether something just doesn't sound right. For example: Does it sound right that Harris "stole" FEMA money to house illegal migrants rather than help hurricane victims?

Actually, no — which is why PolitiFact gave Trump a "pants on fire!" rating for telling this easily disprovable lie.

Voters concerned about truth and the consequences of lying might want to check with PolitiFact at least as often as they check the polls. They'll learn that Trump, contrary to what he recently told Hugh Hewitt, has never been to Gaza. And that Harris' claim that unemployment is at a historic low for all groups of people was rated only "half true." It's good to know the truth, even if you don't like it.

Parker writes for The Washington Post.

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