

McDowell County chamber giving mini grants for businesses recovering from Helene damage

October 23, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: From Staff Reports | Section: Business | 243 Words OpenURL Link

The McDowell Chamber Community & Business Impact Inc., the chamber's foundation, launched a mini grant program to provide financial relief to small businesses in McDowell County.

The grants, funded by donations, are intended to help businesses facing urgent challenges in the wake of the storm, according to a news release from the chamber.

The grant program will prioritize McDowell County's most vulnerable small businesses. The grants are designed to act as a bridge, providing temporary relief as businesses work toward more stable economic footing, the release said.

"We are incredibly grateful for the outpouring of generosity we've received to support our local business community," said Kim Effler, president/CEO of the McDowell Chamber of Commerce. "These funds will be distributed where they are needed most, offering a lifeline to businesses critically damaged by flooding and helping them reopen their doors. By stabilizing these businesses, we're also helping to protect the jobs that so many workers in our community rely on. Our goal is to support both businesses and their employees as they rebuild and recover."

Need a small business grant?

Small businesses affected by Hurricane Helene can apply for the grant program. The grants will provide critical funding to cover essential recovery needs and ensure businesses can continue operating.

To determine eligibility and apply for the mini grant, businesses should complete a brief online application.

For information about the program or application assistance, or if a paper application is needed, reach out to the chamber at mountains@mcdowellchamber.com or call 828-652-4240.

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BRIEFLY

October 23, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Briefly | 231 Words OpenURL Link

THE BORDER: Arrests for illegally crossing the border from Mexico fell 7% in September to 53,858, down from 58,009 in August and the lowest tally since August 2020, when arrests totaled 47,283, U.S. Customs and Border Protection said Tuesday.

JAN. 6: Jeffrey Newcomb, 41, of Polk, Ohio, was arrested Tuesday on charges he brought a massive "Trump" sign to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and joined other rioters in using it as a weapon against police officers during a mob attack, according to an FBI agent's affidavit released Tuesday.

MURDER PLOT: Ruhollah Bazghandi, a brigadier general who served as Iranian Revolutionary Guard counterintelligence department chief, and three other men were charged in a plot to kill Iranian American author Masih Alinejad, who is in exile in New York City, according to a rewritten indictment filed Tuesday.

HELENE: Buncombe County in North Carolina, home to Asheville, overcounted deaths caused by Hurricane Helene by as many as 30, according to a statement Tuesday from its sheriff's office and data from the state. County officials defer to a state tally of 42.

DOCS LEAK: The FBI said Tuesday it is investigating the unauthorized release of classified documents on Israel's preparation for a potential retaliatory attack Oct. 1 on Iran.

STORM: Tropical Storm Oscar disintegrated Tuesday as it headed toward the Bahamas after hitting Cuba as a Category 1 hurricane, killing at least seven people.

- Associated Press

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McDowell football hits the road as next game shifts back to original site at Asheville school

October 23, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: Football | 491 Words OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE — When the Mountain 3A/4A Conference announced plans to return to the football field after a monthlong hiatus imposed by Hurricane Helene, McDowell High School's contest versus Erwin became a de facto home game.

But now, it's back to Plan A.

With Buncombe County schools ready to host games again, Friday's matchup of the Titans (1-5, 0-2 MAC) and Warriors (5-1, 2-0 MAC) will shift back to its original site in Asheville.

"Due to water restoration in Buncombe County and the reopening of school later this week, our last two varsity football games will now be played at the original host sites," McDowell High School's athletic department announced on Monday. "This Friday's game will be at Erwin and the Nov. 1 game with Enka will also be on the road (with a) 7 p.m. start time for both."

The Warriors' 2-0 mark in MAC play has them tied for first place in the conference with A.C. Reynolds (3-3, 2-0 MAC), with both Erwin and the Rockets a half-game ahead of Asheville (3-1, 1-0 MAC), which defeated McDowell 56-14 in Marion one week ago.

Erwin is led by standout sophomore quarterback Caden Ingle, a dual-threat signal caller who has found success through the air and on the ground. His favorite targets are seniors Michael Petty and Hunter Cromer and juniors Lawson Reynolds and Noah Houldham.

In the rushing game, in addition to Ingle, the Warriors are paced by senior Milky Ray and junior Chavion Irby.

Erwin's MAC wins have come over Enka 55-14 at home on Sept. 20 and T.C. Roberson 26-21 on the road across town in Asheville last week. The Warriors defeated Daniel Boone of Gray, Tennessee, 56-0 to start the season, followed that with their only loss at Mountain Heritage 32-27 in Week 2, and strung together two more nonconference wins at Brevard 56-42 and versus West Henderson 27-21.

The Warriors' top defenders are seniors Judah Dayton and Brendan Phelan and juniors Reynolds and Jayden Holder.

The Titans also have a multifaceted quarterback in junior Danny Brown, who so far this season has completed 26 of 68 passes for 398 yards and six touchdowns with four interceptions and also leads the team in rushing with 408 yards and three touchdowns on 63 attempts.

Classmates Hunter Pittman (84-325-6) and Jordan Barnett (38-229-3) also are major contributors to the Titans' ground game. Senior Job Marsh (15 of 26, 286 yards, two touchdowns) has complemented the passing attack, whose leading receivers are senior Chamberland Andersen (14-395-3) and junior Oakley Keaton (8-136-2).

Andersen also is McDowell's leading tackler (31), along with Pittman (29) and junior Joey Collins (27). Andersen also has a takeaway with MHS' lone interception of the season.

JV games added

In addition to the updates to the varsity schedule, the JV Titans have added two contests to their upcoming slate.

McDowell will visit R-S Central in Rutherfordton at 6 p.m. on Thursday and follow that up with a trip to Morganton on Oct. 31 to play Patton in another 6 p.m. kickoff.

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McDowell County won't get 2nd early voting site; board of elections elects to stick with one

October 23, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: MIKE CONLEY nconley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: Elections | 764 Words OpenURL Link

For the second time this election season, the McDowell County Board of Elections held an emergency meeting to consider adding a second early voting site but chose to stick with one location at the board of elections office.

Early voting is taking place at the McDowell County Board of Elections building at 2458 N.C. 226 South in Marion. A second early voting site was originally planned for the Old Fort Depot, but that site was canceled due to the damage caused by Hurricane Helene, according to the board of elections.

On the first day of the early voting period, there were occasionally long lines waiting to get into the board of elections.

On that day, Chet Effler, chairman of the McDowell County Republican Party, made a formal request that a second early voting site be added to accommodate the crowds and traffic. The board of elections held an emergency meeting at 4 p.m. on Oct. 17 and voted unanimously to maintain the single location.

By the end of the day on Thursday, Oct. 17, 1,350 people had voted early at the board of elections office. On Friday, Oct. 18, the total number was 1,376, and on Saturday, Oct. 19, 801 voted, according to the board of elections.

The county elections staff added extra curbside voting on one side of the building. An election worker is directing traffic as it enters the parking lot.

On Monday, the board of elections held a second emergency meeting to discuss a second early voting site. The members, both Democrats and Republicans, met with Elections Director Kim Welborn and Deputy Director Jane Dale Propst in a board room while the chairs of both political parties waited outside and watched the meeting on a television.

Propst said elections officials have not turned anyone away from voting.

McDowell Technical Community College officials offered the use of the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center as a second early voting location. But Kay House, a Democratic board member, said that location has not been used before for voting and the disruption of the elections staff could cause problems.

House said the building will be used as a polling place for Higgins Precinct in the general election on Nov. 5, which may draw smaller crowds.

After a discussion, the board voted unanimously to maintain one voting location. Jimmy Hachadurian, who is a Republican board member, made the motion to maintain the status quo and said, "We can't fix what is not broken."

"While we did have two sites and we wanted to have two sites, we really wished we could have done it," House said.

Propst and Welborn said the board of elections looked at other sites in Old Fort. The Old Fort Depot is now being used by Norfolk Southern Railroad and the A.C. "Bud" Hogan Community Center is now being used by FEMA. The Old Fort library got flooded, and the town's fire department would not work either, according to the board of election.

House said McDowell Transit will bring people to the board of elections office to vote.

"Our issue is access for the voters who have been devastated in Old Fort," Effler said to the board. "It's not this site. It's about those people who have lost everything, getting a sense of normalcy with voting. And that's the reason we feel like that site (the Universal Center) — even if it's run a couple days this week and next week would have been offered, it would have been great."

Effler said the party's goal is for every person who has been affected by the storm to have an opportunity to vote.

"The school system moved an entire school in one week and we believe a voting site could have been established," Effler said in a statement after the meeting. "While there is no hope of that to occur, if you live in Old Fort and need a ride to get supplies, assistance or even to vote, please reach out. We have a team of volunteers to assist you."

Susan Elliott, chair of the McDowell County Democratic Party, said, "Y'all are doing everything you can in light of a national disaster. And this constant chipping away at the electoral process here is demoralizing not only to the board but to (Propst) and (Welborn), to the workers here, to the county and to the state and on up the ladder, and it's not necessary."

The last day of the early voting period is Saturday, Nov. 2. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5.

As of 1:43 p.m. Monday, 807 people had voted early on that day.

At that same time, 4,334 people had voted early in McDowell County, according to the board of elections.

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Cane Creek voting precinct changes post-Helene

October 23, 2024 | Mitchell News-Journal (NC) Author: Brian Hobson Sports@mitchellnews.com| Section: News | 428 Words Page: 8 OpenURL Link

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, voting adds an additional concern to many citizens. Fortunately for those concerned, not many changes had to be made to Mitchell County voting sites. For most areas, the voting locations remained the same. The only glaring change to this year's voting locations is for the severely damaged Cane Creek area, where this year voters will cast their ballots at Gouge Elementary School.

Early voting locations, which opened on Thursday, Oct. 17, at historic courthouse in Bakersville and the Spruce Pine Fire Department continues until Nov. 2. Early voting is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Nov. 2 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. According to Roycene Jones, Director of the Mitchell County Board of Elections, 1, 380 Mitchell residents cast votes during early voting on Thursday and Friday of last week. There are 11, 413 registered voters in Mitchell County. For temporarily displaced voters, on election day it is preferred they vote in their usual precinct.

But those who cannot reach their precinct should vote at whatever voting location is closest to their current residence. If they explain their situation, election workers will provide them with a provisional ballot.

The State Board of Elections voted unanimously to allow more flexibility in voting for the 13 counties most affected by the hurricane, including Mitchell.

"These measures were put in place to ensure the victims of Helene can vote in the upcoming election and provide election officials in the hardest hit areas the tools they need to conduct a secure election under extraordinarily difficult conditions," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

"Just like the people of western North Carolina, election officials are resilient. We are determined to get the job done MITCHELL

Mitchell closeout Development Neighborhood Program The provide homeowners with safe the form The total CDBG-\$750, 000.

A public Monday, 6:30 pm Boardroom Crimson Bakersville, interested attend.

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for our neighbors and friends in western North Carolina."

In addition to the accommodations mentioned before, voters in Mitchell and other affected counties can request an absentee ballot in person up until Nov. 4, which is the day before Election Day.

"As always, the voter or voter's near relative or legal guardian is required to complete an absentee request form with the required personal information for the voter, and that information must be verified by the county board as with any absentee request." Voters or their relatives can then drop off these absentee ballots at a polling place, a county board of elections, or a State Board of Elections office.

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Brian Hobson Sports@mitchellnews.com, 'Cane Creek voting precinct changes post-Helene', *Mitchell News-Journal* (online), 23 Oct 2024 8 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62DE3130EB920



My mountain paradise is in peril after Hurricane Helene

October 23, 2024 | Mitchell News-Journal (NC)

Author: Terry Dickson terryldickson50@gmail.com | Section: Opinions | 1107 Words

Page: 5 OpenURL Link

I have no proof of this, but I'm thinking some Floridians lost two houses this hurricane season, one along the Gulf shores and another in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It wasn't always that way, but I noticed in the 1970s, a huge influx of Floridians into little towns like Celo, Spruce Pine and Black Mountain. I met a couple who owned a candle shop in Celo. He was a butcher in Miami in the cooler months, but they came to the mountains to sell scented candles and gloom-chasers, which were glasses and brandy snifters coated in stained glass. When you lit one of their scented votive candles inside a gloom-chaser, it would brighten things up. I had never heard of sandalwood until I stepped into their shop in 1972.

Their best customers were other people with mountain getaways. The real mountain people lit candles when the power - pronounced paw'r - went out. The folks who had lived their whole lives scratching out an existence in the rocky mountain valleys called these newcomers Florida Yankees.

My late stepfather, Glenn Clark, was a real mountain man. His father, Joe Clark like the famous fiddler, was a mica miner who lived in a holler about as far as you could go up Brushy Creek Road north of Spruce Pine.

We would go visit in the summer and stay a couple of nights with my dad's older brother, Odell, his beautiful wife Annie, and their sons Robert and Wadell. My dad's mother died when he was born at Avery County Hospital in Banner Elk, and he and Odell were handed off to women relatives to raise, in my dad's case, his grandma.

It took a long time to get to Spruce Pine, and our parents would roust us out of bed about 4 a.m. as Mama cooked sausage and eggs to make sandwiches we'd eat somewhere on the side of U.S. 29 an hour or so into the trip.

There was no I-85 then so we'd have to go through Greenville, Chesnee, Marion and Rutherfordton with their red lights. Once we cleared Marion, the road started to climb and we started seeing wondrous things. Water trickled down rock faces and clear creeks tumbled beside the road. There was a little turnout on the left side where Daddy always pulled over and got a drink of water running from a pipe connected to a spring. The ride up N.C. 226 was steep with sharp switchbacks. One old mountaineer said when he went around one bend he noticed he had a burnt out brake light.

We topped out at Gillespie Gap - G'laspie to locals - with its 2, 800-foot elevation usually with Mama car sick. We sometimes took the alternate N.C. 226A which had more twists. We had to pull over halfway to the top to let Mama recover. Some of the businesses we passed are gone, some for economic reasons, some to Helene.

In Spruce Pine we crossed a metal bridge over the Toe River and turned right onto the road to Brushy Creek. There was a stone service station by the road built into the rock behind it.

That store was on Oak Avenue, which locals call Upper Street. Another street, Locust Avenue, or Lower Street, went down by the Toe where stores faced the river and an old train depot.

In the area around Brushy Creek, we passed hills covered with Christmas trees like those I saw on Perry Como's and Andy Williams' Christmas shows. Their needles were so dark they had a blue tint.

Odell and Annie had a small farm they worked in addition to his job, whatever that was. They got their water from a pipe that linked their kitchen sink to a spring on the side of the mountain that reared up behind their white farm house. They also had a hand pump in the yard that gushed cold water when you pulled the handle a few times.

Annie cooked on a wood stove so breakfast was great in that warm kitchen. Every night we spent there felt like winter to me. Before Saturday dinner, Annie told Wadell to get a chicken. He caught one and wrung its neck, although I'd seen her do her own wringing. Slow chickens didn't last.

Some nights, Odell and his neighbors would meet someplace and let their hounds loose to run foxes. They'd sit in an open place overlooking the valley, smoke cigarettes and tell stories listening to their dogs yodel. When it got late, the men would blow their cow horns and the dogs would come to the sound. I never heard of a dog catching a fox.

It was a wonderful place for a flat country boy who liked rocks. Spruce Pine is mining country, mica, quartz, feldspar and garnet, and you could find pink or green keeper rocks and garnets in the gravel on the road in front of my uncle and aunt's house. I always went home with a sack of rocks.

We also went home with a sack full of taters once. We drove up to Sugar Mountain where my dad's uncle Mose grew Irish potatoes and cabbage on the side of the mountain.

Some would say Sugar Mountain is ruirnt, with high rise condos, ski runs and herds of college kids in winter skiing on man-made snow and speaking in a dialect of self absorption. If you've never heard it, listen to some of the young reporters on NPR.

A lot of that is just a memory as are some things that existed just a month ago. Hurricane Helene came through with torrential rains that pushed the Toe well out of its banks into stores and swept houses away. The contents of some trendy coffee houses and shops are now piled on the street and I saw a pickup truck in the river.

There will be a shortage of pecans for pies this fall because of what Helene did in Georgia, and you wonder how many uprooted Christmas trees are turning brown in the mountains.

I wonder more how many old houses survived, whether Brushy Creek Road washed out and when the Blue Ridge Parkway will fully reopen.

As I write this, able-bodied men from my church are working closer to home helping clean up Homerville which appeared to have been hit by at least one tornado. We drove through there Saturday, and it seemed every pine from Waycross to Valdosta was down or leaning to the north.

Those mountains have always been paradise to me. I hope its not lost, especially for the people who grew up in those high places. Terry Dickson is a columnist for the Brunswick News, in Burnswick, Georgia, where this column was first printed.

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New FEMA program helps with bridge replacement - Direct lease program available for property owners

October 23, 2024 | Mitchell News-Journal (NC) Author: Rachel Hoskins rhoskins@thefranklinpress.com| Section: News| 745 Words Page: 10 OpenURL Link

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has rolled out two new programs that may assist with road and bridge repair as well as help multifamily property owners provide housing for displaced residents.

The new FEMA program may provide funds to repair or replace privately-owned access roads and bridges that were damaged by the hurricane, according to La-Tanga Hopes, FEMA media relations specialist. "To qualify, you must be the owner and the home must serve as your primary residence."

According to Hopes, residents do not need to fill out a new application to seek road or bridge repair assistance. "Applicants should simply make note or share details supporting these circumstances when completing their application," said Hopes. "It is OK to update or amend information on an application if need be."

A FEMA inspection is needed to determine if repairs are necessary for a vehicle to access the property. In addition, property owners must meet the following conditions: · A FEMA inspection determines repairs are necessary to provide drivable access to the primary residence.

- The applicant is responsible, or shares responsibility with other homeowners, for maintaining the privately-owned access route to their primary residence.
- The privately-owned access route is the only access to the applicant's primary residence, and repair or replacement is necessary for the safety of occupants, allowing access for emergency vehicles or equipment.

When multiple households share a privatelyowned access route, assistance is shared among applicants, requiring additional coordination and documentation between FEMA and each applicant.

SBA loans The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), FEMA's federal partner in disaster recovery, may also be able to help. Homeowners who share private access roads and bridges with other homeowners may be eligible for SBA disaster loans. Agricultural property is not eligible, but a private access road to the farmer's residence, the residence itself and personal contents may be eligible under disaster home loan criteria.

For more information, call the SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services, or email DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov.

Temporary housing needed FEMA is currently seeking interested, qualified owners or property management companies to help meet the temporary housing needs for disaster survivors by leasing their properties directly to FEMA, according to Hopes.

Under the Direct Temporary Housing Assistance, the direct lease allows FEMA to lease existing, ready-to-occupy residential properties for survivors whose temporary housing needs cannot be met with other forms of assistance. FEMA will pay the property management company/vendor the cost of rent, while the survivor is responsible for utility costs and other expenses not covered in the lease.

Potential property management companies are mainly being sought in western North Carolina within a 30 to 60-minute drive of the affected areas or a distance that does not place an undue hardship on the survivor. However,

FEMA encourages all interested property management companies to consider participating.

Conditions properties must meet: · All property management companies must register to do business with FEMA through the System for Award Management (SAM) at SAM. gov.

- · Companies must lease the vacant units exclusively to FEMA for use as temporary housing for eligible survivors for a term expiring no earlier than 18 months, with the possibility of contract extension.
- · Properties must be located within an area included in a major disaster declaration or within a reasonable commuting distance.
- · Each property must comply with Housing Quality Standards established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and all utilities, appliances and other furnishings must be functional.
- · Each individual unit must provide complete living facilities, including provisions for cooking, eating and sanitation within the unit.
- · The properties must be located within reasonable access to community and wrap-around services, such as accessible public transportation, schools, fire and emergency services and grocery stores.
- · The property owner must be current with all payments related to the unit, if applicable.

"This new program provides a win/win situation where multi-family property owners can benefit from helping FEMA provide displaced families with a place to stay while the monthly rent will be paid by FEMA for them," said Hopes.

Property owners or management companies interested in the direct lease program must email inquiries to FEMA by 5 p.m., Nov. 6, via email to fema-direct lease dr4827nc@fema.dhs.gov. Subject line should read: RFI# 70FBR425-DLDR4827NC. More information and requirements about this opportunity can be found at SAM.gov

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Help is only helpful when it meets a need - Our Opinion

October 23, 2024 | Mitchell News-Journal (NC)

Section: News 499 Words

Page: 5 OpenURL Link

As we approach a full month of recovery from Hurricane Helene, the Mitchell News-Journal wants to highlight the importance of coordination and planning in expediting that recovery. An extraordinary amount of donated money, goods and time has helped Mitchell County get much closer to restoring a normal way of life for residents and businesses. But not every donation has been as helpful as the givers intended.

Mountains of used clothes, for instance, have mostly gotten in the way as few residents have the resources necessary to launder or store them. While everyone who sends clothes has good intentions in mind, sending summer wear and stilettos aren't good in the current environment. Unfortunately many folks have lost everything they own. As such, they don't have storage areas to store summer clothes and shoes until next season. Today, they need good, clean, sturdy shoes, coats, jackets and winter wear.

Donations need to be focused on what is genuinely helpful to those most affected, and volunteer efforts need to be directed to where there is the most need as well. That's why the county now has a Volunteer Reception Center, and why it's so important that volunteers make an effort to check in there. The center, located at the Senior Citizens Center in Ledger, is open Monday -Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p, m. You can call 828-660-0818 or email VolunteerMitchell@gmail.com At the VRC, flood victims can explain their exact needs, and volunteers with those particular skills and resources can be assigned to help them. This is a much more efficient way to make sure everyone gets the help they need than wandering around the county with chain saws and bottled water, trying to clean up whatever is visible from the highway.

Items that are needed include chainsaws, large garbage cans, work gloves, battery operated lights and lanterns, batteries, cleaning supplies, garbage bags, sturdy brooms and mops, and buckets. But remember, before loading up your truck and heading to Mitchell County, call the VRC. They will let you know when and where donations are needed and being accepted.

And finally, be aware that many people still do not have access to electricity, social media or the internet. Posting online that you have a pop-up tent to serve meals or that you're delivering supplies to a specific area may not get the message out to those in need. If you're coming to town to cook a meal, think about the location you plan to be in and be prepared to do some old-fashioned door-to-door visits to let people know you have a hot meal or supplies available. Again the VRC will help direct you to areas that have the greatest needs.

No system is perfect, and sometimes volunteers may leave the VRC with inaccurate ideas of who they're helping and how. But it helps to have some idea of what the greatest needs are and who is genuinely qualified to help, and we hope that opening the center will allow our county to move forward more effectively.

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Limit solids in the Spruce Pine sewer, please

October 23, 2024 | Mitchell News-Journal (NC)

Author: Mariel Williams editor@mitchellnews.com Section: News 430 Words

Page: 1 OpenURL Link

The Spruce Pine Town Council devoted most of its meeting last week to discussions of storm damage, in particular to the town's sewage system. A primary concern is that, because flooding from Hurricane Helene destroyed the town's wastewater treatment plant, sewage is flowing into the North Toe River. Because of this, the town administration has asked wastewater customers to exercise restraint in what they flush and pour down the drain. There are portable toilets at various locations around town that are more suitable for solid waste until emergency repairs can be complete.

The town has also issued a boil water notice to keep water customers from drinking contaminated water.

Chris Rosenboom, Charlotte regional director of utilities for the engineering firm WithersRavenel, said that the priority right now is to focus on emergency repairs that meet the criteria for what the Federal Emergency Management Agency calls "exigent circumstances," because doing this maximizes the potential for the town to get reimbursed for expenses later.

"That basically means emergency work and work that's required for public health," Rosenbloom said. "We're trying to get wastewater, raw wastewater, out of the river and make sure people can flush again."

It's important, Rosenbloom said, not to mix essential repairs with making improvements on the system previously in place, because that could make it difficult to get FEMA to pay for the work. "It involves fixing broken lines, identifying temporary treatment measures to quickly remove the raw sewage from the river," Rosenbloom said.

Rosenbloom said his firm has expertise in dealing with FEMA paperwork and regulations that it can share with Finance Manager Crystal Young and the rest of the town hall staff.

WithersRavenel is searching the sewer system for breaks using closed circuit television and other methods. The town is also leasing temporary wastewater treatment units to make sure the sewer system can function safely and normally without polluting streams and rivers before looking at the full scope of repair and rebuilding work that is needed.

"The idea is to get everyone operational - I hate the word normal, but get things to where they are operating normally," WithersRavenel engineer Ken Orie said in response to a question from Mayor Philip Hise.

After installing temporary processing units, the next step is temporary repairs on the existing wastewater treatment facilities.

"We will be able to get that plant functioning, with some 'Band-Aids,' temporary piping, etc., but we will be able to get that plant operational," Orie said.

Rosenbloom said his team has identified some parts of the existing plant that can be restored, at least temporarily, and other parts that will need to be quickly replaced.

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Volunteer Resource Center opens for Mitchell County

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Page: 1 OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene left Mitchell County ravaged, but plenty of volunteers from across the nation have offered their assistance to help rebuild what was lost. One core problem, though, is how to coordinate the volunteers and get them to the places they can help most. This is where the Volunteer Resource Center fills the gap.

Stephanie Pitman, director of the Volunteer Resource Center, has the daunting task of routing all the volunteers to the places they can help most. Stephanie had been helping at the Mitchell Middle School distribution center when a "couple of Texas ladies" asked if she would be willing to take on the mantle of VRC Director.

Pitman says that a lot of the work involves "do[ing] intakes, and matching skills and training with people in need." The VRC also sends volunteers to distribution and pod (warehouse) sites, because as Stephanie says, "They need hands to do that".

The VRC has staff assisting Pitman, including Brodie Miller, known for his commentary on Mitchell Mountaineer sports, who is the coordinator for the dis- Mountaineer sports, who is the coordinator for the distribution sites. Also assisting are specialists like Whitney Buchanan whose outreach section coordinates with people in hard-to-reach areas via ATV, and Kelly Jones, who has the difficult task of coordinating meals.

Over the past two weeks alone, 264 individuals and groups have offered their assistance and have been assessed for what areas they could help best. One heartwarming story Pitman shared was when an elderly woman requested help moving things out of her flooded basement. The VRC paired her up with a young lady who drove an hour and a half to help, only to find herself unable to find the address she was assigned to. The elderly woman came down to the VRC, worried about her helper, and finally met her and worked together to get her basement completed.

"They talked the whole time, exchanged phone numbers and became friends!" Pitman said. Pitman actively encourages people to get what they need and volunteer if they can.

"People need to not be afraid to get what they need," she said. "Nobody should feel bad about any of that. It'll help empty [the distribution centers] and free up space." As for volunteering, Pitman had this encouragement for people who are able: "Just volunteer if you have time. All of these sites need volunteers, it's not a sprint, it's a long haul."

The current VRC distribution sites are below. \cdot Spruce Pine -Deyton Elementary School \cdot Ledger -Bear Creek Baptist Church \cdot Bakersville -Bowman Middle School \cdot Buladean -Buladean Community Center These sites are open Monday-Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for both volunteers and those requesting assistance. If you can't make it in, call 828-660-0818 or email VolunteerMitchell@gmail.com.

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Cooper, Criswell survey damage in Bakersville

October 23, 2024 | Mitchell News-Journal (NC)

Author: Mariel Williams editor@mitchellnews.com Section: News 545 Words

Page: 1 OpenURL Link

Deanne Criswell, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, accompanied Gov. Roy Cooper on a visit to Bakersville to survey flood damage last week. Cooper said he wants to help Bakersville and other mountain towns "get up and running as quickly as possible."

Mayor Charles E. Vines gave the visitors a tour of some of the flood damage near the Bakersville Town Office. "As I've been traveling with the governor to all these communities impacted so hard by Hurricane Helene, we see that the recovery is going to be very complicated," Criswell said.

In response to a question about a timeline for repairing state highways, Cooper was not specific. "We started out more than 1, 200 roads that were closed," Cooper said. "As of today, we're down to 444, so we're making progress. But we know that there's going to be some of these roads that are going to require major repair."

Interstate 40 going into Tennessee, Cooper said, will need significant repairs.

"Another challenge is bridges," Cooper said. "There are more than 100 state-supported bridges that are out that we know we're going to have to rebuild, but there are for more private-built bridges that lead to one or three or four homes in a community, that we need to try to secure funding for."

Both Criswell and Cooper said they were impressed with how members of flood-damaged communities have supported each other. "There's just so much love - there's so much of the community coming together to help each other," Criswell said. "We now have an opportunity to work together to make sure as we rebuild we can do it in a way where we can reduce the impact of future storms, because as the severe weather continues to change and bring more devastation across the United States we want to make sure that we're improving on the infrastructure." Cooper expressed concern that being closed for an extended period could be harmful to businesses that normally depend on tourism to survive.

"We want people to stay in Western North Carolina, we want small businesses to continue, to be able to operate and thrive so we want to be able to help them as much as they can."

Cooper also spoke about the importance of road and systems repairs.

"Infrastructure challenges are our greatest challenges - making sure that the power grid is back, water and wastewater systems can work, getting roads and bridges and railways back and operational," he said. "That's going to be more of a long-term project."

Cooper noted that U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg would be joining him to tour flood-damaged areas and look at transportation damage.

"We want to secure the billions of dollars that we're going to need to heal Western North Carolina," Cooper said.
"We know that the challenges are great here - this is one of the hardest hit counties, but I continue to be amazed by the resilience and courage and determination of the people." Vines said he was grateful for the governor's interest in Bakersville's future. "We all agree that this is a difficult time for us, however we will build back again," Vines said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mariel Williams editor@mitchellnews.com, 'Cooper, Criswell survey damage in Bakersville', *Mitchell News-Journal* (online), 23 Oct 2024 1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62DE302F172D0



Six seek seats on county commission

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Section: News 4894 Words

Page: 1 OpenURL Link

Six candidates will appear on this year's ballot as options for the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners: Lee Ellis, Jan Hamilton, Bill Hoag, Harley Masters, Ron McKinney and Dale Blevins.

Additional information on where and how to vote can be found in a separate story in these pages. The Mitchell News- Journal asked each of the commissioner candidates to answer the listed questions outlining their views for the future of Mitchell County. However, voters should note that these questionnaires were distributed and answered well before the recent flooding and county-wide damage from Hurricane Helene.

Therefore, candidate answers do not address issues related to the current state of disaster.

Blevins, Ellis and Masters all had their questionnaire answers published in these pages once before, when they ran in the Republican Party primary in March. Because these candidates have already had some press exposure, MNJ is positioning the candidates who have not already been featured first - Democrats Hamilton and McKinney, and unaffiliated candidate Hoag.

Jan Hamilton Community you live in: Spruce Pine How long have you lived in Mitchell County? Born and raised in Mitchell County; daughter of Jim and Jolene Thomas Professional background: I have spent my career in social work, employed first with the elderly in nursing home care and later with the Department of Social Services as a foster care case worker and supervisor of Children's Services. My last position was as a fraud worker, in which capacity I was able to recover benefits in food stamps and Medicaid programs for the county.

Educational background: High school diploma - Bowman High School; bachelor of social work - Mars Hill College Why are you running for a seat on the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners? I feel that county government should consist of representatives from both parties which would add a different perspective to the decisions made. If I am elected, I plan to be an impartial commissioner, listen to all constituents, and stand up for people who might not have a voice.

What would be your top two priorities as county commissioner?

1) My priority would be finding a way to keep our foster-care children within our county. 2) I want to ensure that Blue Ridge Regional Hospital remains open, to provide quality care to our county.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Mitchell County and what role do you see the county playing in meeting these challenges? 1) Continuing to develop job opportunities in and around the county. 2) Making sure that our schools are providing a quality education. This entails assuring that teachers have competitive wages and benefits and that our children are offered a curriculum that is competitive with other counties in the state. Together with the Board of Education, we need focus groups to study and discuss progress and innovation for Mitchell County. Local governments must work together to build strong communities. In what areas can Mitchell County collaborate with the Town of Bakersville and the Town of Spruce Pine to enhance the county?

I feel that all communities should come together (a representative from each) to develop a plan that will benefit each community. This would mean commissioners meeting with each community to assess their needs and resources. We need to have ongoing communication with all. Funding and grants should be applied for by commissioners and designated community persons.

What does the term Open Government mean to you?

Open government, to me, is the towns of Spruce Pine and Bakersville working together for the growth of the entire county. All constituents should feel comfortable contacting the commissioners to ask questions or concerns. An open door policy with the Commissioners could serve that purpose.

Bill Hoag How long have you lived in Mitchell County?

We have owned our home since 2002 and have lived in Mitchell County full-time for seven years.

My wife's family has had a home in the Mitchell County area since 1982.

Professional background: I am a retired professional firefighter with the Sarasota County Fire Department with 32 years of experience. I worked in many positions in the fire department. My final position was assistant chief of logistics. As the logistics chief, I acquired the skill sets to make me an excellent county commissioner. I worked extensively with our budget, which was more than \$80 million. I made all of our purchases and paid the fire department bills. I was also the fire department's project manager for constructing four fire stations.

I volunteer with the Spruce Pine Fire Department where I am the assistant chief. I also lead hikes at Grandfather Mountain for the Jason Project, which gives students a chance to be outdoors. The project includes four hikes, allowing the students to find peace and satisfaction.

Educational Background: I have an associate's degree in emergency management. I have many fire and paramedic certificates.

Why are you running for a seat on the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners?

I have professional experience that I can use to become a good commissioner and hit the ground running. I love our community and believe we have a lot of ongoing projects that will enhance our community. As commissioners, we must create an environment encouraging businesses to come to Mitchell County.

I would work hard to establish a master plan for Mitchell County. The plan would include a 10-year working plan and a 20-year long-term plan. We must include a firm commitment to education as this is the key to having a successful student graduate from Mitchell County.

I am a strong supporter of emergency services. I would like to start the conversation about the future of Mitchell County's fire services.

What would be your top two priorities as county commissioner?

We need to be very transparent about property tax reevaluation. The commission should hold many informational meetings throughout the county to explain the process well before it begins. Our tax evaluation has many moving pieces. As I gathered signatures for this election, I listened to numerous citizens talk about their properties' recent reevaluation. They had concerns that could have been answered through informational meetings. The County Commissioners should distribute the information and not let the grapevine control it.

My second priority is emergency services, including emergency medical services. We need to monitor Mitchell Medics' contract and set benchmarks that the commission can monitor to ensure its effectiveness. I fully support the sheriff's office and our 911 dispatch service.

My main focus is our local volunteer fire departments. These fire departments are struggling and still determining what the future will bring. Our volunteer fire departments save us millions of dollars, but as our communities have changed, they have fewer and fewer volunteers. We need to start the conversation on plans to provide fire service to the citizens of Mitchell County. The need for volunteers is a national issue that we can solve locally. We need to

have a plan now to make sound fiscal decisions in the future.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Mitchell County and what role do you see the county playing in meeting these challenges? The top two challenges facing Mitchell County are median-income housing and the hospital's future.

The best way to control property taxes is to reduce the reliance on personal property taxes. At the same time, businesses are increasing their infrastructure. This will require more workers and, therefore, more affordable housing. As stated previously, I spoke to numerous contractors when I was getting signatures for this election. They all had the same concern: Mitchell County needs a full-time level three building inspector (covering all types of construction). I would also support an assessment of the county's properties and land to find ways to address the problem. After the assessment, we would perform a housing analysis and find the properties that could be developed. We also have a couple of schools that will return to the county and could be included in the assessment. These buildings are not on the tax roll and will only cost the county money due to maintenance. As a commissioner, I would encourage a meeting with the county's large employers to discuss our findings and seek solutions to our housing issue from private businesses or grants.

The Blue Ridge Regional Hospital is a crucial asset to our community. Having a hospital in our community sets Mitchell County apart from our surrounding counties. The county should fight hard to determine the hospital's and our community's future.

Local governments must work together to build strong communities. In what areas can Mitchell County collaborate with the Town of Bakersville and the Town of Spruce Pine to enhance the county?

I see several areas where the county and the two cities could collaborate more. The first area is purchasing. If the three entities came together, they could have a purchasing agreement. They could buy vehicles, general equipment, and supplies as one organization. This would give them the power to get better pricing and terms on more expensive items.

The three entities should have combined meetings every quarter. This is the best way to allow communication to flow, which solves many issues.

We should also work hard to include the entire county. I would work hard to understand the needs and solutions to help every citizen in the county or the cities.

What does the term Open Government mean to you?

Decisions should not be made where they might be concealed from the public. Our local government's job is to foster an environment where citizens thrive and have confidence in their commissioners.

This is accomplished by performing duties in person rather than by email or text. Commissioners should not discuss issues outside of meetings. Citizens deserve the right to hear each commissioner's rationale for a decision. This makes everyone comfortable and helps them understand the decision, even if they disagree. The rumor mill is full force when decisions are made behind closed doors. Letting the citizens see the process so they understand and have the truth is much better. I strongly support an open government.

Ron McKinney Community you live in: Bakersville How long have you lived in Mitchell County?

I was born in Bakersville and have lived in Mitchell County until now, except for service in the U.S. Air Force and my college years.

Professional background: I have been an educator for 30 years; primarily as a guidance counselor in the Mitchell County School System and as a director of financial aid and dean of student affairs at Mayland Community College.

I have also been a Christmas tree farmer for over 40 years.

Educational background: Bowman High School; master's degrees in counseling and school administration from Appalachian State University; and doctoral work at NC State and UNC Chapel Hill Why are you running for a seat on the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners?

The experiences and knowledge that I have accumulated over the years spent in education and the farming business, have given me a unique understanding of the people of Mitchell County and the issues that will affect them in the challenging years ahead. Also, my participation in civic projects such as the Mitchell Community Health Partnership, Bakersville Creekwalk, and various festivals, has shown me that community involvement is a necessity. My belief in Christian values will always be an important guide as I serve as a commissioner.

Because I am not interested in petty politics, I am free to serve the people What would be your top two priorities as county commissioners?

My first priority would be to develop the economic health of the county to a level that will allow our young people to stay in the county, or return to the county, and also attract new permanent residents. The population in 2010 was 15, 579. It actually dropped to 14, 906 in 2020 and was 15, 094 in 2022. Yancey County has added over 1, 000 people since 2010. And yet, we continue with the same economic development activities that we have had for the past 50 years. The County Commission needs to establish and support new economic development plans.

Another important priority for me is access to health care. From about 1998 to 2017, Mitchell County, with local leadership and philanthropy, moved forward to establish Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, with a supporting cast of physicians and specialists. Now, after the purchase of Mission and Blue Ridge Hospital by the Hospital Corporation of America, access to health care has deteriorated to an emergency level. The hospital has a skeleton staff, able to offer only basic services. Obstetric services, for example, are non-existent. County Commissioners have a responsibility to seek out a solution to this crisis. Nothing is more important than the health of the people.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Mitchell County and what role do you see the county playing in meeting these challenges? I identified two challenges, economic development and access to health care, in the previous question.

Economic Development in Mitchell County is primarily dependent on bringing more people into the county. If you consider the recreation interests of young families, the county has the natural resources that will bring them into the county shortterm, but the commissioners must help develop those resources.

Fly fishing needs to be expanded by working with landowners to reduce the amount of posted land. We need to develop hiking trails into the Yellow Mountain Natural Area. The state has \$55 million set aside for this purpose. Portages on the 74 miles of the Toe River that run through Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties will open up the river.

Attracting new residents is tied to quality of life. Access to health care is a priority, especially for elderly, retired people. The current medical resources are a serious liability. The County Commission should work through our state representatives to pressure state agencies to correct this situation.

The County should also invest more money in the school system. Instruction areas, such as music education, should be funded. To name the auditorium at Mitchell High School after Kathy Miller and then do away with the Chorus program, makes no sense.

Local governments must work together to build strong communities. In what areas can Mitchell County collaborate with the Town of Bakersville and the Town of Spruce Pine to enhance the county?

Success depends on genuine collaboration. The first step is to create a joint task force with representatives from each government, major business, and community leaders. This task force should develop a Strategic Plan; the plan

should include clear goals, timelines and success standards for issues addressed, such as economic development, recreation or housing.

This joint task force should emphasize transparency by regularly sharing information, progress reports and challenges.

Pooling resources, expertise and grant opportunities must be a priority.

The task force should celebrate its achievements and try to learn from setbacks.

By working together, the county and its towns can transform the quality of life for its people. This collaboration will leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

What does the term Open Government mean to you?

Open Government includes several procedures and activities designed to make government more transparent, accountable, and accessible to the public. It is based on the core principles of: Transparency: open access to government information and processes, including records, data, and decision-making procedures.

Participation: Bringing citizens into the decision-making process through public hearings, input into budgeting and citizen advisory boards.

Accountability; Ensuring that government officials are answerable for their actions and held responsible for fulfilling their obligations Overall, open government aims to strengthen trust between citizens and their government, increase public participation in decision-making and create more democratic and responsive governance.

Dale Blevins Community you live in: Spruce PineHow long have you lived in Mitchell County? All my life (65 years) Professional background: Retired Educator and retired director of Parks and Recreation (town of Spruce Pine).

Educational background: Bachelor of arts in K-6 Instruction; master of arts in K-6 Instruction; educational specialist (Ed.S.) in K-12 Curriculum Supervision with an Academically Intellectually Gifted Concentration Why are you running for a seat on the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners?

I am a candidate because I love our community and I want to support the people of Mitchell County. This includes everyone - our children, young adults, men and women, and the senior-citizen population of our county. It is my goal to support each of these age groups to the best of my ability, so that our county thrives and continues to achieve success long after myself and others are gone.

Overall, my values as a potential candidate are for the people of Mitchell County. I want to listen to people because each person's problem or issue is important to them and their problem/issue should be important to the people holding the seat as well.

What would be your top two priorities as county commissioner? The first priority is knowing what to expect when property tax re-evaluation time rolls around. County leaders need to keep citizens informed on updates and changes. In order to help people understand their property evaluation, leaders should consider these ideas to help ease the burden of stress many citizens have during the re-evaluation period: Look at your tax rate and bill and then look at comparable homes in your neighborhood, walk through your property with the assessor to address all points affecting its assessed value, and remember, property taxes are calculated by multiplying your county's effective tax rate by the most recent assessment of your property's value.

The second priority is educating people on how important education is to our county and how local funding goes to work in our local schools. For example, it is the state of North Carolina's responsibility to fund instructional expenses while Mitchell County government is responsible for the cost of capital expenses - building upkeep, local paid employees, local educational opportunities, iPad incentive programs (which covers all K-12 students), and fuel

costs for maintenance vehicles and for buses. It is also very important that locallyfunded employees are kept up to the yearly cost of living increase each year.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Mitchell County and what role do you see the county playing in meeting these challenges? A strong infrastructure is necessary for rural development. Many small rural counties lack economic security, as a result of decades of damaging economic policy and industry restructuring. Traditional economic sectors, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and resource extraction, which historically supported rural areas, have become increasingly automated or have disappeared altogether. The new economy built around innovation, ideas, technology, and financial markets has overlooked rural areas, and concentrated jobs, wealth and capital in larger cities. For many years solutions organized around deregulation, tax cuts, and facilitating capital accumulation have worn away the foundations in which our economics stand. Underinvestment in infrastructure, inadequate internet access funding, and a declining tax base within our county contributes to a downward economic spiral.

As Mitchell County looks at creating a stronger infrastructure, new employment opportunities are also a challenge. Our workforce consists of highly skilled citizens, but these individuals have less access to ongoing educational training due to rising tuition costs and the availability of certain educational opportunities. As a result, our workforce lacks adaptation to the new economy that work forces require today. Securing support and direct assistance for this training should be a priority within our county that could be addressed through partnership efforts with our local community college.

Local governments must work together to build strong communities. In what areas can Mitchell County collaborate with the Town of Bakersville and the Town of Spruce Pine to enhance the county?

I want to bring the communities of Baskerville and Spruce Pine together through programs, grants, and other partnerships.

First, I will focus on supporting established programs that currently benefit both Bakersville and Spruce Pine. These programs include the Mitchell Senior Center, the AMY (Avery, Mitchell, Yancey) Library system, educational programs for our children, Mitchell County Transportation, and many other great programs. However, I will also seek to find grants that would continue to assist and support both areas. I would like to seek out grants that would help revitalize sewer, gas and water systems throughout the county. Overall, working to foster unity between Bakersville and Spruce Pine is one of my top priorities. I will always search for opportunities that could benefit each community equally.

What does the term Open Government mean to you?

Open government refers to a government that is transparent with its citizens. For instance, in an open government, the budget could be easily understood and accessible to citizens because it is a citizen's right to understand where their tax money is being used.

Additionally, each agency that receives tax money would give an annual report to the citizens. Commissioners in an open government would not discuss topics with other commissioners outside meeting times. Overall, an open government holds those in government positions accountable because citizens are constantly informed and made aware of government happenings. Having an open government within our county is vital, so that our people feel as if they understand the decisions being made within our great county. Harley Masters My husband and I live outside Bakersville on our farm with two dogs, Parker and Bailey.

How long have you lived in Mitchell County?

I was born here in 1991, but I moved to Tennessee when I was 17 and moved back to Mitchell County in 2016.

Professional background: I started working when I was 16 years old, waiting tables at JJ's Seafood. I learned customer service was important, a lesson I've never forgotten. It's part of all aspects of my life. I've owned a small

business since 2018, a successful cafe in Bakersville, and I've served on a variety of boards locally, regionally, and on a state level, representing and serving all of Mitchell County. Recently I was one of 24 elected officials across the state of North Carolina selected for the 2024 Advanced Leadership Corp program at the UNC School of Government. I graduated in early February.

Educational background: Cocke County High School graduate with an associate's degree in aviation; graduate of UNC School of Government leadership programs.

Why are you running for a seat on the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners?

When I was sworn into office as a commissioner in 2020, we compiled a list of goals, short and long term. Among them was a new recreation center for everyone, young and old, a new sheriff's office, and better county representation on local, regional and state boards. We've worked diligently towards those goals, accomplishing most of them in the past three years. I am running for reelection to continue working towards the long-term betterment of Mitchell County. I want to take on our next big project, preserving the old Bowman Middle School building, transforming it into a facility that benefits all our citizens.

What would be your top two priorities as county commissioner? My first priority as a county commissioner will be to continue engaging all our communities, listening to them about their needs, including those of our county departments who serve the public daily. Second, I will make sure we have county policies that follow both the spirit and letter of the law, providing transparency to allow citizen oversight. Citizens have a right to know how county government works for them.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Mitchell County and what role do you see the county playing in meeting these challenges? The greatest challenge facing Mitchell County is financial sustainability, long-term and short-term. Short-term financial decisions have long lasting impacts on the county budget. More often than not these impacts are not clear to citizens until a few years down the road. State or federal law requires counties provide a range of services to all their citizens. Mandated services include those provided by our register of deeds, election administration, fire protection, emergency services like law enforcement and emergency medical services, fair and equitable building code enforcement, public school funding, tax assessments, courts, public health and many more. Our challenge as a county is to provide quality needed services in a sustainable way using good financial planning.

Local governments must work together to build strong communities. In what areas can Mitchell County collaborate with the Town of Bakersville and the Town of Spruce Pine to enhance the county?

Communication is key. The best thing I have found to be effective in working together with the county and the municipalities is having an open dialog. But that conversation has to go beyond municipalities into the further out communities like Buladean, Tipton Hill, Glen Ayre, Little Switzerland, and outside the city limits of Spruce Pine. Establishing those relationships and making sure other elected officials, citizens, and organizations feel comfortable enough to bring ideas, problems, and accomplishments to me and all our commissioners to discuss is the essence of effective collaboration What does the term Open Government mean to you? No response.

Lee Ellis Community you live in: Grassy Creek How long have you lived in Mitchell County? Lifelong resident.

Professional background: I was blessed to be brought into the health insurance business by my dad. I have worked with good friends - and my wife - over the last 29 years to grow a business that serves the needs of people in our community and our region. Understanding how complex health insurance is, and helping business owners, families and others to make good decisions on how to insure themselves has been very rewarding. This is truly a "community service" job that I am proud to have.

Educational background: Mitchell County Schools; Mayland Community College Why are you running for a seat on the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners?

Many friends and local businesses encouraged me to step up to serve our county, and after many conversations and a lot of prayer, I felt led to give back. Growing up in the Minpro area, my childhood could not have been better. As I got older, local people looked after me, gave me direction, offered help, and have been there for me. Serving my community has always been important - whether in my Church or locally for several nonprofits, including the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce and hospice. I want to work hard for the citizens of our great county!

What would be your top two priorities as county commissioner? Budget: The Mitchell County budget has increased significantly over the last four years, and that is not sustainable. I will make every effort to at least maintain the overall budget as long as possible if elected. Our children deserve the same opportunities we have enjoyed.

Supporting Education: We now compete for local students prior to kindergarten through the college level with Mayland. We have to support our education system at every level with all available resources. We are all aware of how much more everything costs. Schools are no different than any other Mitchell County-funded entity, with one exception: They are teaching and taking care of our children. They have to be accountable too, but our children spend six to seven hours a day, five days a week for the better part of nine months with teachers, administrators, food-prep staff, bus drivers, maintenance staff and so on. We need the best of the best in each of these roles based on the time and influence they spend and have on our children. Some industries in Mitchell County face worker shortages; our education system could become one of them.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Mitchell County and what role do you see the county playing in meeting these challenges? Building Inspections: Per the Economic Development Commission, there are potentially over \$1 billion in renovations, expansions and new building planned here over the next two to three years. Yet the county does not employ a full-time Level III building inspector. Currently all Level III inspections are provided by outside contractors with their own full-time jobs. The type of growth opportunity we have in the very near future comes once in our lifetimes. If we work with our local employers in all industries to pursue the previously mentioned growth, the impact to our tax base would be exponential for years to come.

Drug Abuse: While I don't have an answer to this issue, I don't hesitate to say this is our biggest problem. Regardless of age, or anything else, drug abuse is ripping families apart and stealing the life expectancy of its victims. Drug abuse does not discriminate. It doesn't see wealth or poverty. It can impact from any walk of life. If I have learned anything since I filed for the election, it is we have a plethora of challenges ahead. We have an obligation to work on drug abuse on many levels.

Local governments must work together to build strong communities. In what areas can Mitchell County collaborate with the Town of Bakersville and the Town of Spruce Pine to enhance the county?

With the limited finances available to Spruce Pine, Bakersville and Mitchell County, there may be areas where consolidating services should be studied. If applicable, this might help with associated costs like salaries and benefits, vehicle costs, maintenance and utilities.

As more services are needed, this could help all three entities as well as the service provider as well. Both Towns have great leadership as well as great people, so I am confident that both would work in partnership toward any project that makes our County better.

What does the term Open Government mean to you?

Open Government means that public officials have an obligation to discuss and decide the county's business in public view. No decisions made behind closed doors or over text. Accountability to the public means letting citizens know the process, see the information that is considered and to make decisions in public meetings. Period.

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Halloween Extravaganza and Hurricane Helene Benefit Concert featuring The Rewind is Oct. 26

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WEST JEFFERSON — A Halloween extravaganza and a Hurricane Helene Benefit Concert all in one? You heard it right! Boondocks Brewing's Brew Haus is excited to host The Rewind: A Tribute to the 80s for an unforgettable night of music, fun, and fundraising. The concert is Oct. 26 from 8-11 p.m. and will come together to lift spirits (including the ghostly kind) and raise funds for the Ashe County Recovery and Restoration Fund.

This special event is not just about having a spooky good time—it's a chance to support the community! All cash tips and Venmo donations collected by The Rewind during the night will go directly to the Ashe County Recovery and Restoration Fund, helping local families and businesses affected by Hurricane Helene. More information about the fund can be find online at www.ashecountygov.com/hurricaneHelene.

What to expect

Totally Tubular 80s Music: Rock out to your favorite hits from the 80s with The Rewind on their final show of the 2024 "Need for Speed" tour. Expect a full rock show experience, complete with smoke, lights, bubbles, and exciting crowd participation!Costume Contest: Come dressed in your best Halloween attire! Prizes will be awarded to the most creative costumes.Community Spirit: Enjoy a night of restorative fellowship while dancing, singing, and shaking off the stress of recent events in the heart of the Ashe County community.

Don't miss out on the fun and the opportunity to support a great cause while rocking to the best 80s hits. Mark your calendars for Oct. 26 for a night to remember at Boondocks Brewing's Brew Haus in West Jefferson.

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Devastation from hurricane compelled musician with High Country ties to spring into action

October 23, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: Derek Halsey| Section: Mountaintimes | 1571 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH COUNTRY — For some, the connection to the mountains of Western North Carolina came roaring back when early reports of the damage done by Hurricane Helene began to come in from the storm zone.

For people who have gone to college in the High Country, skied or worked these slopes, hiked or rock-climbed in these mountains, hunted or fished in these creeks, rivers, or lakes, or played music in this area, the news of the high winds and historic flooding tugged at their hearts.

Chris Lovejoy, who lived in the High Country two decades ago, was one of the many glued to the news stories and first-hand social media accounts that appeared after Hurricane Helene dumped 40 trillion gallons of water on much of Western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and South Virginia.

When Lovejoy was younger in the early 2000s, he lived in Boone and spent a lot of time in Asheville. Now, he, his wife, Jamie, and their son live in Randolph County, W.Va., in the small town of Beverly, near Elkins. On the Wednesday after the storm hit, Chris and Jamie knew they could no longer watch from afar.

"By Wednesday morning, after days of getting the information about how hard North Carolina got hit and seeing videos of the destruction, we thought, 'Hey, this happened in Appalachia, which is our home, and this could have easily happened up here in north-central West Virginia,'" Chris said. "Because I had lived in Boone and spent a lot of time in Asheville, and because I still have about eight friends of mine who grew up with me in Hurricane, W. Va., that moved to Western North Carolina, all of that pulled at me. At that time, I had only heard from three of the guys there that I had grown up with. That was the day when my wife Jamie said, 'I feel like we've got to go. I am feeling called to go down there.' I said, 'I am, too. Let's do it.'"

Chris owns an electrical business, and Jamie's employer said if she signed up with a non-profit organization, she could also take days off and head south. Some of Jamie's co-workers donated some of their paid time off.

The Lovejoys contacted Samaritan's Purse, which told them they had a place for them to volunteer in Asheville — one of the hardest hit areas. With Samaritan's Purse, you have to be at least 14 years old to volunteer, so they dropped their 11-year-old son off at Grandma's house.

When the Lovejoys' church in Beverly heard the news of their impending trip to the disaster zone, the Elkins Family Worship Center filled their vehicle with supplies and gave them gas money for the journey.

After work on Wednesday, the Lovejoys headed south and got a hotel room in Bristol so as to not drive into the swath of hard-hit areas at night in the dark. To their amazement, there were hundreds of electric line workers as far as the eye can see, who had filled up nearly every hotel room in town.

By the next sunrise, they were in the town of Marshall, and the light of the morning is when they began to see the extent of the storm damage in person.

"I moved to Boone around 2002 or 2003," Lovejoy said. "Fairly soon, I found myself in one of the first versions of the Boone-based band Boss Hawg with myself on the guitar along with Jon Jon Davis, John Hill on the mandolin, Josh Williams on bass and Brian Swenk on the banjo. I was also in the band The Crookneck Squashers with Mark Freed, now running the Jones House, Robert Evans, Ryan Crider and Darin Gentry. For a while, I lived in that musician's hangout above the store in Sugar Grove where other pickers like Mark Schimick, Brett Morris and many others used to jam. Brett now runs the Junior Appalachian Musicians program.

"I also lived on Oak Street in Boone with Ben McPherron, Tim Marsh and Brian Swenk, and spent a lot of time playing music in Ben Smith's downtown basement room," continued Lovejoy. "The last place I lived at while in WNC was on Wildcat Road in Deep Gap. As for Asheville, I spent a lot of weekends there playing music with my long-time friend Bryan Clendenin, who went on to be in the band Dehlia Low. Bryan and I learned how to play bluegrass music together, and we would busk in the morning on the street in Pack Square, playing for enough money to get lunch and dinner, and then we'd jam at the Jack of the Woods pub at night. Those were some of the best times of my life."

Those experiences contributed to Lovejoy's heartfelt desire to help so many of those suffering in North Carolina.

Once they reached post-Helene Asheville, Chris and Jamie went through an hour-long orientation meeting at the Samaritan's Purse headquarters before setting out to help folks in need.

"When we got in the conference room for orientation, people were just getting to the mountains for the first time and our team had about 30 people in it and we were one of nine teams," said Lovejoy. "Our team featured people who had travelled in from Atlanta, Memphis, Chicago, Florida, and us from West Virginia. In the parking lot, I saw license plates from all over the region as well as from Missouri, Michigan and more places."

Soon, the Lovejoys and their Samaritan's Purse volunteer teammates went to the first home on their list. They hiked for about a half mile on the tree-blocked driveway with provisions.

"A big oak tree, about four feet in diameter, had uprooted and fallen through the top of the house and basically split the home in half," said Lovejoy. "A 15-year-old son lived in the house with his parents, and all three of them told us the story of what happened that night. The teenage son was out on the porch listening to the intensity of the storm and he heard tree after tree starting to fall. So, he went straight into his Mom and Dad's bedroom and woke them up and said, 'Hey, we have to go downstairs to the basement because the trees are falling everywhere.' Just 20 minutes or so later, they heard the tree hit their house, which sliced through the roof and landed literally on the master bedroom bed where his parents were sleeping just a little bit earlier. They narrowly escaped."

Lovejoy's team then set about "drying in" the house, which now had an oak tree inside of it — with a 20-by-8-foot gash in their roof above.

"When I got up on top to begin tarping the roof, you could look down and see their whole house," said Lovejoy. "I think our work on their home gave them a sense of not being alone, because a bunch of us worked together to do a job that may have taken them a month to do by themselves. The damage was there, but the tarps were up and their house was at least cleaned up and dry now. When we were done, they were in tears, and they were so grateful.

"Before we left, the Team Leader gathered everyone in a circle with the family and a prayer was said, and then he gave them a Bible that was signed by every worker that was there that day. Then, we found our way into Swannanoa next, and it truly looked like a war zone, with massive flood damage and helicopters everywhere and sirens going off all over the place."

By the following Saturday, after hundreds of volunteers had shown up to the Samaritan's Purse headquarters, the Lovejoys decided to go help a friend who had a business in the area.

"We decided to go and help my buddy Casey Conner, who had a pizza place that he opened up just six weeks earlier with his brother in Swannanoa called Good Company Pizza," said Lovejoy. "Luckily, most of his equipment was sitting up off the ground, even though they got about four inches of flood water in the restaurant. You could see where the flood water line was, and yet, his commercial equipment was high enough off the ground that none of the internal components got wet. Still, there was a lot of mud that we cleaned out of the place."

The Lovejoys also took the time to look up other friends in Asheville before they drove home to West Virginia on

Sunday. They were especially appreciative of friend Jask Carrier and his family who put them up in an Airbnb while in town. And the previously-mentioned Bryan Clendenin, helped them safely navigate the disaster zone; he gave them some fresh, home-roasted coffee to sip on as they drove home to Beverly, W. Va., back to the serenity of home.

"On the way out, we finally saw the town of Erwin, Tenn., in the daylight," said Lovejoy. "It looked like a war zone there as well, with the Nolichucky River taking out the interstate highway and making the whole valley look like a river bottom filled with big debris burns. You could also see where huge landslides happened as well. We got home later that day and were happy to have our running water, which is something we all take for granted at times."

Chris said they felt guilty about leaving with so much work still to be done, "so we are going to try and go back in November."

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Haywood death toll from Helene holds at 5, no more missing

October 23, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Aarik Long | Section: News | 325 Words OpenURL Link

Five people lost their lives in Haywood County during Helene, but emergency officials don't expect that number to rise.

As of Monday morning, there was no one missing or unaccounted for due to the storm in Haywood County, said Gina Zachary, Haywood County Sheriff's Office public information office.

The five who lost their lives were:

Brian Gaddis, 34, of Canton

Gordon Hargrove, 64, of Love Joy

David Russell, 56, of Jonathan Creek

Shirley Ray, 72, of Clyde

Sandra Rogers, 57, of Clyde.

Gaddis was the only of the five recovered on the initial day of flooding, Sept. 27. He was found near Old River Road in Bethel in a "flooded area" and had been "swept away in flood waters," according to his death certificate.

Hargrove was the victim of an ATV accident while out in the storm. A stretch of road that he was on gave way underneath him, causing his ATV to overturn. He was found on a roadway near his home with "multiple blunt force injuries due to Hurricane Helene."

Russell was found outside near Jonathan Creek Road and was the second drowning death from Helene. He was "outside attempting to leave in his vehicle when flood waters swept him away."

Ray was found in her home on the Sunday following the storm. She had other health problems, including chronic interstitial lung disease. Her cause of death is listed as "acute right sided diastolic heart failure," with the lung disease and Hurricane Helene listed as other contributing causes.

The final of the five victims, Rogers, was discovered on Oct. 2 near the Waterville boat ramp. She was the third drowning victim of Helene. Her mobile home was washed away in Merrill Court near Hyder Mountain Road with Rogers still inside.

The sheriff's office completed 1,255 wellness checks following Helene.

During Tropical Storm Fred three years ago, six people lost their lives — showing how important pre-storm preparations were leading up to the more severe Hurricane Helene.

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Flood victim lost his life trying to check on mother

October 23, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Aarik Long | Section: News | 615 Words OpenURL Link

Haywood County's first Helene-related fatality lost his life when he ventured out in the storm to check on his mother

On Friday, Sept. 27, the world changed for everyone in Western North Carolina as Hurricane Helene ripped through communities in a torrent of water, mud and debris. Some lost homes and businesses. Others lost more.

Brian Christopher Gaddis' family lost a friend, son and brother.

Gaddis, 34, of Canton, was living off of Main Street with his aunt. The night Helene hurled through, Gaddis left to check on his mother despite pleas from his aunt, according to friends and family.

"He loved his mother. He did anything he could for his mother," said Jonathan Jones, Gaddis' friend.

As Gaddis tried to make his way to Cruso, he was caught by the rising waters of the Pigeon River off N.C. 215 in Bethel. That final act was just another example of the man's love for others and heart for helping, according to lones.

"Brian was one of those people who would go out of his way, doesn't matter if he was broke, he would give his last cent and the shirt off of his back to help anyone he could," Jones said. "He was always kind to everyone. He didn't take offense to anything whatsoever. That's one of those people you don't find."

Jones and Gaddis had gone fishing over the summer. After they got done casting their lines, Jones jumped in the water. Gaddis refused to follow, telling Jones something that haunts him now, following Gaddis' death.

"He was deathly afraid of deep water if he couldn't touch," Jones said. "That's what's bothered me so much about this. He went out to check on her and couldn't swim at all."

Gaddis grew up in Cruso. He and Jones became friends when they were teenagers.

"He was one of the best friends I've ever had. He was like a brother to me," Jones said.

Gaddis's brother, Steven Gaddis, was also involved in those adolescent shenanigans.

"We were always getting into trouble when we were young'uns growing up — sneaking out of the house to go play in the woods. We've been sidekicks and partners in crime," Gaddis said.

Jones told a story of Gaddis using the last of his paycheck to drive to Georgia and pick up someone who needed a ride to get back to Haywood County. Despite having to use the last dime to his name, Gaddis didn't hesitate to jump into action to help.

"He was a really good kid. I can say that," Jones said. "That boy would go out of his way to help anybody that he could. He was one of the sweetest people you'd ever meet."

Both Steven Gaddis and Jones said some of their favorite memories with Brian were just sitting around and cutting up.

"Just hanging out with him was always a good memory. Any time he was around, there was always laughs and a good time," Jones said. "He was always smiling. There wasn't ever a dull moment around Brian."

One of those instances took place just a week before Brian's death. The trio sat around and joked while reminiscing on the fun they had together.

"It was almost like Brian knew he was about to go. It's weird how things happen," Jones said.

The day before the storm, Gaddis had been watching Twisters, — one of the Gaddis brothers' favorite movies. Brian called Steven and the two were quoting the movie back and forth.

"That was the last time I talked to him," Gaddis said.

Gaddis left behind two daughters. Jones described him as a "really good dad.

"He was always upbeat and just going. He loved to be doing stuff, especially outside and being with his friends," Gaddis said. "He was a good kid, man."

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Halloween insider's guide to 30 spooktacular events in Haywood County

October 23, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Carol Viau | Section: Life | 2093 Words

OpenURL Link

Helene isn't going to sideline Halloween in Haywood County. There are plenty of Halloween happenings on the docket! So, lift your kids' spirits, get costumes ready and enjoy the fun, spooky season of Halloween.

The scene isn't just for the littles though. From the tame and festive and spooky and creepy, the Haywood cauldron is brimming with Halloween activities for everyone.

Adults can get in on the spooktacular action, too, with ghoulish Halloween bashes. Meanwhile, teens and scare seekers can get their fix with a haunted house and haunted corn maze.

Just about everything on the late October calendar has been wrapped in Halloween theming, from friendly-spirited trunk-and-treats to zombies rising on Waynesville's Main Street. Consult area schools and churches for more truck 'n treat fun, too.

Downtown trick-or-treating

Hazelween: 5-7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26 in Hazelwood.

"Hazelween Fest" trick-or-treating in is back for a fourth year from along Hazelwood Avenue in Waynesville. Families turn out en masse decked out in costumes, and kids have just as much fun parading around on the street as they do collecting candy.

The Hazelwood Boosters Club pulls out all the stops for trick-or-treating with Hazelwood merchants and residents. Automobiles from the Hazelwood Hot Summer Nights Cruise-in will be parked and giving out candy also. Hazelwood Avenue, from Haywood Urgent Care to Brown Avenue, will be closed to traffic.

Downtown Canton: 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 31.

The Canton Merchant Partnership hosts a spooktacular night of fun and trick-or-treating on Main Street in downtown Canton, so bring your little ghosts and goblins for this safe, family event. The fun includes bouncy houses, a costume contest, selfie station, random flash mob dances, spooky train rides, hayrides, vintage car show and Ben's Backdraft BBQ food truck.

Plus, swing through the Milltown Farmers Market from 4-7 p.m., the final market of the season, complete with a scavenger hunt for kids. The market will be moved from Sorrells Street Park to the Smathers parking lot off Main Street.

Treats on the Street: 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 31 in Waynesville.

Trick-or-treaters will take over downtown Waynesville for the annual Treats on the Street. Bring your little ones in costumes for candy, music, dancing, a photo booth — and Halloween specialty drinks/food specials at restaurants. Main Street will be closed to traffic, giving costumed children free rein to run in a safe environment.

Not-to-be-missed freaky zombies will rise from the dead when the WNC Flash Mob zombies will walk up Depot Street at 5:30 p.m., then perform the iconic Michael Jackson "Thriller" dance at three different stops along Main Street.

Festivals and treats

Tuesday, Oct. 29

Boo-Thru at HCC: Haywood Community College will host drive-thru trick-or-treating from 6-8 p.m. or until the candy is all distributed.

The Boo-Thru allows families to come to campus for trick-or-treating without the pressure of a costume or even leaving their car. HCC recognizes that community partners and neighbors have other areas of focus at this time. HCC employees and students will line the parking lot around Hemlock, which will have two candy stop stations available for guests. There will be some decorations and a festive setting.

Friday, Oct. 25

Monster Mash-Bash: Free spooktacular family Halloween event for all from 5-9 p.m. at the Waynesville Rec Center. Safe and fun Halloween experience for the whole family with snacks, costume contests, hayrides, sweet treats, pumpkin carvings and lighthearted spooky movies. 550 Vance. St., Waynesville.

Saturday, Oct. 26

ScreamFest: An eerie-sistible event from noon–10 p.m. at the Maggie Valley Festival Grounds. See the grounds transformed into a haven of spooky fun with trick or treating, unique vendors, food trucks, live music, fall games, plus a haunted house after dark to chill you to the bone. Be there if you dare. Tix \$10-15. 3340 Soco Rd., Maggie Valley.

Cabbage Rose Trunk or Treat: Kids and kids at heart, enjoy the spookiest, most exciting trunk or treat party 4-6 p.m. at Cabbage Rose's eighth annual Halloween bash in Maggie Valley. Tons of prizes and costume contests for all ages at 6 p.m.; wear your best costume and dress up your pet, too — prizes are bigger than ever this year. Trick out your trunk or vehicle for a chance to win cash \$200 prize to the coolest, creepiest or craziest design. Free admission. 3388 Soco Rd., Maggie Valley.

Motorcycle Halloween Party: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at Smoky Mountain Steel Horses' annual Halloween party. Free drinks and chili 12:30 p.m.-until gone. Family fun, bring kids for trick or treating and check out the dealership's bikes. 82 Locust Dr., Waynesville.

Tuesday, Oct. 29

Maggie Valley Nursing and Rehabilitation: Enjoy some Halloween fun 6:30-8 p.m. with the residents and staff. The residents love to see kids in costumes and will be handing out candy to anyone in the community. Poppy Joe's Food Truck will be set up to serve all kinds of goodies. 75 Fisher Loop, Maggie Valley.

Thursday, Oct. 31

Mama T's Spooktacular: Join WPTL Radio in Canton from 5-9 p.m., for Mama T's Halloween Spooktacular. Live broadcast by John Anderson cranking in the parking lot, plus food trucks, free cotton candy and fun for everyone. Want to eat real food other than sugar? Four food trucks onsite — Hit the Pit BBQ, Woof St. Bistro, Fat Belly's and Sunburst Coffee. 543 Pisgah Dr., Canton.

Milltown Farmers Market: 4-7 p.m. at Smathers parking lot, downtown Canton. Enjoy the final market of the season, at the Smathers parking lot, with many craft vendors, complete with a scavenger hunt for kids. Great opportunity for the community to come together at the market and the adjoining Canton Treats on Main Street event. 462 Main St., Canton.

Spooks and Chutes: 5:30-8:30 p.m. with the Waynesville Elks Lodge. Kids of all ages welcome; come in costumes

(or not). Free hotdogs, chips and bottled water. Event was named in 2020, when candy was sent down a chute to kids for social distancing; the name has stuck. The Lodge has a donation center for items for flood relief items. 510 Dellwood City Rd., Waynesville.

Auburn Park et al Trick-or-Treating: The Auburn Park, Shelton Hills and Hendrix Park neighborhoods have become trick-or-treat legends in Waynesville, with hundreds of kids hitting the streets for a traditional house-to-house Halloween experience, pillow cases and all. Some streets are blocked to traffic so the kids have full run of the place.

Outside the Box

Saturday, Oct. 26

Farmers Market Pumpkin Carving contest: Bring your pre-carved pumpkin creation to Haywood's Historic Farmers Market, Waynesville, by 9:30 a.m. The market's shoppers will vote for the favorite; winner snags some awesome market goodies and major bragging rights. After the contest, carvers take their pumpkins home to enjoy. 250 Pigeon St., Waynesville.

"Howl-O-Ween Dog Costume Contest:" 10-11:30 a.m., join Sarge's Animal Rescue Foundation supporters, at Waynesville Historic Courthouse steps. Do something fun and festive for the fur babies; grab a costume for your pup — or make a donation of your choosing at Sarge's Adoption Center and use one of theirs. Funds raised from the \$10 per dog entry fee go to various area missions helping animals with foods, medications, boarding and foster supplies after Helene. 285 N. Main St., Waynesville.

Winchester Creek Farm Halloween tours: Alpacas, llamas and farm animals — oh, my! Oct. 26-27, with goodie bags of candy and treats on seven stops during the farm guided Scavenger Hunt. Wear costumes. Food from Dogsonwheels Sylva, plus Cold Mountain Photography digital photos (add \$20 to tour price). Book tours online. 386 Walker Rd., Waynesville.

"Hocus Pocus" Halloween movie: Beaverdam Community Center holds outdoor movie night 5 p.m. "to give the children of the community a little comfort in this time." Enjoy Halloween favorite "Hocus Pocus." Fat Belly's food truck, plus snacks, balloon animals and surprises for kids. Bring camp chairs and blankets. 1620 N. Canton Rd., Canton.

Spooky Terrarium craft: 5–6 p.m. at the Waypoint, Waynesville. Create a Halloween terrarium, designed to spark creativity and bring a touch of spookiness to any space. Perfect project for all ages. 113 N. Main St., Waynesville.

Sunday, Oct. 27

Cute 'n' Spooky Paint Class: Create some ghostly fun and fall vibes 2-4 p.m. at The Ten Acre Farm's paint class, perfect for all skill levels. Noelani guides attendees painting adorable ghost scene, with pumpkins, flowers and autumn trees. Kids welcome. Event proceeds go to Mountain Projects, benefitting survivors of Hurricane Helene. \$35 per person. 148 Chambers Farm Ln., Canton.

'Frightacular' concert: 4 p.m. Haywood Community Band at FUMC Waynesville; free. Gather for an evening of musical frights and delights. More than 60 band members set the mood for the spooky holiday with a program of ghostly compositions. Donations taken for student musician scholarships in college and band camps. 566 S. Haywood St., Waynesville.

Thursday, Oct. 31

WNC Flash Mob "Zombie Walk:" freaky zombies rise from the dead, starting at 5:30 p.m. staggering up and down Main Street, Waynesville. See the WNC Flash Mob's zombies starting at Depot Street performing the iconic Michael Jackson "Thriller" dance, then follow them along Main Street to Church Street (three different stops). Folks watching the thrilling performance are invited to join in. Not to be missed.

Out & About Pinhead's Graveyard: This sprawling, eerie, century-old downtown Canton warehouse has been ranked the No. 1 haunted attraction in NC. Pinhead's Graveyard is ready to scare at its "Slasher House" indoor haunted house. Make your way through recreated scenes from classic horror movies while being haunted by live costumed, scarers.

Open "rain or blood" 7 p.m. Thursdays–Sundays through Oct. 27, plus Oct. 31, Halloween night. Brand new set up for 2024. Victims \$35; kids 6-10 \$20; below age 5 free; active military, veterans, LEO, seniors (65+) \$20; 562 Main St., Canton.

Cold Mountain Corn Maze: Work your way through the Bethel corn maze, in its 20th anniversary year. Enjoy fall-themed, family-friendly activities, pumpkin patch and hayrides. It turns haunted at dusk with costumed scarers roving the stalks. Markers inside the maze pose trivia questions about pop culture, Halloween and American history; with the right answer, it leads in the right direction. This year's design is a wolf emblem, representing a men's cancer support group.

Hours: 4-9 p.m., Wednesday-Friday, 1-9 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, through October. \$12 admission, including hayride; +\$3 for the elevated scare experience. 4168 Pisgah Dr., Canton.

Pumpkin Patch Hayrides: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays at The 10 Acre Farm in Bethel. Head to the garden for a delightful hayride (\$5) through the farm, pick your perfect pumpkin (optional). Enjoy fall's great pumpkins, gourds, squash available for purchase. Order hayride tix online. 148 Chambers Farm Ln., Canton.

Halloween Craft Kits: Get crafty with fun take-and-make kits for purchase at the Arts Council's Haywood Handmade Gallery, Waynesville. Includes seven quality crafts that make the perfect activity or gift this spooky season; \$20. 86 N. Main St., Waynesville.

HART whodunnit mystery: Enjoy HART Theatre's production of Agatha Christie's legendary "The Mousetrap" (weekends through Nov. 17). This suspenseful masterpiece has captivated audiences with gripping mystery and unexpected twists for more than seven decades. Follow characters attempting to uncover the murderer among them before it's too late. 250 Pigeon St., Waynesville.

Halloween for Grown-Ups

Friday, Oct. 25

Axe & Awl Leatherworks: Awl Hallows Eve bash: 7 p.m. – midnight; spooktacular night of eerie enchantment, terrifyingly tantalizing cocktails, fantastic costumes, in a hair-raising night of revelry with DJ jam. Tix \$10. 21+ only; ID required. 41 Depot St. Waynesville.

Saturday, Oct. 26

Frog Level Halloween Bash: Frog Level Brewing 6-9 p.m., featuring performance from the Tricia Ann Band, costume contest (with prizes) and some bloody brews. Plus, bring the kiddos on Halloween Oct. 31 for free candy. 56 Commerce St., Waynesville.

"Nightmare on Main Street:" Assembly on Main, 7 p.m.-midnight, with spine-chilling Halloween cocktails, blood-curdling shooters, Zombie Punch (brewed for the little monsters) and ghoulish drink specials. Dress to scare for freakishly fun costume prizes for kids, creepy couples and most terrifying overall costume. Eerie tunes, fang-tastic food, spooky decorations. Assembly on Main, 1940 S. Main St., Waynesville.

Thursday, Oct. 31

The Scotsman's "Take Me back to the 90s" Halloween party: 9 p.m.-2 a.m., Downtown Waynesville. Get spooky with

the 90s at The Scotsman Public house, with DJ playing favorite songs from the 1990s. Costume prizes and drink specials. 37 Church St., Waynesville.

Halloween Dinner and Spooky Tales: 5 or 7 p.m., by reservation at Valé 243 Southern Italian Restaurant. Join in a spooky Halloween dinner and tales, with dramatic reading of "The Tell Tale Heart" and "The Raven." Prix fixe, spooky menu. Call for reservations/prices. 243 Paragon Pkwy., Clyde.

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Halloween insider's guide to 33 spooktacular events in Haywood County

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Wednesday, Oct. 30

Autumn Care: Bring the kids to trick-or-treat at Autumn Care in Waynesville from 6-8 p.m. The residents of the nursing home love giving out candy to the kids and seeing their costumes!

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Halloween-themed Parent's Night Out: Drop your little goblins off for a night of spook-tacular fun, games, and Halloween activities at Blue Dragon Taekwondo from 5-8 p.m. while you enjoy a few hours of rest. Costumes are welcome. \$30 for the first child; \$20 for each additional sibling. No need to be a student of Blue Dragon to participate. cookebluedragon@gmail.com or 828-627-3949,

Winchester Creek Farm Halloween tours: Alpacas, llamas and farm animals — oh, my! Oct. 26-27, with goodie bags of candy and treats on seven stops during the farm guided Scavenger Hunt. Wear costumes. Food from Dogsonwheels Sylva, plus Cold Mountain Photography digital photos (add \$20 to tour price). Book tours online. 386 Walker Rd., Waynesville.

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Halloween insider's guide to 32 spooktacular events in Haywood County

October 23, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Carol Viau | Section: Life | 2118 Words OpenURL Link

Helene isn't going to sideline Halloween in Haywood County. There are plenty of Halloween happenings on the docket! So, lift your kids' spirits, get costumes ready and enjoy the fun, spooky season of Halloween.

The scene isn't just for the littles though. From the tame and festive and spooky and creepy, the Haywood cauldron is brimming with Halloween activities for everyone.

Adults can get in on the spooktacular action, too, with ghoulish Halloween bashes. Meanwhile, teens and scare seekers can get their fix with a haunted house and haunted corn maze.

Just about everything on the late October calendar has been wrapped in Halloween theming, from friendly-spirited trunk-and-treats to zombies rising on Waynesville's Main Street. Consult area schools and churches for more truck 'n treat fun, too.

Downtown trick-or-treating

Hazelween: 5-7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26 in Hazelwood.

"Hazelween Fest" trick-or-treating in is back for a fourth year from along Hazelwood Avenue in Waynesville. Families turn out en masse decked out in costumes, and kids have just as much fun parading around on the street as they do collecting candy.

The Hazelwood Boosters Club pulls out all the stops for trick-or-treating with Hazelwood merchants and residents. Automobiles from the Hazelwood Hot Summer Nights Cruise-in will be parked and giving out candy also. Hazelwood Avenue, from Haywood Urgent Care to Brown Avenue, will be closed to traffic.

Downtown Canton: 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 31.

The Canton Merchant Partnership hosts a spooktacular night of fun and trick-or-treating on Main Street in downtown Canton, so bring your little ghosts and goblins for this safe, family event. The fun includes bouncy houses, a costume contest, selfie station, random flash mob dances, spooky train rides, hayrides, vintage car show and Ben's Backdraft BBQ food truck.

Plus, swing through the Milltown Farmers Market from 4-7 p.m., the final market of the season, complete with a scavenger hunt for kids. The market will be moved from Sorrells Street Park to the Smathers parking lot off Main Street.

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State funding bill on the way to cover hurricane losses

October 23, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Vicki Hyatt vhyatt@themountaineer.com| Section: News| 938 Words OpenURL Link

When N.C. Sen. Kevin Corbin met with county and school leaders, he had one request: tell me your immediate needs

The list, he said, would be needed by Monday and would become part of the justification for a special legislative budget request that will be ready by Thursday to provide disaster assistance in the state.

"I don't want my counties to miss out," he said, noting Haywood and Transylvania seemed to be the worst hit in the seven western counties he represents.

Corbin stressed the lists should include "immediate needs" such as housing for flood victims, and expects the total ask will be in the billions.

"That's billion with a B," he told a gathering of county leaders Saturday.

That meeting included Haywood County Commission Chairman Kevin Ensley, Vice Chairman Brandon Rogers, County Manager Bryant Morehead, School Superintendent Dr. Trevor Putnam and School Board Chairman Chuck Francis.

The October appropriation will be in addition to \$273 million the N.C. General Assembly already provided and is expected to be followed by another funding ask once the General Assembly convenes its regular session starting in January.

To meet immediate needs, Corbin was curious about the number of damaged houses in the county. Morehead said the county assessment for now stands at 600, with about 190 homes badly damaged. That number doesn't include assessments from Waynesville and Canton, which are conducting their own assessments.

Corbin said he met with U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards who spoke directly with President Joe Biden and is working on bringing in mobile housing units once the need is determined. A drawback to that, county leaders noted, is that the units can't be placed in the flood plain and need to have water and sewer access, conditions that may be hard to meet.

Ensley asked whether part of the funding assistance could include money to buy and develop land where new homes could be located, something similar to what happened in the wake of massive flooding in Haywood in 2004 when Barefoot Ridge outside Clyde was built.

Corbin said he'd ask about the possibility, but it probably wouldn't be part of the October funding package.

While the cumulative needs of each county and region will be part of the overall package, Corbin said there will likely be an application process to access funding.

What's needed

While Corbin requested the list of funding requests be ready just two days after the Saturday meeting, it wasn't a problem.

The losses and needs had been at the top of the to-do list for days.

"This is my fourth rodeo," said Putnum, in regard to dealing with the aftermath of serious flooding within the school system. He provided a spreadsheet of damages along with varying options accompanied by the estimated costs for each route.

Morehead said he had roughly figured the county would need \$180 million to offset economic losses from the closure of Interstate 40, direct county losses and to build additional housing in flood-resilient areas.

"That sounds like a lot of money, but 600 homes at \$300,000 apiece," Morehead said, acknowledging there is a wide gap in the degree to which the homes have been damaged.

An unknown is the ripple effects of I-40 being closed for an unknown period. He recalled the hardship it posed to the local economy when a rockslide closed I-40 for six months.

Morehead cited a 2019 study by the Appalachian Regional Commission documenting the economic impact of a six-month I-40 shutdown due to a major rock slide near the North Carolina/Tennessee border.

The study documented a lodging revenue decrease between 50 and 80%; a retail business and restaurant downturn in the range of 30 to 90%; a 25% decrease in fuel usage and transportation cost increases of nearly \$175 million.

The unemployment rate for North Carolina at the fluctuated between 10 and 11 percent during 2009 and Haywood's rate was 8% higher than that, the study noted.

On top of the losses to the Haywood business community, county and local governments will be losing sales tax — a loss that will be on top of the millions in property tax losses due to the closure of the Pactiv Evergreen mill, Morehead said. There could again be an uptick in unemployment if the economy lags.

The ask

For the school district, Putnum documented nearly \$520,000 in funds already spent on recovery, and had estimated costs for an additional \$5 million to complete recovery work.

A separate category broke down a \$44 million request for relocating and rebuilding athletic facilities and the education center in Clyde.

Relocating the Pisgah football stadium was discussed and is something Putnam said is not out of the question, but is a process that will take several years. Corbin said it is a discussion that needs to happen.

Putnam said rebuilding the school facilities after the last flood cost \$7 million.

When Morehead submitted the county request, it was for nearly \$93 million and included \$9 million in funding for the county jail that's under construction; \$15 million for public health and safety equipment and vehicles; \$20 million for capital improvements; \$7.5 million for staffing related to Helene; \$19 million to offset existing staffing operations; and \$21.5 million for water infrastructure improvements.

Since 2021, Haywood County has been hit by two major storms, including the recent devastation caused by Hurricane Helene, Morehead said in his letter to Corbin.

"In addition, the closure of the Pactiv Paper Mill in Canton has resulted in the loss of over 900 jobs and a reduction ir our county's tax base by nearly \$300 million in valuation. Because of Hurricane Helene, Haywood County has also been placed on a CreditWatch list by the S&P rating agency," he wrote.

Corbin said he said he's communicated with the municipalities in the county to similarly provide their lists.

• Citation (aglc Style)

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