

From Friday night lights to Hurricane Helene: The Observer's best photos for September

October 14, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: The Pham, The Charlotte Observer | Section: local | 1031 Words OpenURL Link

September arrived with excitement for Friday nights and high school football games, UNC Charlotte Saturday night games, and of course our Carolina Panthers on Sundays.

Making the last push, Vice President Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump and Sen. JD Vance, R-Ohio, stopped here in Charlotte and all around North Carolina multiple times.

Is there a presidential election happening?

If that was not exciting enough, people lined up hours before the Great Smoky Cannabis Company in Cherokee, NC opened that allowing people to purchase marijuana products.

Then came Hurricane Helene.

Charlotte got plenty of rain and a few downed trees, but Western NC and Mountain Island Lake saw much worse.

Every day visual journalists bear witness to the people in our communities and their stories. Some images are pleasant, while others are painful and heart-wrenching to produce.

Our mission is to document truthfully, fairly and with compassion.

september 001.JPEGThis image taken by a drone shows homes along the Catawba River submerged in floodwater from Helene. A number of homes saw roof-high flooding as water moved through the Catawba River system. Mark Thompson DroneFootage.Pro

september 002.JPGA small outer building is submerged in flood water from the Catawba River near the intersection of Lake Drive on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

september 004.JPGMcKinley Moore inspects the damage on his home after a tree fell over his bedroom early Friday morning Sept. 27, 2024 in Charlotte. The ceiling fan and along with the ceiling fell on top of him.

september 005.JPEGThis image taken by a drone shows homes along the Catawba River submerged in floodwater from Helene. A number of homes saw roof-high flooding as water moved through the Catawba River system. Mark Thompson DroneFootage.Pro

september 003.JPGFlooding is seen at Lake Dr. and Harwood Lane in Mt. Holly Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024 a day after Hurricane Helene crossed NC.

september 006.JPGA vehicle buried among the debris along with a destroyed house in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

september 007.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

september 008.JPGBill White watches as a crew with NC Baptists on Mission Disaster Relief work to remove trees

from his home in Arden, N.C. on Monday, September 30, 2024.

september 009.JPGAs flood water from the Catawba River continues to rise, Jesse Riggins, left and brother Lucas Riggins, right, carry household items from Jesse Riggins' home on Riverside Drive to a pickup truck on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

september 010.JPGA collage of wedding photos sits on a rubble in Lake Lure, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

september 011.JPGDebris from Hurricane Helene are seen on and under the old bridge that connects Lake Lure and Chimney Rock in Lake Lure, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

september 012.JPGThe North Carolina National Guards stop to congratulate the newlyweds, Sereyna and her husband Gavin Walker in Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

september 014.JPGPanthers wide receiver Diontae Johnson celebrates scoring a touchdown during the game against the Bengals at Bank of America stadium in Charlotte, NC on Sunday, September 29, 2024. The Panthers still fell to the Bengals, 34-24.

september 013.JPGPanthers wide receiver Diontae Johnson, right, vies for the ball with Bengals cornerback DJ Tuner II during the game against the Bengals at Bank of America stadium in Charlotte, NC on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

september 015.JPGIndependence Patriots wide receiver Ricky Myers Jr. is unable to catch a deep pass against the Charlotte Christian Knights on Friday, September 6, 2024.

september 017.JPGWest Charlotte students sit on the field following a chaotic scene that had players and fans scrambling for safety near the start of third quarter action between Mallard Creek and West Charlotte on Friday, September 20, 2024 at West Charlotte High in Charlotte, NC.

september 016.JPGCharlotte wide receiver Sean Brown, center, shrugs in the end zone after scoring a touchdown during the game against Gardner-Webb at Jerry Richardson Stadium in Charlotte, NC on Saturday, September 14, 2024.

september 018.JPGDr. Brenda Flanagan, an English professor at Davidson College who teaches creative writing, Caribbean and African-American literature, and literary analysis, is a cultural ambassador for the US State Department and and is working on a book about her year with NC native Nina Simone.

september 019.JPGA man sits in a chair near the back of a line to pay for marijuana products purchased at Great Smoky Cannabis Company in Cherokee, NC on Saturday, September 7, 2024. The Cherokee dispensary superstore opens to all adults today.

september 020.JPGJim Nantz looks over a script during a recording for the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro, NC on Saturday, August 10, 2024. Nantz is a sportscaster who has worked the telecasts of the NFL, NCAA Division I men's basketball games, the NBA and PGA golf coverage. Known for his famous intro "Hello Friends," Nantz has become a fixture at many of sports biggest events including The Masters.

september 022.JPGSupporters young and old cheer for Vice President Kamala Harris as she speaks during a rally at the Bojangles Coliseum in Charlotte, NC on Thursday, September 12, 2024.

september 021.JPGVice President Kamala Harris speaks during a rally at the Bojangles Coliseum in Charlotte, NC on Thursday, September 12, 2024.

september 024.JPGSupporters watch as Former President Donald Trump leaves a campaign rally inside the Mosack Group manufacturing warehouse in Mint Hill, NC on Wednesday, September 25, 2024.

september 023.JPEGFormer President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally inside the Mosack Group manufacturing warehouse in Mint Hill, NC on Wednesday, September 25, 2024.

september 025.JPGSenator JD Vance, the GOP vice presidential candidate, and his wife, Usha, walk on the stage before Vance speaks to supporters during a rally at Dale F. Halton Theater on the campus of CPCC in Charlotte, NC on Monday, September 23, 2024.

september 027.JPGBree Watson Johnson holds a photograph of her mother, Colette Watson. Colette Watson was a flight attendant on Eastern Airlines Flight 212 when the plane crashed on September 11, 1974. Following the plane crash, Watson continued flying for Eastern until the airline closed in 1991.

september 028.JPGEastern Flight 212 survivor Richard Arnold, right, kisses his wife, Catherine at their home in Camas, Washington. Arnold, now 81, was 31 at the time of the plane crash in 1974.

september 026.JPGWith an advantage view, this goat can keep an eye out for an unexpected visitor the 7-acre DeepRoots CPS Farm in northwest Charlotte, NC

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They planned to wed in NC on Nov. 9. Instead, in Helene's wake, there'll be four funerals.

October 14, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Théoden Janes, The Charlotte Observer | Section: hurricane | 2631 Words OpenURL Link

In their imaginations, Knox Petrucci and Alison Wisely were at their wedding — dancing.

Perhaps cheek to cheek, to a cherished song of Knox's, like Langhorne Slim's "Changes" or JFDR's "White Sun." Or maybe to a tune Knox had penned for the self-produced folk-rock album he'd been recording. Or, more likely, to a party favorite they could both just let loose to; with laughter cascading out of their mouths; surrounded by Alison's sons Felix (9) and Lucas (7), friends from all over Western North Carolina's Yancey County, and relatives from all over the country.

In their imaginations, this dancing would have followed a show-stopping speech by the precocious Felix, who was planning to kick off his remarks to their 50 or so guests with: "Thank you, everyone, for joining us on this auspicious evening..."

mother helene profile theoden inline link

Which would have followed a big Italian feast. Which would have been preceded by Knox — in a brand-new navy-blue suit and an ascot — and Alison — in an embroidered top and white pants — standing in the shadow of Mount Mitchell and professing their undying love for each other.

They had been daydreaming about these moments for more than a year.

And in some ways, it was more than just a wedding. More than just a joyful excuse to assemble the people they treasured most.

It would be a moment of triumph, a climb to the top of their own personal mountains after years of tribulations. For Knox, who in recent years had reestablished a close relationship with his older sister Briana Yarbrough after a long, sorrowful estrangement. For Alison, who in the wake of a painful divorce had formed a healthy co-parenting situation with their devoted father, Lance Wisely.

But on Sept. 27, just over six weeks before they were to be married, Hurricane Helene unleashed a deluge that caused the normally peaceful river in front of their Green Mountain home to become a ferocious — and deadly — ocean.

So ferocious and so deadly, in fact, that nobody can give a full accounting of what that day was like for them because nobody survived to offer one: At roughly noon on that Friday, Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas were swept away as they sought safety from floodwaters.

The only thing certain now is that the very day Knox and Alison had planned to marry is instead being reserved for four funerals.

He was 41. She was 35.

"It definitely feels like a bad movie," says Knox's sister, Briana, calling from her home in Palo Alto, Calif., sounding both deeply exhausted and deeply shattered. "I don't —" she starts to say, then she stops. Then she sighs. Then she starts, softly, to cry. "It's like I'm not talking about real life right now."

'I just made this beautiful human my fiancée'

They originally bonded over — of all things — bees.

In 2019, Knox and Alison both found themselves employed at Honey & the Hive, a Weaverville beekeeping supply store that Knox had only applied to work for because he was looking for a job and they were hiring.

They started dating in short order, attracted by shared passions that included animals, and art, and camping, and creativity, and being members of the queer community in an area where it wasn't always easy to be a member of the queer community, among other things. (On top of that, Knox knew something of failed marriages, having been through one in his 20s.)

Before long, they were moving in together.

Up until the moment Helene took her life, this NC mom was watching out for her loved ones

Their home was idyllic and idiosyncratic: a 1950s-era brick ranch with a fenced yard and a two-story barn, sprawling across a three-acre plot of land upon which also sat an older, larger, decommissioned outbuilding that long ago served as the little town's post office and general store. On the opposite side of their street were some railroad tracks, and on the other side of the tracks was the North Toe River.

As their relationship grew through the pandemic, their careers also seemed to snap into sharper focus.

Knox took to the whole bee thing with authority, becoming the store manager and eventually a teacher of beekeeping courses.

Meanwhile, although Alison likewise had an affinity for the winged insects, she also had a degree from Western Carolina in forensic anthropology — and felt called to pursue a vocation related not just to death, but also (ironically) to grief. So she went after and landed a job as operations manager at Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, a conservation and green cemetery built into the lush, green, rolling hills of Mills River.

By last year, they'd built a well-rounded life that they loved, so much so that on June 11, 2023, Knox slipped onto Alison's ring finger a piece of jewelry he'd blacksmithed himself using a small forge he'd bought.

Knox and Alison Engagement day. JPEGKnox and Alison, freshly engaged, in June of 2023.

Briana, the sister he'd been making up for lost time with, was the first person he told.

"I just made this beautiful human my fiancée," Knox wrote in a text to his sister, beneath a selfie of the bespectacled couple showing off the ring.

He knew, of course, that in proposing to Alison he also was proposing to be a stepdad to Felix and Lucas — and he knew, of course, that these weren't just any ordinary boys.

Baby swings, podcasts and misunderstandings

Lucas, 7, liked cows. A lot. He had at least nine stuffed ones, if not 10 or 11, and he would attempt to carry all of them with him. Everywhere. Even to the water park, while his dad Lance Wisely strenuously objected.

Lucas wanted to be pushed in a baby swing that still hung from a tree at Lance's house in Marshall, N.C., not because he liked being considered a baby but because his dad could strap Lucas in to the baby swing. Securely. Meaning his dad could then swing him as high as possible and then add in a good, hard, death-defying spin.

Lucas did gymnastics, had started taking aerial silks classes, could climb 20-foot-tall trees in rain boots, and — oh yeah, was bilingual, thanks to the Spanish immersion program at North Buncombe Elementary School.

Felix, 9, was stupefying his parents by the time he was just 3, when he was already expressing an interest in learning about obscure types of dinosaurs and (ironically) the most severe types of weather events, from tornadoes to hurricanes.

Felix was incredibly curious, perceptive, and articulate, a future star on the debate team.

In NC's tiny 'Dogtown,' Hurricane Helene's fury left these close cousins worlds apart

Felix could hang with adults in a lot of respects, and proved it by discussing wild creatures, folklore and supernatural topics with his mom Alison — as co-host of a podcast called "Beyond Legends" that they launched together just this past April.

This, his parents would probably admit, is classic Felix: The week of Sept. 16, Felix confronted his dad and asked him if he wanted to marry his partner, Sarah Sheahan of Minneapolis, Minn.; Lance said yes. Felix then called Sarah and asked if she wanted to marry his dad; Sarah said yes. Not long after that, when Lance was on the phone with Alison about figuring out the holidays with the kids, Alison said to Lance, "So, Felix tells me you guys are engaged..."

"That," Lance exclaimed, "is not what we said!"

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 20, Lance dropped the boys off at school in Weaverville. It would be the last time he'd see his sons alive.

Lance_and_boys_-_bedtime_snuggles.jpgLance Wisely gives bedtime snuggles to his sons Felix and Lucas.

A surge of optimism, then worst fears realized

Briana called from the West Coast to check in on Knox late Wednesday evening, a day before Helene was expected to hit.

He'd done some basic stormproofing, he informed her, but he didn't seem worried about it. And she wasn't either. Her brother lived in the mountains, after all. Not on the beach.

Thursday passed with no contact. Friday the line was quiet, too. She still wasn't overly concerned. They had been in fairly frequent touch since reconciling 2-1/2 years earlier, but it's not like they talked every day. It wasn't until some people she knew who had extended family in North Carolina reached out on Saturday to ask if she had heard from Knox.

"No," Briana said. "Why?"

They told her about the storm. She looked at the news. It was the first she was seeing about Helene, and headlines were screaming with words like "brutal" and "devastation."

She immediately texted Knox. She would never get a reply.

From 2,500 miles away, as Briana's panic rapidly intensified, she started trying to exploit social media and the internet to glean whatever information she could that might provide clues to how things were looking back in Green Mountain.

From Minnesota, where he had been visiting Sarah, Lance was doing the same. There had even been talk of the two of them trying to drive back to North Carolina in Sarah's four-wheel-drive vehicle, so they could try to navigate

through the wasteland Helene had created to get to Knox and Alison's house themselves. They ultimately were discouraged from doing so, and stayed put.

Monday, Sept. 30, was the day that brought a surge of optimism after more than 48 hours of agony.

At the family's request, someone in Yancey County with a good telephoto zoom lens had gotten as close to the house as they safely could before confronting a severely washed out part of the road, and snapped a picture. It showed the structure still standing, and the door open. The house hadn't been swept away, Lance thought. Maybe they're OK after all. Maybe that open door means they're airing out the house.

But on Tuesday, Oct. 1, the worst of Lance's worst fears was realized, times four.

Sarah had been able to reach a fire department dispatcher, who had talked to a Green Mountain resident, who had reported this: Around noon the previous Friday — as the river turned into a sea that surged high above its banks, across the tracks and the road and into Knox and Alison's front yard — two adults with children were observed along their road getting into a white vehicle. Alison owned a white Mazda CX-5.

The violently swirling flood kept rising. The vehicle began to float. The people scrambled back out of it.

According to the eyewitness, the four were struggling to make their way through the water back to the house when a giant wave lifted all of them up — and rushing water carried them away.

'I'm realizing how much more I wish I knew them'

It's been a blur of immense sadness ever since Lance called Briana and told her she should sit down.

A blur of crying. Of sobbing. Of excruciating phone calls. Of having, Briana says, "to give that message over and over," and of every reaction being "the most painful thing to experience: that deep grief, the wail of people that loved my brother."

Of trying and routinely failing to make sense of the nonsensical.

Yet they've been heartened by an overwhelming outpouring of support from the community. The locals who chased leads for clues to what happened. The rescuers who were eventually able to find all four bodies, which on one hand made it really real but on the other gave them some peace. The more than a thousand people who've donated more than \$65,000 to a GoFundMe in Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas' memories. The sanctuary where Alison worked offering to cover the costs of their burial and funeral expenses.

The friends and neighbors who have found and cared for their cattle dog, Reishi, and their cat, Mowgli, and who remain on the lookout for Moonpie, their still-missing hound.

Reishi_the_Cattle_Dog_on_Relief_Rd.jpgReishi the cattle dog frolics near Relief Road Extension in Green Mountain.

And the beekeeper-buddy of theirs, Melissa Mejia of Burnsville, who hiked through the mud to the house with her husband, Marc, and salvaged — in addition to a handful of mementos the family will want — the boys' lizard, Sheila, alive.

Melissa has been back to the house multiple times since, with multiple people, because Knox's and Alison's families haven't been able to get to Western North Carolina, but also because it's an arduous process to sift through all the damage. Basically, it's like a bomb went off inside. "Like someone picked up the house, and filled it with water, and shook it around, and then everything settled — but then they added a bunch of mud to it," says Charlie Oak Blakely, one of the couple's best friends, who's been joining Melissa on the salvage missions.

"Everybody who goes in their house," Melissa adds, "gets stuck in the mud. There's always, for everybody, been a

moment where you can't turn around. It's like quicksand. You're stuck, and then you're losing your balance, and it's like a moment of despair. But ..."

She pauses, then finishes the thought:

"... It feels wrong to be upset inside of their house. Because they were so kind and loving and joyful and positive."

Hanging onto the happiest feelings they can

In a weird way, in Lance's imagination, it almost seems as if the boys, Alison, and Knox are still there — in or around that house — together.

Lance still hasn't returned to North Carolina from Minnesota, and so in his imagination, "it feels, in some ways, like my children are just with their mother. Which, in a grim sense is true. But not in the sense that like, Oh, I'm gonna get them back next week. Which, sometimes, it still feels that way."

He's as shattered as any father can be. He'd give anything to push Lucas on the baby swing one more time, or to shake his head and smile in disbelief at something Felix did or said that made the boy seem twice his age.

But he also already is trying to imagine a future in which he's as happy as he was when they were alive.

"I mean, what can you do? Right?" Lance says. "I've known some parents who have lost their children, and ... a lot of them turn into shells of people — like, they're just hollowed out by it — and I don't want to do that. ...

"It's heartbreaking that they won't be here for me to share those things with anymore, to experience the joy of their silliness and their childlike perspective. They were such amazing, magical, ridiculous, curious, energetic, joyful children. And I want to keep the vitality that I was showing my children — you know, showing them how to just drink from life.

"I still want to do that."

In Knox's sister Briana's imagination, meanwhile, she and her 14-year-old daughter, Dahlia, are transported back to the week this past summer when they visited Green Mountain and Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas.

They're catching fireflies around a bonfire. They're standing in front of that old post office and general store on Knox and Alison's property and listening to Knox talk about how he'd like to turn the building into an art center. They're out playing with the boys next to the river. Felix is trying to find watersnakes. Lucas is splashing in the ankle-deep water.

The river is being kind, being gentle, being a friend.

Briana can also envision an alternate current reality in which Knox and Alison are still alive, and they're bringing the kids along as they get up to their elbows in the various grassroots hurricane relief efforts all over Western North Carolina.

Finally, for a few fleeting moments here and there — in her imagination — it's November 9th, and Briana is attending not a somber private funeral but the joyful wedding that her brother and her would-be-sister-in-law had planned for that day. And when she can imagine that, she imagines this:

Knox and Alison, dancing.

IMG_7536.jpgAlison Wisely and Knox Petrucci were to be married in a small ceremony on the edge of Burnsville, N.C., on Nov. 9.

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'You've got to fight for everything': Canton, NC, carries on after floods, mill closure

October 14, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Ryan Oehrli, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 1135 Words OpenURL Link

When the Pisgah Black Bears returned to football practice Oct. 7, one of Jody Mathis' junior varsity players was a noshow

The school had checked on its students the week before and kept a tally of how many lost their homes to Helene: 22. Mathis got a new tally and an explanation for his missing player the next day.

"I just found out they lost their house," the coach said in an interview with The Charlotte Observer that day. "That's why he wasn't here yesterday. It makes sense now."

Three football players lost their homes, Mathis said. Floodwater in Pisgah Memorial Stadium covered all the visitors' bleachers save for three rows. The football field is damaged and much of the fence around it is destroyed.

Seniors have likely played their last game on the field. Mathis hopes juniors will get to play there again.

The Pigeon River crested at nearly 26 feet — a new record.

Neighbors aid stranded NC residents after Helene damage

People dragged wet trash to the curb: family furniture, clothes, toys that children couldn't play with anymore. Some older women slept in a storage shed. Others left town at night, coming back each morning to rebuild.

canton_04.JPGJody Mathis sits in the stands of the football stadium that was flooded during Hurricane Helene at Pisgah High School in Canton, N.C., on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

The town is used to struggle.

In September 2004, Hurricane Frances hit Haywood County. Nine days later, as the ground dried, Ivan paid a visit. Mathis thought he'd never see anything like it again.

But in 2021, he watched from a distance as Hurricane Fred filled his football stadium. At the same spot, he watched it when Helene hit.

"God dang, I've seen it twice — and twice in the last three years," the 21-year coach said.

On top of it all, Canton lost about 1,000 jobs last year when a company closed the doors to its historic paper mill.

'Fight for everything'

About 20 minutes from touristy Asheville, Canton is an old-school, blue-collar town.

For more than a century, it made paper. Smoke would billow out of the mill downtown. People across Western North Carolina remember the smell of wood chips pulping, sometimes even fondly.

More than being a major employer, the mill symbolized Canton. A mural, local businesses and even a bluegrass

song by the North Carolina band Balsam Range pay homage to it.

canton_02.JPGJody Mathis looks out at the paper mill he used to work at before it closed down at Pisgah High School in Canton, N.C., on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

Mathis, 51, is a fourth-generation mill worker. His great-grandfather worked at Sunburst, a logging community whose wood helped build the mill where his grandfather worked as a foreman and his father had a salaried job.

The youngest Mathis went in as a salaried employee, too. By 2023, he managed inventory, logistics and a warehouse.

The running joke: In 1908, the mill opened on Tuesday. By Friday, it was shutting down. As soon as it opened, it was at risk of closing. Its workers were always struggling against something, like prior floods that filled its basements or environmental concerns, Mathis said.

"That's where you get this mentality. You've got to fight for everything," he said.

Pactiv Evergreen, the last company that ran the mill, shuttered it in May 2023. About 1,200 people worked there. Four thousand people live in Canton.

The company cited expenses, like upgrading the century-old mill, and an unfavorable market.

When the news of closure broke, Gov. Roy Cooper warned Pactiv Evergreen in a March 2023 letter that closing would violate a state incentives agreement and could cost the company \$12 million.

"The Canton mill has been in operation for more than a century and has been the lifeblood of that town and region," the governor wrote. "I am deeply concerned about the impact of the mill's closure, which will have a devastating effect on the livelihoods of thousands of people in Canton and western North Carolina, as well as the region's economy and social fabric."

Attorney General Josh Stein followed up with a lawsuit. Last week, a Wake County judge ruled the suit can move forward.

Speaking at Pisgah Memorial Stadium Oct. 4, Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers said Spiritas Worldwide, a potential buyer, is still interested in buying the property, to his knowledge. It's unclear what the company would do with it.

"But again, it's one of those things," Smathers said. "The world looks much different now than it did literally a week ago. If we were in this stadium a week ago, we'd all be underwater."

For now, the mill remains idle.

canton_05.JPGJody Mathis coaches football on the practice field at Pisgah High School in Canton, N.C., on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

"Milltown Mentality" — the branding on Mathis' shirt Tuesday and a sort of slogan among townspeople — doesn't.

The Bears, for example, have been helping their neighbors. After COVID-19, two floods in three years and Canton's economic and cultural heart stalling, Mathis has seen his kids get their hands dirty.

Ten were asked to help clean up a house damaged by Helene. Twenty showed up, and that grew to 25.

Knee-deep in mud, they got to work. That's the way it's always been, Mathis said: People have each other's backs.

canton_01.JPGJody Mathis coaches football at Pisgah High School in Canton, N.C., on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

When the whistle blows

Waiting in a long line to get gas at a BP station in neighboring Clyde days after Helene tore through Western North Carolina, Bobby Thompson offered what was on his mind: Pisgah Memorial Stadium.

Some normalcy would be nice, but the field had been wrecked, he said.

"This town needs it," Mathis said of football.

It's unclear how long it will take to repair the field and host games there. It fared better after Helene than it did in 2021 when Fred hit. The turf stayed put this time.

"When we get on the field — win or lose — it's gonna be great," Mathis said. "Because at that point, we know we can start moving forward."

Canton has survived adversity before, and Mathis looks forward to the eventual return. In the meantime, the Bears will play at a temporary home field.

On a typical home game night, the Bears line up and two rows of people numbering in the hundreds watch as they walk to the stadium. The dormant mill, still the heart of the town's identity, sits downhill.

The stadium's whistle from the old paper mill survived the storm.

Latched onto a scoreboard, it bellows when it's time for kickoff or when the Bears score a touchdown.

Whenever they play at home again and the whistle shrieks, Mathis said, Canton will go wild.

canton_03.JPGJody Mathis holds a photo of the football team with the paper mill in the background at Pisgah High School in Canton, N.C., on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

canton_06.JPGBob Stansell cleans out his house after it was flooded by Hurricane Helene in Canton, N.C., on Monday, October 7, 2024.

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Vickie Sawyer, Republican NC Senate District 37 candidate, answers our questions

October 14, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Mary Ramsey, The Charlotte Observer | Section: voter_guide | 652 Words OpenURL Link

To help inform voters in the Nov. 5, 2024, election, this candidate questionnaire is available to be republished by local publications in North Carolina without any cost. Please consider subscribing to The Charlotte Observer to help make this coverage possible.

Name: Vickie Sawyer

Birth date (month, day and year): Aug. 8, 1975

Campaign website or social media page: sawyernc.com

Occupation: Family business owner and senator

Education: UNC Charlotte - Education

Have you run for elected office before? (Please list previous offices sought or held)

NC Senate - 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024

Please list your highlights of civic involvement

2014 - Our Schools First School Bond Referendum, 2005-2010 - PTO President and Board Member, 2010-2018 Girls and Women's Coach for Sports, 2014-2018 Iredell Co Republican Board Member, 2018-today Fraternal Order of Police Member, 2023-2024 Chair of Republican Women's Caucus, 2022-2024 CoChair of Joint Women's Caucus, 2020-today CoChair of Arts Caucus

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and most of the county's towns are on board with draft legislation to get permission from the legislature for a sales tax referendum to pay for public transit and other transportation. If elected, would you support a bill that allows the sales tax increase to appear on the ballot? Why or why not?*

As the co-chair of Senate Transportation, Charlotte elected leadership and business community have communicated with me on their proposed legislation. Increasing transportation funding is a cornerstone of my service in the NCGA as evidenced by my work leading the NC Ten Commission. During my service as transportation chair, the NCGA has increased the annual investment for transportation by 700 Million annually. I am committed to finding more solutions to solve our transportation infrastructure.

In North Carolina, abortion is banned after 12 weeks. State politicians, including gubernatorial candidate Mark Robinson, have said they want to restrict abortion even further. Do you support the state's current abortion restrictions, and what is your approach to legislating issues related to reproductive health?

As one of the main collaborators on SB20, I worked to ensure that women's rights were protected with expanding the state's exceptions for abortions, funding family leave for state employees, and provided additional resources for foster care and adoption. The current legislation is a common sense approach that allows women choice, provides options for difficult situations during pregnancy and supports women and children.

What would you say is the biggest issue facing your constituents, and what would you do to address it if elected?

Investment in transportation infrastructure and Hurricane Helene recovery for our neighbors in Western NC.

While violent crime rates are decreasing nationwide they are growing in large North Carolina cities like Charlotte and Raleigh. How would you tackle the issue of rising violent crime rates and what do you believe is the legislature's role when it comes to public safety?

The NCGA has enacted laws to protect our citizens. A law is only as good as the enforcement agency. It is the duty of local governments to fully fund and support our City Police and Sherriff's Offices so they have the tools necessary to keep our communities safe.

While inflation has slowed, rising prices continue to concern North Carolina residents. How will you ensure your constituents are able to afford basic necessities like health care, food and housing?

Increasing taxes on families that are already financially burdened by inflation is problematic. The General Assembly has gradually decreased personal income tax to 3.99 starting in 2026. Also, we increased the deduction amount to 25,500. We also continue to cut burdensome regulations that are punitive to small business owners and stifle the economy. Cutting red tape and leaving more money in family's pockets is the best medicine for inflation.

Is there any policy by your party that you disagree with?

The beauty of our system of government is that we can openly disagree about policy and come to a compromise. In that regard, the Republican Party is no different. Instead of drawing attention to areas of disagreement, my focus is on creating solutions and finding common ground.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Ramsey, The Charlotte Observer, 'Vickie Sawyer, Republican NC Senate District 37 candidate, answers our questions', Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3563D1E9CDE48>



Stacie McGinn, Republican NC Senate District 42 candidate, answers our questions

October 14, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Mary Ramsey, The Charlotte Observer | Section: voter_guide | 799 Words OpenURL Link

To help inform voters in the Nov. 5, 2024, election, this candidate questionnaire is available to be republished by local publications in North Carolina without any cost. Please consider subscribing to The Charlotte Observer to help make this coverage possible.

Name: Stacie McGinn

Birth date (month, day and year): July 7, 1959

Campaign website or social media page: staciemcginnfornc.com

Occupation: Business executive, non-profit leader

Education: Baylor University B.B.A. Georgetown University J.D.

Have you run for elected office before? (Please list previous offices sought or held)

No

Please list your highlights of civic involvement

Board Member and Chairman, Finance Committee, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra

Member and supporter, St. Gabriel Catholic Church

General Counsel, Republican Party of Mecklenburg County

Board Member and Head of Legislation and Public Policy, RWGC

Volunteer, Samaritan's Purse (relief worker in Boone, NC, following Hurricane Helene)

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and most of the county's towns are on board with draft legislation to get permission from the legislature for a sales tax referendum to pay for public transit and other transportation. If elected, would you support a bill that allows the sales tax increase to appear on the ballot? Why or why not?

As Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have grown, our transportation system and infrastructure have struggled to keep up. I strongly support revamping and improving local transit and transportation. Charlotteans, however, are tiring of tax increases for which they do not see real value. I would want to know more about the referendum and the specific transportation proposals, including its impact on low- and middle-income residents, proposed project costs, and oversight.

In North Carolina, abortion is banned after 12 weeks. State politicians, including gubernatorial candidate Mark Robinson, have said they want to restrict abortion even further. Do you support the state's current abortion restrictions, and what is your approach to legislating issues related to reproductive health?

I support the current North Carolina law and would not seek to change the status quo. The current law strikes the right balance on this difficult issue, with exceptions for rape and incest and fetal abnormalities, and no restriction in the case of the life of the mother. Most North Carolinians do not support abortion on demand but favor a specific time limit. Importantly, the bill also included \$160 million in support services for men and women who choose to have their children.

What would you say is the biggest issue facing your constituents, and what would you do to address it if elected?

The three primary issues I have focused on for this campaign are rising crime, the economy and improving the state's education system. My positions and solutions are discussed on my website at staciemcginnfornc.com. I will work across the aisle to kick start our economy and bring down the cost of living. I will support law enforcement and fight for legislation that makes our streets safer. I will work to improve our schools so every child can receive a world-class education.

While violent crime rates are decreasing nationwide they are growing in large North Carolina cities like Charlotte and Raleigh. How would you tackle the issue of rising violent crime rates and what do you believe is the legislature's role when it comes to public safety?

We must get tough on crime, stop the revolving door that puts criminals back on the street and support law enforcement. I support recent steps to stiffen penalties for drug dealers who are responsible for the alarming increase in drug overdoses. I support examining sentencing laws and bail reform policies so that dangerous criminals are held accountable and kept off our streets. I will work with local and state leaders to make sure we fully fund law enforcement and make our streets safe.

While inflation has slowed, rising prices continue to concern North Carolina residents. How will you ensure your constituents are able to afford basic necessities like health care, food and housing?

I will fight to lower personal income taxes so you can keep more of your hard-earned money. I will fight to cut red tape and support pro-growth policies so our small businesses can thrive creating more good paying jobs. I secure more investment in affordable housing so workers can afford to live in the area where they work. I will work across the aisle to address the cost-of-living crisis created by years of historic inflation, and spur economic growth that lifts up all North Carolinians.

Is there any policy by your party that you disagree with?

I am laser focused on the local issues that face residents of the 42nd District every day: crime, the cost of living and education. I have been crisscrossing the 42nd District since the very beginning of this campaign to spread my positive message. Together, we can make our streets safer, unleash our economy, and improve our schools. I will unite Democrats, Republicans and Independents behind our common-sense message. I deliver results for all the residents of District 42.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Ramsey, The Charlotte Observer, 'Stacie McGinn, Republican NC Senate District 42 candidate, answers our questions', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3563D17ADB4E0>



Zoo offers entry discount to Helene survivors

October 14, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: COURIER-TRIBUNE STAFF| Section: Local | 156 Words OpenURL Link

ASHEBORO — The N.C. Zoo is giving survivors of Hurricane Helene a discount on the admission cost through Friday,

Residents from affected counties may enter the zoo for \$5 per person for up to six people per party.

Eligible guests may request the discount by displaying their valid N.C. photo ID indicating residence within one of the following areas in North Carolina:

Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

"Our hearts go out to our neighbors in Western North Carolina who are still suffering in the wake of Hurricane Helene," zoo representative Sara Pack said. "On behalf of the entire North Carolina Zoo team, we welcome individuals and families from affected communities to visit, explore and recharge as they continue their long journey toward recovery."

For more information, visit www.nczoo.org/events/hurricane-helene-victims.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

COURIER-TRIBUNE STAFF, 'Zoo offers entry discount to Helene survivors', *Courier-Tribune, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C44C2C95D55718



Former Asheboro man seeks hometown's help

October 14, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson PAXTON MEDIA GROUP | Section: Local | 407 Words OpenURL Link

An Asheboro native on the front line of the recovery effort in Asheville in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene is asking for folks in his hometown to help his church's effort to establish some minimal water supplies for people who have no clean water available.

Brad Andrews, a 2007 graduate of Asheboro High School, has lived in western North Carolina for the past four years. He moved to Hendersonville in 2020 to take a job and then moved to Asheville two years ago.

He is a member of Grace Baptist Church in west Asheville and has remained in the city since Helene to assist with recovery efforts. The church is on high ground in west Asheville and escaped damage, so church members have used the building as a site to collect and distribute donated supplies.

Andrews, 35, and other volunteers are concentrating on upfitting homes with a pump system to get some water to them. Asheville's water system was wrecked by the flooding and will take major work to repair.

"Our local church has found that a small reservoir system, a 300-gallon tank and pump connected to a building's existing water system, is the only water solution for many of our members who live in the city," Andrews said. "Our goal is to install reservoirs and pumps on our especially needy homes who are without water indefinitely."

His church is asking for donations so that children and adults can at least take baths and showers until the city's water system is restored. The cost is about \$800 for each system.

Donations can be sent to subsplash.com/u/gracebaptistwestashevill/give.

Andrews said that the emergency response from Helene has evolved. Two weeks ago in the immediate aftermath, the emphasis was on reaching people with life-sustaining supplies, especially people in remote areas.

Now the response is shifting to find ways that will allow people to cope until more normalcy can be established.

"We want people to be able to have running water," Andrews said. "We want to be that resource."

Andrews said that the response to the flooding in Asheville and the vicinity has ranged from tragedy to heroism during the past two weeks.

"We've seen people come together like never before," he said. "Neighbors that were consumed by their own busyness have banded together and helped each other out."

Churches and nonprofits have rallied in difficult daily circumstances to assist people in need.

"The outpouring of love and support from around the country, and even other countries, has been tremendous," Andrews said.

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Citation (aglc Style)



Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 14, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP | Section: Local | 369 Words OpenURL Link

As donations of water, food, baby formula, generators and so many more items continue to arrive in hurricaneravaged western North Carolina, here's a donation item you may not have considered — blood.

The American Red Cross is working to restock much-needed blood products that went uncollected in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which forced the cancellation of more than a hundred blood drives across the region.

"We are in critical need of donors," said Kaitlyn Connolly, regional communications manager for the American Red Cross. "When we don't have electricity or we don't have running water, we can't collect blood, so we had to cancel a lot of those blood drives."

According to Connolly, the organization has missed out on collecting approximately 2,500 blood products because of the hurricane.

"So the need is critical right now," she said. "We're trying to restock the blood on the shelves, because that blood on the shelves is what saves people's lives."

Donors outside of the affected areas, in particular, are encouraged to make an appointment to donate blood now and help keep the blood supply stable in the weeks to come, Connolly said.

As the news has spread about the shortage of blood, citizens have been stepping up to help meet the need, Connolly said.

"We've seen a lot of people coming out and donating, and we're very thankful for them, but we can always use more blood donations, especially now," she said. "We'll take any blood product — whole blood, platelets or plasma."

As an added incentive, anyone who donates blood between now and Oct. 31 will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card by email and will be automatically entered for a chance to win one of three \$5,000 gift cards.

For a full list of blood drives, visit redcross.org.

Want to help?

To find a blood drive near you, visit redcross.org, hover your cursor over "Give Blood" and then click "Find A Blood Drive." Type in your ZIP Code for a list of upcoming blood drives in your area. Anyone who donates blood, platelets or plasma between now and Oct. 31 will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card by email, and will be automatically entered for a chance to win one of three \$5,000 gift cards. For full details, visit redcrossblood.org/treat.

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JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP, 'Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene', *Courier-Tribune, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4555D3283A7E8



Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 14, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP| Section: News | 289 Words OpenURL Link

As donations of water, food, baby formula, generators and so many more items continue to arrive in hurricaneravaged western North Carolina, here's a donation item you may not have considered — blood.

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For a full list of blood drives, visit redcross.org.

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'Spectacle' Starworks benefit set for Oct. 26

October 14, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: COURIER-TRIBUNE STAFF | Section: Entertainment | 304 Words OpenURL Link

STAR — Starworks, 100 Russell Drive, Star, will hold "Spectacle: Experience the extraordinary," a fundraising event filled with theatrics, special guest artists, live jazz, silent and live auctions and a "Raise the paddle," on Saturday, Oct. 26.

This year's highlights include a RhinoLeap Productions performance of scenes from Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility," a luncheon, the brand-new "Experience Starworks" silent auction and the "Makers dozen" live auction.

The event will run from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., as follows:

11 a.m.: Meet Starworks' artists and studio tours.Noon: Luncheon with artists and special guests.1 p.m.: Live theater performance by RhinoLeap Productions, featuring scenes from "Sense and Sensibility."2 p.m.: "Experience Starworks" silent auction closes.2 p.m.: "Makers dozen" live auction of 13 specially selected artworks. "Raise the paddle" to support artists impacted by Hurricane Helene.

All proceeds from "Raise the paddle" will help Starworks provide materials, temporary housing and essential resources for displaced artists, enabling them to continue their work and rebuild their futures.

The "Makers dozen" live auction features works spanning glass, ceramic, metal and wood by artists Jack Barnes, Katherine Maloney, Donna Craven, Matt Kelleher, Wes Hart, Aytac and Davids, Ibrahim Said, Mark Peiser, Michael Waller, Leash-Foushee Waller, John Miller, Jen Fuller and Richard Jolley.

The first-ever "Experience Starworks" silent auction includes beautiful selections from Starworks' line of signature glass creations, such as a set of handmade glasses, a "12 days or ornaments" collection and a glass pumpkin patch. Additional auction opportunities include "Make your own" experiences, allowing the winner and a guest(s) to participate in a private, hands-on workshop at Starworks' glass, ceramic or metal studios.

To preview the auctions, visit StarworksNC.org/spectacle. Absentee bidding is available for the "Makers dozen" live auction by emailing support@starworksnc.org.

Tickets are \$150 per person, \$250 per couple and \$50 for Starworks alumni and can be purchased at StarworksNC.org/spectacle or in person at the School House Gallery at Starworks.

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Rob Schofield: The best way to improve disaster relief is to prepare now

October 14, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 818 Words OpenURL Link

Government officials and average citizens of all guises and stripes have done a mostly remarkable job of carrying out relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Notwithstanding the understandable frustrations of those in devastated areas still waiting for aid and the calculated lies of some cynical politicians and shameless social media creeps, the truth is that government agencies and elected leaders of both major parties have been working tirelessly, and even heroically, in the storm's aftermath.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County, said Oct. 4 in response to the wild and false rumors and crazy conspiracy theories that continue to spread on social media: "turn that garbage off...get off Facebook and get out there and put on a pair of boots and pair of gloves and get to work."

Meanwhile, average citizens and private organizations across the state are heeding Wilke's call by contributing millions of dollars, tons of supplies and, where and when possible, large amounts of physical labor to the effort.

In some places, officials have been inundated by so many donations that figuring out a way to distribute them efficiently is one of the big current challenges. And this latter fact helps illustrate an important good-news-bad-news truth about the current situation.

The good news, of course, is that notwithstanding the yawning political divides that plague us these days, the vast majority of North Carolinians still care about their neighbors and are anxious to do what they can to help people in need — whatever their politics or beliefs. We may be a tense and quarrelsome body politic these days, but thankfully for most people, basic human decency still prevails.

The bad — or at least maddening — news in all this, however, is how sadly familiar it all feels. As with the societal outpourings of shock, grief and goodwill toward the victims that invariably follow in the aftermath of the mass shootings that so plague us, the hurricane response is wonderful and inspiring. But it's also, as the old saying goes, a day late and a dollar short.

In other words, the overwhelming societal response to Helene and other similar disasters demonstrates the happy fact that Americans remain willing to sacrifice for the common good. But as with the shootings, what's needed is not just post-disaster relief and sacrifice, but pre-disaster prevention.

Think about it: As climate change and population growth conspire to place millions and millions more people in harm's way, disasters like Helene are certain to become increasingly common unless society comes together quickly to do two things that only government can spearhead.

First is dramatically enhancing physical infrastructure and disaster planning, as well as the rules governing where and how buildings are constructed.

Simply put, we can and should have water and sewer systems and power and communication grids that are vastly more resilient, but it will take money — lots of it — to construct and maintain them.

The same is true for the kind of pre-positioned disaster relief and recovery equipment and personnel that could spring into action in huge numbers on a moment's notice to the remotest mountain holler, and for stricter zoning and building codes that could make homes and businesses much tougher and storm resistant. We can have these things, but only if we're willing to pay for them.

What's lacking, sadly, are political leaders who have the courage to speak these hard truths, to say "no" to greedy industry lobbyists who try to block every proposed regulation and to ask voters to come together and sacrifice a little ahead of time so that a crazy patchwork of public and private relief efforts will be less necessary in the future.

And, of course, the same is true for climate change itself. As Helene made clear yet again, global warming and sealevel rise may appear to be steady, incremental processes when viewed from a distance, but up close they are violent and episodic.

Happily, we have the knowledge and capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rapidly so that climate change doesn't spiral utterly out of control in the coming decades, but again, probably only if we're willing to make some modest sacrifices. And that means — at least initially — things like slightly higher taxes and energy bills, and lifestyle changes like winding down the overwhelming societal reliance on internal combustion vehicles.

Will a majority of American politicians ever get to the point — as is already the case in some more enlightened countries — at which they're willing to level with voters about these facts?

The current electoral cycle in which one side constantly repeats the virulent lie that climate change is a hoax, while the other mostly avoids the issue or implies that it can be addressed in a pain-free manner, inspires little confidence.

One prays that it won't take several more Helene-like disasters to convince a majority of Americans and their leaders to grasp the wisdom of sacrificing a little now to save a lot later.

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Harris urges congregants to put faith into action at Greenville church

October 14, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Ginger Livingston The Daily Reflector | Section: Local | 436 Words OpenURL Link

GREENVILLE — Citing lessons learned at her childhood church, Vice President Kamala Harris urged the congregation of Koinonia Christian Center Church on Sunday to continue putting its faith into action.

The Democratic presidential nominee spoke at Koinonia hours before appearing in front of an audience of 7,000 people at East Carolina University's Minges Coliseum.

"My earliest memories of the teachings are that we have a loving God, a God who asks us to speak up for those who can speak for themselves. To defend the rights of the poor and the needy," Harris said. "At an early age I learned that faith was a verb, that we show in action and in service."

Harris said she's seen action and service in the nation's response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton. She mentioned a family who had lost everything gathering supplies for people they believed were worse off than them.

She also shared the story of Eddie Hunnell, a man who jumped in a river to save a woman from drowning after he couldn't reach her by canoe.

Hunnell told Harris he had to save the woman, that he didn't have a choice, even though everyone knows he did have a choice, Harris said.

"His choice was to take a risk to save another," she said.

The actions of Hunnell and hundreds others make the rumors and misinformation being spread about relief efforts in the wake of the hurricanes unconscionable, Harris said. She said people who need help are being convinced that forces are working against them, and as a consequence, won't seek aid.

"Let's let that sink in for a minute," Harris said. "Right now Americans are experiencing some of the most difficult moments in their lives. But instead of offering hope there are those that are channeling their tragedies and sorrows into grievance and hatred. They are playing politics with the heartbreak of millions.

"That is not what leaders we know do in crisis," Harris said. "Now is the time to bring folks together, to come together and be there for one another."

Hundreds filled Koinonia's sanctuary for the vice president's visit.

"God is shining down on Koinonia today," Koinonia Bishop Rose O'neal told the congregation.

Harris' appearance comes as her campaign launches a "Souls to the Polls" voter engagement initiative encouraging Black voters to put their faith into action at the ballot box.

"There are things on all sides that we don't agree with but what I've asked you over the years is to listen to the issues, then try to get a sense of the direction that person would take our country in, look at their service history and pray and ask the Lord," O'neal said.

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Ginger Livingston The Daily Reflector, 'Harris urges congregants to put faith into action at Greenville church', *Daily Advance, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C365E290E6FEF0>



What's up

October 14, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Julian Eure| Section: Whats Up| 1142 Words OpenURL Link

TODAY

Harman-Scott meet-greet

Susan Harman-Scott, candidate for state Senate in North Carolina's District 1, will attend a meet-and-greet event at the Perquimans County Democratic Party's headquarters at 112 Market St., Hertford, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Computer help

The Pasquotank County Library will host computer assistance program on Google Docs today and Word 1 on Thursday. Both programs are at 4 p.m. and require pre-registration by calling Mike at 335-7536.

Donations for western NC

Food Bank of the Albemarle is accepting donations of non-perishable food, personal hygiene items and cleaning supplies for delivery to western counties in North Carolina hard hit by Tropical Storm Helene. Items will be accepted Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact: 252-335-4035.

Splash Week

Arts of the Albemarle's annual Splash Week continues in Elizabeth City's downtown through Saturday. Events for the artists' retreat will include the first-ever Splash Art Fair on North Poindexter Street on Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Artists and artisans are invited to sell their work at the fair. The event will also feature free music, family activities and crafts.

Library storytime

The Pasquotank County Library will host a storytime program on the theme "Cats" for kids ages 1-2 today and kids 1 and younger on Thursday. Both programs at 10 a.m.

Programming Room

The East Carolina Digital Literacy Program will host an online safety and privacy program at the Pasquotank County Library from 10 a.m. to noon. To register, call the library at 252-335-7536 or visit https://bit.ly/47CNVIw.

Boo Bowling

The Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce will host "Boo Bowling" at Albemarle Lanes from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Cost is \$100 for team of four people.

THURSDAY

One-stop voting begins

One-stop voting for the 2024 election begins in area counties. In Pasquotank County, voting will be at the K.E. White Center weekdays from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; on Saturday, Oct. 19, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and on

Sunday, Oct. 20, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

FRIDAYMedicare outreach

The North Carolina State Health Plan will host a 2025 open enrollment Medicare outreach event at Museum of the Albemarle from 10 a.m. to noon.

Hertford Ghost Walk

Masonic Lodge 106 and Church of the Holy Trinity will host the Historic Ghost Walk in Hertford Friday and Saturday from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. each night. Tickets are \$10 and available at the Perquimans Chamber of Commerce Office at 118 W Market St., Hertford; Tommy's Pizza at 309 Ocean S. Hertford; and Church of the Holy Trinity both nights of tour.

SAturday

Wings Over Edenton

The Wings over Edenton air show and pilot fly-in will be held at Northeastern Regional Airport in Edenton. The free event will feature static displays of historic and current aircraft, an aerobatic demonstration, Young Eagle flights for youngsters, helicopter rides, a car and tractor show, vendor displays, and food trucks. To participate in the fly-in, contact tyler.newman@edenton.nc.gov or call (252) 482-2155, ext. 535.

MONDAY

Red Cross blood drive

The American Red Cross will host a blood drive in the main room at Albemarle Area Association of Realtors in Elizabeth City, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Computer help

The Pasquotank County Library will host computer assistance program on PowerPoint; PowerPoint on Tuesday; Google Docs 2 on Wednesday, Oct. 23; and Word 2 on Thursday, Oct. 24. All programs at 4 p.m. and require pre-registration by calling Mike at 335-7536.

UPCOMING

Library storytime

The Pasquotank County Library will host a storytime program on the theme "Cake" for kids ages 3-5 with an adult on Tuesday, Oct. 22; kids ages 1-2 on Wednesday, Oct. 23; and kids 1 and younger on Thursday, Oct. 24. All classes at 10 a.m.

Programming Room

The East Carolina Digital Literacy Program will host a program on how to search for trusted online sites at the Pasquotank County Library Wednesday, Oct. 23 from 10 a.m. to noon. To register, call the library at 252-335-7536 or visit https://bit.ly/47CNVIw. Each participant who completes the pre-test and post-test will be entered in a drawing to win an iPad. Light refreshments will be served.

Red Cross blood drives

The American Red Cross will host blood drives in the Sentara Albemarle Medical Center education rooms

Wednesday, Oct. 23 from noon to 5 p.m.; JP Knapp Early College High School gym in Currituck Monday, Oct. 28 from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; the B&M Contractors, Inc. training room in Elizabeth City on Tuesday, Oct. 29, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and the City Road United Methodist Church fellowship hall in Elizabeth City Thursday, Oct. 31, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Programming Room

The East Carolina Digital Literacy Program will host a program on how to use healthcare online at the Pasquotank County Library Wednesday, Oct. 23 from 10 a.m. to noon. Students will learn how to use telehealth. To register, call the library at 252-335-7536 or visit https://bit.ly/47CNVIw. Each participant who completes the pre-test and post-test will be entered in a drawing to win an iPad. Light refreshments will be served.

Community Olympics

The Boys & Girls Club will host its Community Olympic Games at 108 East Ward St., Elizabeth City, Thursday, Oct. 24. Contact: ejmitchell@bgc-albemarle.org or call 252-216-5966.

YMCA Golf Classic

The 18th annual YMCA Golf Classic to benefit the Y's All Kids Swim Program will be held at the Pines of Elizabeth City, Friday, Oct. 25. Donations raised by the tournament will allow Albemarle Family YMCA to offer free swim lessons to area children. Check-in is 11 a.m. and shotgun start tee-off is at noon. Team of four costs \$450, individuals are \$113, and mulligans are \$10 each with a limit of two per player. Register and payment due Oct. 15. Send to Jane Snyder, Albemarle Family YMCA, 1240 N. Road St., Elizabeth City, 27909 or email jsnyder@ymcashr.org.

Computer help

The Pasquotank County Library will host computer assistance program on Google Docs Monday, Oct. 28; mouse and keyboarding on Tuesday, Oct. 29; Google Drive on Wednesday, Oct. 30; and PowerPoint on Thursday, Oct. 31. All programs at 4 p.m. and require pre-registration by calling Mike at 335-7536.

Soil and water programs

The Northeast Ag Expo will sponsor a workshop for farmers on Tuesday, Oct. 29 at 8 a.m. at the Pasquotank Extension Office in Elizabeth City. Attendees will learn from FSA, Soil and Water and NRCS about various available programs and deadlines as well as the resources these agencies offer area farmers. To register, contact the Perquimans Center of NC Extension at 252-426-5428.

Library storytime

The Pasquotank County Library will host a storytime program on the theme "Halloween" for kids ages 3-5 with an adult on Tuesday, Oct. 29; kids ages 1-2 on Wednesday, Oct. 30; and kids 1 and younger on Thursday, Oct. 31. All classes at 10 a.m.

Landslide to perform

The Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce will host its Appreciation & Celebration Extravaganza featuring Landslide, a Fleetwood Mac tribute band, at Sagos on the River Nov. 9 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Drew Gregory and Chris Betts will be guest performers. Tickets are \$100, corporate tables are \$900.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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All reported missing persons have been accounted for in Rutherford County

October 14, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Helene | 262 Words OpenURL Link

Rutherford County Emergency management announced over the weekend that all of the more than 1,100 missing persons reported after Hurricane Helene have been accounted for. They announced that three deaths in the county have been confirmed to be caused by the storm.

According to a press release on Oct. 11, the National Guard is now leading an effort to clean debris from Lake Lure, with a focus on a 16-acre area. The cleaning process is expected to take several months and locals are being asked to stay out of the lake as it is still unsafe. The town of Lake Lure has requested an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) consultation through FEMA. The request has been received and is being evaluated. Booms are in place to prevent large debris from going further downstream toward the dam. A hazmat boom has been strategically placed to soak up water, oil, coolants and other materials, preventing these from going downstream.

Storm debris pickup on state and municipality-maintained roads will begin no earlier than Oct. 21, a schedule will be posted on the Rutherford County Emergency Management Facebook page.

As of Oct. 11, it is reported that 97.8%% of Duke customers and 97.2% of Rutherford electric customers' power has been restored.

Town officials in Lake Lure have asked that only locals who live and work in the area should travel to the town, as cleanup and construction to the roads in the area is still ongoing. The N.C. Highway Patrol and the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office are overseeing checkpoints requiring verification to minimize traffic going to Town Center and beyond.

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STAFF REPORTS, 'All reported missing persons have been accounted for in Rutherford County', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C393D477EFFDF8



Bostic man arrested, charged with threatening FEMA workers; Officials say no militias were operating in Rutherford County

October 14, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: SCOTT CARPENTER scarpenter@thedigitalcourier.com| Section: Archives | 767 Words OpenURL Link

CHIMNEY ROCK — Some aid work was temporarily suspended in Chimney Rock and Lake Lure on Saturday, Oct. 12, because of threats to the safety of the aid workers, according to the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office. One man, William Jacob Parsons, a white male age 44 of Waters Road, Bostic, was arrested and charged with "going armed to the terror of the public."

Parsons was processed by officers with the Rutherford County Sheriff's Department and was later released on bail the same evening of the arrest, posting a \$10,000 secured bond.

Authorities say Parsons made credible threats verbally on Saturday, and earlier in the week, via social media. He specifically threatened workers with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

A Rutherford County Sheriff's Department spokesperson stated "...Rutherford County Communications Center received a call at approximately 12:54 p.m. stating that a white male had an assault rifle and made the comment about possibly harming FEMA employees working after the disaster of Hurricane Helene in the Lake Lure-Chimney Rock area. Once deputies of the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office were made aware, the deputies alerted officers with the Lake Lure Police Department and other law enforcement officers from other agencies helping with relief efforts."

Deputies went the location of where the threat was made, in Polk County, and obtained more information. Officers were ultimately able to identify Parsons as the suspect. At the time of his arrest, he was armed with a handgun and a rifle.

Some national news outlets, including The Washington Post, reported that National Guard troops saw "armed militia" threatening workers. Threats were also reported, leading to a pause in operations, in Ashe County.

According to Chief Deputy Randy Greenway, of the Rutherford County Sheriff's Department, there have been no armed militias operating in Rutherford County over the weekend.

"We believe Parsons was operating alone," Greenway said.

While he couldn't speak directly about the mindset of Parsons, Greenway said everyone is entitled to their opinion in a free society.

"But you don't have the right to physically threaten people or to threaten people with a weapon," Greenway said.

Greenway said he doesn't believe that most in Rutherford County hold extremist anti-government views.

"I don't think that this incident represents all of Rutherford County," Greenway explained. "I believe most people, in Lake Lure and Chimney Rock, are appreciative of FEMA's efforts and the efforts of all the people, local and from out of town, who have come in to help this area recover."

The threats, and the temporary suspension of work by FEMA on Saturday, helped no one, officials have said. This only led to delays in the work being done and raised the level of anxiety in the areas of Rutherford County hardest hit by Hurricane Helene, they said.

Greenway was adamant when he said, "there is no information to suggest there are armed militias operating in Rutherford County or targeting Rutherford County."

National news organizations suggested militias are meddling in areas where FEMA is operating.

"Rumors seem to spread quickly here, but there are no militias in Chimney Rock or Lake Lure," Greenway said.

"We want to urge anyone who thinks they know of a threat of any kind, to contact law enforcement immediately," he continued. "Do not go on social media, spreading false information or rumors that you do not know if they are true or not."

Greenway said this incident with Parsons is unfortunate, and there could be additional charges against him.

"Work had to be suspended. Progress was delayed. This was not helpful. Those in Chimney Rock and Lake Lure who are just doing their jobs, trying to help with the recovery — these people should not have to be looking over their shoulders," Greenway continued. "You can hold your own personal opinions. But threatening physical violence is going too far and is illegal."

Greenway emphasized that if any activity, or threats, rise to the level of a crime, local enforcement will do its job to uphold the law.

"We will do our job, regardless of political opinions or viewpoints," Greenway said. "We will always come down on the side of the law."

With the tragic events, the destruction, associated with the recent hurricane, Greenway said it is heartwarming to see so many in the community coming together to support each other. And it's heartwarming to see the people and the aid coming into these communities from outside Rutherford County, to help with recovery, he said.

"So it is very disappointing when we have cases like this, with individuals making threats to others trying to help," Greenway added. "Again, I want to emphasize, if you know of any sort of threat, contact law enforcement. Do not spread rumors, which only make the situation worse."

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SCOTT CARPENTER scarpenter@thedigitalcourier.com, 'Bostic man arrested, charged with threatening FEMA workers; Officials say no militias were operating in Rutherford County', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C393D4700968B8>



Open burning permits waived until further notice for 21 counties in Western North Carolina

October 14, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 290 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — The N.C. Forest Service is waiving the requirement for open burning permits in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties effective at noon Saturday, Oct. 12, until further notice. This measure is enacted through the authorization of House Bill 149, the Disaster Recovery Act of 2024, according to a press release from N.C. Department of Agriculture.

"Hurricane Helene left excessive amounts of storm-related debris on the ground in the western part of the state," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "Critical infrastructure is still being restored, and many communities continue to have limited access, making it difficult, nearly impossible, for people to comply with the law and get a burning permit. While we're waiving the requirement for a permit in these 21 counties, we cannot stress caution and safety enough when it comes to burning outdoors this time of year.

"With more fuel on the ground as a result of the hurricane, seasonal leaf fall and as conditions continue to dry, burning storm-related debris as safely as possible is paramount. We need our emergency personnel focused on hurricane response and recovery efforts, not pulled away by escaped debris burns. Use the best practices and wildfire prevention tips recommended by the forest service," said Troxler.

This waiver does not apply to permits required by other agencies, including the N.C. Division of Air Quality or a local fire marshal's office, according to the press release.

When burning outdoors, recommended best practices include the following:

Never burn on a dry, windy day.

Never leave your fire unattended.

Keep a water source, shovel, rake and a phone nearby.

For additional best practices and wildfire prevention tips, visit www.ncforestservice.gov/fire_control/fc_firesafetyoutdoors.htm.

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Rob Schofield: The best way to improve disaster relief is to prepare now

October 14, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 818 Words OpenURL Link

Government officials and average citizens of all guises and stripes have done a mostly remarkable job of carrying out relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Notwithstanding the understandable frustrations of those in devastated areas still waiting for aid and the calculated lies of some cynical politicians and shameless social media creeps, the truth is that government agencies and elected leaders of both major parties have been working tirelessly, and even heroically, in the storm's aftermath.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County, said Oct. 4 in response to the wild and false rumors and crazy conspiracy theories that continue to spread on social media: "turn that garbage off...get off Facebook and get out there and put on a pair of boots and pair of gloves and get to work."

Meanwhile, average citizens and private organizations across the state are heeding Wilke's call by contributing millions of dollars, tons of supplies and, where and when possible, large amounts of physical labor to the effort.

In some places, officials have been inundated by so many donations that figuring out a way to distribute them efficiently is one of the big current challenges. And this latter fact helps illustrate an important good-news-bad-news truth about the current situation.

The good news, of course, is that notwithstanding the yawning political divides that plague us these days, the vast majority of North Carolinians still care about their neighbors and are anxious to do what they can to help people in need — whatever their politics or beliefs. We may be a tense and quarrelsome body politic these days, but thankfully for most people, basic human decency still prevails.

The bad — or at least maddening — news in all this, however, is how sadly familiar it all feels. As with the societal outpourings of shock, grief and goodwill toward the victims that invariably follow in the aftermath of the mass shootings that so plague us, the hurricane response is wonderful and inspiring. But it's also, as the old saying goes, a day late and a dollar short.

In other words, the overwhelming societal response to Helene and other similar disasters demonstrates the happy fact that Americans remain willing to sacrifice for the common good. But as with the shootings, what's needed is not just post-disaster relief and sacrifice, but pre-disaster prevention.

Think about it: As climate change and population growth conspire to place millions and millions more people in harm's way, disasters like Helene are certain to become increasingly common unless society comes together quickly to do two things that only government can spearhead.

First is dramatically enhancing physical infrastructure and disaster planning, as well as the rules governing where and how buildings are constructed.

Simply put, we can and should have water and sewer systems and power and communication grids that are vastly more resilient, but it will take money — lots of it — to construct and maintain them.

The same is true for the kind of pre-positioned disaster relief and recovery equipment and personnel that could spring into action in huge numbers on a moment's notice to the remotest mountain holler, and for stricter zoning and building codes that could make homes and businesses much tougher and storm resistant. We can have these things, but only if we're willing to pay for them.

What's lacking, sadly, are political leaders who have the courage to speak these hard truths, to say "no" to greedy industry lobbyists who try to block every proposed regulation and to ask voters to come together and sacrifice a little ahead of time so that a crazy patchwork of public and private relief efforts will be less necessary in the future.

And, of course, the same is true for climate change itself. As Helene made clear yet again, global warming and sealevel rise may appear to be steady, incremental processes when viewed from a distance, but up close they are violent and episodic.

Happily, we have the knowledge and capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rapidly so that climate change doesn't spiral utterly out of control in the coming decades, but again, probably only if we're willing to make some modest sacrifices. And that means — at least initially — things like slightly higher taxes and energy bills, and lifestyle changes like winding down the overwhelming societal reliance on internal combustion vehicles.

Will a majority of American politicians ever get to the point — as is already the case in some more enlightened countries — at which they're willing to level with voters about these facts?

The current electoral cycle in which one side constantly repeats the virulent lie that climate change is a hoax, while the other mostly avoids the issue or implies that it can be addressed in a pain-free manner, inspires little confidence.

One prays that it won't take several more Helene-like disasters to convince a majority of Americans and their leaders to grasp the wisdom of sacrificing a little now to save a lot later.

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Staff Writer, 'Rob Schofield: The best way to improve disaster relief is to prepare now', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3463935EF6B38>



VP Harris asks Koinonia congregation to put faith into action

October 14, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Ginger Livingston | Section: Local | 429 Words OpenURL Link

Citing lessons learned at her childhood church, Vice President Kamala Harris urged the congregation of Koinonia Christian Center to keep putting faith into action.

The Democratic presidential nominee spoke at Koinonia hours before appearing in front of 7,000 people at East Carolina University's Minges Coliseum on Sunday during a two-day campaign swing through North Carolina.

"My earliest memories of the teachings are that we have a loving God, a God who asks us to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. To defend the rights of the poor and the needy," Harris said. "At an early age I learned that faith was a verb, that we show in action and in service."

Harris said she's seen action and service in the nation's response to the survivors of Hurricane Helene and Milton, such as a family who lost everything in the storm but worked to gather supplies for people they believed were worse off than them.

She also shared the story of Eddie Hunnell, a man who jumped in a river to save a woman from drowning after he couldn't reach her by canoe.

Hunnell told Harris he had to save the woman, that he didn't have a choice, Harris said, but everyone knows he did have a choice.

"His choice was to take a risk to save another," Harris said.

The actions of people like Hunnell and hundreds more make misinformation about relief efforts unconscionable, she said, because it is convincing some that efforts to help people are doing the opposite and discouraging them from seeking aid.

"Let's let that sink in for a minute," she said. "Right now Americans are experiencing some of the most difficult moments in their lives. But instead of offering hope, there are those that are channeling tragedies and sorrows into grievance and hatred. They are playing politics with the heartbreak of millions.

"That is not what leaders we know do in crisis. Now is the time to bring folks together, to come together and be there for one another," Harris said.

Hundreds filled Koinonia's sanctuary to hear the vice president.

"God is shining down on Koinonia today," Bishop Rose O'neal said.

Harris' appearance comes as her campaign launches a "Souls to the Polls" voter engagement initiative encouraging black voters to put their faith into action at the ballot box.

"There are things on all sides that we don't agree with, but what I've asked you over the years is to listen to the issues, then try to get a sense of the direction that person would take our country in, look at their service history and pray and ask the Lord," O'neal said.

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Ginger Livingston, 'VP Harris asks Koinonia congregation to put faith into action', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C365F5AD2D0488



Robinson advocates 'policy over personality' during Ayden stump

October 14, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Pat Gruner | Section: Local | 1010 Words OpenURL Link

AYDEN — The Republican nominee for governor fired up supporters during a visit to an Ayden eatery on Monday where he vowed to seek legal action against CNN while criticizing Democrats for disaster relief and public safety policy.

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's visit filled the dining room at Bum's Restaurant on Third Street with voters bedecked in red hats and shirts sitting or standing throughout the space.

A campaign spokesman introduced Robinson as the next governor of North Carolina to raucous applause. Robinson told those in attendance that he has helped deliver over 5 million pounds of food to western reaches of the state devastated by Hurricane Helene, where his focus has now shifted to preparing residents for winter and Election Day.

"We're working with folks at the national level, the state level and at the local level to ensure the polls are open, but the bigger issue is travel up there is still kind of tricky for folks," Robinson told reporters. "We're going to see if we can't help to organize some folks that can help people get back and forth to the polls."

The lieutenant governor told supporters that opponents including N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein, the Democrat nominee for governor, have spent \$50 million against his campaign. One of the guests chimed in that Robinson must "feel special."

"Oh yeah, we feel real special," Robinson responded to laughter. "We feel real set aside.

"Why they doing all this, folks? Why are they spending \$50 million on a guy they said couldn't win the governor's mansion? Because they know we can," he said. "They know good and well what's at stake here."

Robinson called a September CNN report that said he made lewd and antisemitic remarks on a pornographic website "garbage," adding he expected to file a lawsuit on Tuesday to "take CNN to task for what they have done to me."

"I've been completely transparent about my life," Robinson said. "Wrote a book telling folks about the bad experiences I've had, the mistakes that I've made. When reporters came to me and asked me about what I actually said and wrote, I told them straight to their face, 'Yeah, I said it, and if you don't like it, too bad.' CNN can't say that."

Robinson announced at a Raleigh news conference on Tuesday the suit had been filed in Wake County Superior Court. It claims that CNN "chose to publish despite knowing or recklessly disregarding that Lt. Gov. Robinson's data — including his name, date of birth, passwords, and the email address supposedly associated with the NudeAfrica account — were previously compromised by multiple data breaches."

He also questioned a frequent Stein campaign boast that the N.C. Justice Department and legislators earlier this year cleared a backlog of 16,000 untested rape kits from law enforcement agencies statewide. Robinson blamed the backlog's existence on Stein and his predecessor in the attorney general post, now Gov. Roy Cooper.

"How'd they get behind, Josh?" Robinson asked. "How did you let them get behind? Were you not doing your job? Or maybe it was your predecessor, Roy Cooper, who let them get behind. Either way it's on you. They never should have got behind because you should've been doing your darn job."

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{div}Morgan Hopkins, a Stein campaign spokeswoman, refuted the accusation and said that Stein worked across the aisle to address the backlog. She said that Stein also worked with the legislature to install measures to prevent a future backlog and that, as governor, he would continue such a bipartisan approach.{/div}

{div} {/div}

{div}Hopkins said that a prior backlog at the State Crime Lab was cleared during Cooper's tenure as attorney general. {/div}

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{div}Robinson's turn to eastern North Carolina included Sunday visits to Craven and Onslow counties. The focus comes less than a month away from Election Day on Nov. 5. He called the region a "crucial" part of the state and that economically North Carolina is in a position for residents to be on more even footing.{/div}

"We have huge plans for this part of the state as governor," Robinson told reporters after the rally. "You heard my message in there, we're talking about those five pillars. The goal there is to start the process of really starting to build this thing. We want an economy that spans from Murphy to Manteo. We want an economy that's no longer fragmented."

The five pillars on which Robinson plans to build the economy are public safety, public education, health care, infrastructure and housing. He said the governor's role in appointing department heads is crucial to addressing the issues and that state agencies need to "put up guardrails instead of barriers" for residents.

Johnny Justice, a Pitt County independent voter, said he does not know how people outside of single-issue voters can cast a ballot for Stein. He feels Robinson's policies are "broad enough" to address demographics regardless of where people live in the state, rather than focusing on metropolitan areas like Raleigh or Charlotte.

Justice said that Stein is "probably a great individual," but that he would not vote for him in good conscience.

"I don't have a dog on either party, but what I am is a patriot and I'm voting for this country," Justice said.

Hunter Briley said he is voting for Robinson partially because his policies align with Briley's Christian values and also because he is concerned about fentanyl, which the CDC estimates killed 74,702 Americans in 2023.

"To me, I take it personally, you know," Briley said. "That's our people, it's our country, our home, so something should be done about it. It doesn't seem that the other side wants to do anything about it."

Robinson criticized Stein's decision to join a lawsuit against the social media platform TikTok last week, calling his concerns out of whack compared to the opioid epidemic.

He urged supporters to participate in early voting, which begins Thursday.

The lieutenant governor has previously voiced opposition to the number of days available to vote in North Carolina, but said that if the practice is available, people should take advantage of it. He told people that when they vote, it should also be Republican down the ballot.

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He urged supporters to participate in early voting, which begins Thursday.

The lieutenant governor has previously voiced opposition to the number of days available to vote in North Carolina, but said that if the practice is available, people should take advantage of it. He told people that when they vote, it should also be Republican down the ballot.

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