

### Autumn in the Park draws locals for fall festival

October 21, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 479 Words OpenURL Link

The fourth annual Autumn in the Park festival by In the Park Events took place on Saturday, Oct. 19, from 1 to 7:30 p.m. at Baird Park in Sawmills. Vendors and guests sprawled across the park, with children and dogs in costume for the annual costume contests.

In the Park Events estimated 8,200 people attended the festival this year, patronizing 91 local vendors. If it matches with the exact number the organizers receive from the town in the next few weeks, that number will beat out last year's over 7,000 attendees.

The festival included a free children's area where children could visit Sprinkle's Mobile Petting Zoo or play on the inflatable house and slide free of charge (with a fee for those looking to feed the animals). The area also included face painting stands and the Teddy Bear Mobile plush-stuffing center.

The annual dog costume contest was held at 3:30 p.m. with 13 entrants in colorful costumes. Three awards were given out. The Cutest Costume award was given to Steve and Danielle Miller's Winnie, dressed as a pizza delivery boy. Most creative went to Kelly Sky McMurtry's Chia, dressed as a Hershey's Kiss. Steve Kaylor's Jocie won Best in Show dressed as a Target shopping cart.

In the children's contest, at 6:30 p.m., 78 entrants competed for a total of 15 awards between three age groups, 0-3, 4-7 and 8-12. 5 awards were given to each group: Best in Show, Scariest Costume, Parky's Choice, Most Creative and Best Hocus Pocus.

In addition to the vendors, contests and children's area, the event featured live music, a performance from Granite Falls' new Appalachian Rhythm Clogging and Dance studio, and a fireworks display arranged by the town of Sawmills. The festival was centered around the park's playground, so the children had a place to play while parents rested or ate from the local food vendors.

To vendors that were affected by the impact of Tropical Storm Helene, In the Park Events offered refunds to those who couldn't get to the park for the event and offered discounted rates to vendors that had other events cancelled due to the storm, making room for them as needed.

"A huge thank you to everyone who came out to this year's Autumn in the Park!" said In the Park on Facebook after the event. "It was an incredible day full of fun, food, and entertainment. While we don't have the final numbers yet, we're thrilled to share that over 7,000 of you joined us this year!

"A special thanks to all our sponsors, vendors, and food trucks for helping make this event such a success. Huge shout to the Town of Sawmills and their Parks and Recreation Department. We couldn't have done it without you!"

In the Park's next event is the Food Truck Rodeo at Hudson's HUB station on Nov. 9, followed by the Christmas in the Market in Sawmills on Nov. 23.

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### Raiders finish regular season unbeaten in conference

October 21, 2024 | Sampson Independent, The (Clinton, NC) Author: Daron Barefoot Sports Writer | Section: sports | 546 Words OpenURL Link

Hosting St. Paul's in Spivey's Corner, Midway was looking to wrap up conference play with a perfect mark Tuesday night. The Lady Raiders were also celebrating Senior Night as they closed out their regular season home schedule against the Lady Bulldogs. When the final whistle blew, Midway swept conference play, getting the victory in straight sets, 3-0.

It was five straight points out of the gate for Midway in the first set, which quickly led to a timeout from the visiting Lady Bulldogs. When the action resumed, a Gracyn Hall kill continued the streak before St. Pauls was finally on the board at 7-1. They made it 7-2 and some good, competitive volleyball began to unfold. Still, the Lady Raiders held the advantage, though the Lady Bulldogs were trying to claw back. Instead, Midway gradually rebuilt their lead and reached double digits at 17-7. From there, they'd go on to win the set 25-16.

The second set got off to a much closer start, one that saw St. Pauls briefly lead. After being tied 4-4, the Lady Raiders plowed ahead at 9-4 to yield another St. Pauls timeout. Their run continued out of the break, though, and the lead hit double digits at 14-4. From there, they went on to win the set 25-7 to go up two sets to none.

Continuing their dominating effort in the third, it turned out to be a breeze for the Lady Raiders as they coasted to another blowout win, 25-8.

Now that the regular season is a wrap, Midway will shift their focus to the playoffs, where the Lady Raiders are expected to get another high seed. All season long, they've been bouncing back and forth between the number two and number three seed. They conclude the regular season at 18-3 overall and 10-0 in conference play, but will have to wait until Sunday to find out where exactly they land. Regardless, they should enjoy at least a couple games at home.

Having reached the East Regional finals three years in a row, Midway's team is wondering if this can be the year they finally climb the hurdle and break through into a state championship appearance.

"We have to focus on the basics as we prepare for playoffs," head Coach Susan Clark said. "We have to clean up our game some. The girls have been having fun and playing hard but the playoffs are always intense so we have to get our minds right and stay focused."

With the NCHSAA having extended the volleyball season by a few days to help the schools affected by Hurricane Helene, Midway did try to add one final non-conference game late this week. Unfortunately, those plans fell through and the Lady Raiders will have had a full week off before the playoffs kick off on Tuesday. Clark was worried about the long break, acknowledging that somehow her team needs to stay fresh, saying "We need to keep up the energy as we prepare for one team at a time."

In years past, it has been Camden County at the top of the standings and representing the East. While that still could be the case later on, they are currently positioned around the number five spot while one-loss Ayden-Grifton sits at the top and appears to be the team to beat.

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### Satellite mode a lifeline after hurricane - Some phones can connect in emergencies

October 21, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Felecia Wellington Radel; USA TODAY | Section: News | 913 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

The phone wasn't working.

Power and cell service had been out for a couple of days after Hurricane Helene, and Jeff Twersky was trying – again – to see if he could get a connection.

Twersky, 69, a retired trial lawyer, was with his wife, family and friends in Weaverville, North Carolina, just outside Asheville, when the hurricane hit. The group rented an Airbnb in the small town earlier in the week to celebrate a birthday and explore the mountainous region, but they weren't expecting the stormy forecast or the fallout that followed.

Roads were blocked, water was running out, and the ability to reach out to anyone via mobile phone calls or texting was limited, if it worked at all. Thousands across the Southeast were isolated without power or cell service in the days after Helene.

Twersky, who had traveled to the area from Vashon Island, Washington, went outside the night of Sept. 28 hoping there would be more luck at the late hour for getting a connection on his iPhone 16, and it happened.

"My phone switched to satellite," Twersky said, adding he was unaware of the feature. "I managed to get ahold of my daughter in San Francisco."

Satellite mode and cellular networks

A satellite mode or "satellite SOS" feature has been introduced on many newer mobile phone models. The feature allows users to text when cellular or Wi-Fi coverage is unavailable, like in remote areas or during natural disasters.

For Apple, iPhone 14 and newer devices that have been updated to iOS 18 can use the feature. Google has Satellite SOS mode that can be activated on its Pixel 9 models for contacting emergency services. In addition to the tech companies making the devices, cellular networks also work with companies for satellite support, including AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile, which partnered with SpaceX's Starlink.

The satellite SOS solutions are "a new technology that's been integrated into the phone so that if there is no cellular network available, they can fall back to a satellite connection," said John Wojewoda, AT&T's assistant vice president of Tower Strategy and Roaming.

Satellite connection is limited to text messaging, and it requires certain conditions to work, including a clear line-ofsight of the sky and, depending on the device, may require additional steps to activate.

But with few other choices in the midst of a disaster and widespread outages, it's good to have even a limited option.

Satellite SOS isn't the only service solution using satellites.

"AT&T also uses satellite to support the wireless network, the cellular network," Wojewoda said.

When there's a disaster, such as a storm coming in and knocking out power and cell towers, there's a national

team, the Network Disaster Recovery, that not only works on restoring coverage but can turn up service temporarily for a cell site using satellites.

Verizon partnered this year with Skylo, a satellite service provider, to launch direct-to-device messaging service on certain smartphones. Both Verizon and AT&T work with AST SpaceMobile, a satellite communication company, with deals that would bring space-based cellular broadband network accessibility.

T-Mobile and Starlink direct-to-cellular service, which allows wireless emergency alerts and SMS, including texting 911, was enabled in Florida ahead of Hurricane Milton's landfall and in areas that had been hit by Helene, according to a statement from T-Mobile.

'It was a lifesaving thing'

Being able to use satellite mode on his iPhone was a lifeline, Twersky said.

Once he was able to text his daughter, he and his group were able to get crucial information about the storm, roads and access that they couldn't get otherwise with the cell outages.

The group also worked to cut fallen trees and clear other debris, but many roads remained blocked.

"At that point, it was three days in," Twersky said. "We basically had no food left. We were running out of water. A couple of us needed medications that were running out. It was a lifesaving thing to find the satellite."

Twersky eventually reached family who could pick them up.

Seeing all the devastation, especially as they left, was difficult. But there's a silver lining.

"We saw a side of community that you don't always see, and I think maybe disaster brings it out," Twersky said.
"The way that the community got together and helped everyone was just incredible."

**Evolving technology** 

Satellite SOS is rather limited in capabilities and basically allows texting only. But the technology is evolving, Wojewoda said.

Bringing in the satellite assets helps with temporary solutions, but companies like AT&T are working on long-term solutions, too.

With people relying more and more on cellphones for communication, climate change worsening floods, storms and weather events means expanded and more permanent solutions are needed.

From a technology perspective, cellular networks want to have capabilities that can be used to provide connectivity all the time when there's a disaster, Wojewoda said.

Companies hope to bolster networks, as well. AT&T wants to increase network resilience and is undergoing a refresh of its power backup systems, "investing millions of dollars in generators, batteries and systems to help keep our network up and running when there is a local power outage," according to a statement from Andrea Huguely, an AT&T spokesperson.

The company also worked with Argonne National Laboratory, a federally funded research and development center in Illinois, to look at climate projections and data. AT&T, FEMA and the laboratory created a Climate Risk and Resilience Portal, a hub that provides climate data for public safety and community leaders.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C588C518639B48>



### CCC to host benefit concert

October 21, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | Section: News | 658 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Cleveland Community College is hosting a benefit concert in conjunction with its annual fall fest to provide assistance to a sister college it adopted following Hurricane Helene.

Yeti Nights Fall Fest & Benefit Concert will be held Thursday in the Petty Amphitheater, with the concert beginning at 5:30 p.m. and the event running from 5 to 8 p.m. All of the funds raised will go to support people in Western North Carolina impacted by the hurricane.

The concert is free, but attendees are asked for donations of any amount.

Paula Vess, communications and public relations coordinator, said at the Fall Fest and concert, there will be a bucket for cash donations, plus there will be signs with a QR code that people can scan to make an online donation.

She said they have also set up a donation page on their website, Clevelandcc.edu, and people can click on Events at the top of the home page. Under Events they will see a link titled, Hurricane Helene Relief Effort that will take them to a donation page.

The concert features the '80s band Cassette Rewind and an opening act comprised of Cleveland County musicians.

Rodger Perry, musician and CCC employee, said some members of the local bands "Black Coffee Quartet " and "Bruised Rhino" are collaborating to open for Cassette Rewind.

Vess said there will be kids activities, games, trunk or treat and a kids costume contest. Food trucks will be there for food purchases.

Jason Hurst, president of CCC, said there are 14 community colleges that are in disaster zones, including Cleveland Community College.

"We're probably one of the first that's been able to get up and running," he said.

The college was one of the only places in the county that had power following the storm, but due to the downed powerlines and trees around the county that hindered travel, they closed campus Friday through Wednesday.

"We were so much more fortunate than our neighbors to the west," Hurst said. "The 14 colleges have been on weekly conference calls with the governor's office with state emergency management, FEMA, NC Community College system office and all presidents from 14 colleges that could get on the call to talk about the status of colleges and what we needed to get back up and running."

He said some had no access to communication.

"Because we are in such a better position than other colleges we have chosen to adopt Blue Ridge Community College as the college we're going to try support," he said.

In addition to contributing funds, they also offered IT support and lab access to students in programs such as cosmetology, welding and more. They also assisted with basic necessities such as paper products, water and food.

"We have a CDL program we hope to be able to use our trucks to transport back and forth," he said.

Hurst said Blue Ridge is working on surveying faculty, staff and students to get a better idea of what the needs are and then they can begin meeting those needs. The sister college reopened to staff and students last week.

"We're continuing to hear stories where they're in there trying to assess damage but there's still active mudslides. They're literally having to try restore power with helicopters," he said. "The problems we're seeing too, even where college relatively OK, people can't get there."

Hurst said CCC is grateful for the resources coming their way and feel blessed to not have been as impacted as some of their neighbors.

"Bottom line with all this, we were hit hard, our county was hit hard, but we were so much more fortunate than our neighbors to the west and we want to send all we can to help them," he said. "It's not a pat on our backs, it's just the right thing to do. "

Jeff Ledford, CCC's director of safety and security, said it is especially meaningful because they are targeting a population they have a connection with.

"I think it reinforced that community part of Cleveland Community College," he said.

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Rebecca Sitzes, Shelby Star, 'CCC to host benefit concert', *Star, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C588C4E8CD2CD8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C588C4E8CD2CD8</a>



### Harris urges Ga. voters to 'turn the page' on Trump

October 21, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Maya Homan; USA TODAY | Section: News | 513 Words Page: A12 OpenURL Link

Amid Georgia's record-shattering early voter turnout, Vice President Kamala Harris returned to Atlanta to urge voters to usher in "a new and optimistic generation of leadership."

U.S. Rep. Nikema Williams delivered opening remarks alongside Sen. Jon Ossoff, Georgia high school student and gun safety activist Tyler Lee, and eight-time Grammy-winning recording artist Usher.

"This is Georgia, and we know a little something about breaking history," said Williams, who chairs the Georgia Democratic Party.

Usher, who was scheduled to perform at Atlanta's State Farm Arena on Sunday, told attendees that he had taken time away from his national tour to stump for Harris.

"It doesn't matter where you're from - she has a vision for our future that includes everyone," he said.

Harris' last visit to the Atlanta metro area – a rally for reproductive rights that was held in Cobb County – was somber, as she shared the story of Amber Nicole Thurman and Candi Miller, whose deaths have been linked to the state's six-week abortion ban.

But as early voter turnout soared to 1.3 million in the first five days of voting, Harris' return to the state took on a different energy: excitement.

"It is time to turn the page," Harris told the crowd of roughly 11,000 attendees. "It is time to turn the page, and America is ready to chart a new way forward."

Rally attendees echoed Harris' enthusiasm. Tinesha Cole, a 52-year-old small-business owner, said Harris' rally was the first one she has attended and that she had been eagerly watching as Georgia's early voter count soared.

"We got great turnout numbers," she said. "Already, over a half a million people have done early voting, which is unprecedented out here. I'm optimistic about what the outcome is going to be."

Another rallygoer, 63-year-old nonprofit worker Philip Rafshoon, said he was feeling "nervous but optimistic" about the upcoming election. He hasn't cast his ballot, but he's planning to do so before the end of early voting.

"I'm waiting for my husband to get back so we can vote together," he said.

Harris' roughly 30-minute speech contained a few somber moments. She began by thanking the workers who have been helping residents recover in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which devastated wide swaths of the state late last month. She also criticized Republican former President Donald Trump's economic plans, and shared a campaign video featuring Thurman's family members that seeks to link Trump's legacy more directly to abortion bans that have been enacted across the South.

Additionally, Harris highlighted Trump's refusal to participate in future debates and mocked his recent spate of canceled events, one of which was reportedly because of exhaustion.

"I do believe Donald Trump is an unserious man," she said. "And the consequences of him ever being again in the

White House are brutally serious."

With the Nov. 5 election nearing, she urged her supporters to cast their ballots. "Democracy is not a state; it is an act," Harris said. "So Georgia, now is the time to act."

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Maya Homan, USA TODAY, 'Harris urges Ga. voters to 'turn the page' on Trump', *Star, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 A12 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C588C5230F0960">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C588C5230F0960</a>



### 'We're just so grateful': Community rallies to provide hurricane relief

October 21, 2024 | Sun Journal (New Bern, NC) Author: Caramia Valentin The Sun Journal | Section: News | 670 Words OpenURL Link

Staff with the city of New Bern packed two truckloads of supplies for western North Carolina on Thursday, many of which the local community donated through the city's relief supply drive.

Between Oct. 1 and Oct. 11, city staff collected critical supplies at five locations in New Bern to help people affected by Hurricane Helene in the western part of the state. All supplies were brought to the city's warehouse facility at 210 Kale Road where they were loaded into trucks for transport.

BSH Home Appliances Corp. and the Coastal Environmental Partnership each donated one tractor-trailer and a driver for the delivery of supplies to people in need in the western part of the state.

CEP Executive Director Bobby Darden said they were glad to partner with New Bern because many of their employees were looking for ways to help out west.

"We've got new trailers, we're good at driving, we're not good at logistics of getting donations and stuff together, so we were glad to partner with them," Darden said.

New Bern's City Manager Foster Hughes said as soon as news of Helene's damage reached New Bern, city staff started discussing ways to help.

"We couldn't not do this because it's still in our minds what happened with Hurricane Florence. With how they got hit, we knew we had to help," Hughes said. "This is just a small thing we can do. We were amazed at the response and the amount of folks that reached out and wanted to help."

On Friday morning, the trucks left with 32 pallets of supplies destined for New Covenant Church in Haywood County. The lead pastor Blake Stanberry was in New Bern to watch the trucks fill up and bless their journey out west.

Stanberry said the church is one of three distribution centers in Haywood County that's providing emergency supplies in the area.

With some people still living in tents on the river, Stanberry said it's a blessing to receive the supplies.

"In my town, Clyde, up to our town hall, our fire department, our community center was just totally underwater," Stanberry said. "Now our streets are piles of rubble where we've cleaned out, so it just looks like a war zone.

"People are amazingly working together. Mountain people are pretty resilient. We're pretty tough. We don't ask for handouts, but when people bring them, we're just so grateful."

Stanberry said the area has seen a significant amount of help from New Bern, Wilmington, Greenville the Triangle area, and beyond.

He said it was hard not to get emotional as he watched the New Bern community come together to help Haywood County.

"When people are hit with something like this, they just try to respond out of adrenaline for the first few days, and then the reality sets in," Stanberry said. "When you continue to get contact from folks that have been through storms like this year after year, and we just don't know what we're doing, we don't know how to respond.

"People ask us, 'What can we do?' Sometimes we just don't even know what to say."

Stanberry said many people are still in shock, but they learn something new every day and make new friends every day.

"Every day, we get a new truckload of something that's right on time," he said. "We're gonna pull out of it. We're gonna take care of our people, and that doesn't mean just mountain people. It's North Carolina people."

New Bern's trucks will arrive at New Covenant Church with various emergency relief supplies: non-perishable canned goods and snacks, bottled water, sports drinks, heavy-duty trash bags, tarps, heavy-duty work gloves, toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, cleaning supplies, toiletries, baby food, diapers, feminine hygiene products, bug spray, and sunscreen.

Stanberry said emergency response supplies are needed, but as the temperature drops, he's concerned about families.

"Now, because of the cold weather, we very much need blankets, we need coats, we need the small buddy heaters, even sleeping bags for folks that are in shelters and tents," he said.

"I'm just real concerned about families making it through cold weather, especially children." Copyright, 2024, Sun Journal, All Rights Reserved.

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Caramia Valentin The Sun Journal, "We're just so grateful': Community rallies to provide hurricane relief', *Sun Journal* (online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C59276E27BE568">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C59276E27BE568</a>



### Faith-based relief groups prepare for long haul

October 21, 2024 | Times-News (Burlington, NC) Author: BOB SMIETANA Religion News Service | Section: Local | 683 Words OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE — With the one-two punch of Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton within two weeks of one another, faith-based disaster relief groups are getting ready for a long, slow recovery that may take years.

"It's going to take a long time," said Bruce Frank, pastor of Biltmore Church in Asheville, which is working closely with North Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief. Volunteers have already cooked more than 100,000 meals in the church parking lot.

Two hours away in Boone, staff and volunteers from Samaritan's Purse, an evangelical humanitarian group led by evangelist Franklin Graham, have been working to clear debris, set up water filtration systems and deliver food and other supplies by helicopter to communities cut off by the storm.

In rural communities the group has set up some 50 Starlink satellite kits to restore internet service and has furnished generators to supply power, set up oxygen shelters for patients unable to receive their usual supplies, and refilled more than 1,000 oxygen tanks.

So far, said Graham, more than 16,000 volunteers have shown up to help, with more expected. The group is working at sites in North Carolina, Georgia and Florida in Helene recovery. More help will be needed in the months to come, said Graham.

But Graham said plans are already underway for long-term rebuilding, primarily recruiting leaders for that work and arranging with suppliers for rebuilding materials. Meanwhile, volunteers already on the scene are installing culverts to drain water and helping to temporarily restore gravel roads washed out by the storm.

The nondenominational Christian volunteer group Eight Days of Hope has been working on rapid response to both Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton, setting up mobile feeding sites as well as trailers with laundry and shower equipment.

"So if you need a warm shower or you need your laundry done, you could come and do that and get a warm meal while you were there," said Hannah Fletcher, a spokesperson for the group.

Having just wrapped up its Milton response, Eight Days of Hope planned to continue its work for much of October in areas affected by Helene, while making plans to return for rebuilding work once communities have a long-term plan in place.

The group's more than 250 volunteer leaders nationwide specialize in mobilizing large numbers of disaster relief volunteers, working with churches and as well as long-term recovery leaders in local communities.

"We come in and we're like an adrenaline shot," Fletcher said. "We do a bunch of work on all the homes as fast as we can, and then eight days later, we're gone. Then the long-term recovery group kind of carries the rest of those houses to the finish line."

The Salvation Army has served nearly 6,000 meals to Florida residents affected by Milton and more than 400,000 meals in communities affected by Helene. The group also plans to assist with long-term recovery.

Todd Unzicker, executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, said that so far more than 2,000 of its volunteers have been deployed to assist with recovery from Helene, but he is telling churches and

volunteers who are ready to help right now that there is plenty of work ahead.

"The challenge is saying, hold on," he said. "We are going to need you a month from now and six months from now."

Unzicker said that, of the convention's 3,000 churches, 1,100 are in communities affected by Helene.

He also said that Baptist disaster relief is working closely with state, local and federal officials in the aftermath of the storm. Those leaders are doing all they can, Unzicker said.

"North Carolina Baptists are grateful for all of our government officials," he said. "We pray for them and we're ready to stand by and work with them."

Frank, the pastor at Asheville's Biltmore Church, has been encouraged by the way people in his congregation and others have responded to Helene, noting that the church's 828Strong ministry began as a way to respond to needs during COVID-19 and that the work has continued since.

"Unlike COVID, which kind of tore people apart, this has brought people together," he said. "The church has stepped up, both our church as well as other churches."

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### 'We have to have an open mind' - Sec. Buttigieg urges patience as he visits I-40 wreckage

October 21, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Will Hofmann; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 851 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

WATERVILLE - After the historic floods caused by Tropical Storm Helene, Interstate 40 East along the Pigeon River is a canyon.

The highway known as a critical connector from the western mountains to the eastern coast now resembles more of a grand vista or an image from a Western movie. Helene caused the road to slip into the river and has thrown the future of the corridor up in the air. Infrastructure recovery for the Western North Carolina region will take "months, if not years," Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg said during his visit to the region Thursday.

I-40, connecting Wilmington to Asheville and beyond into the Great Smoky Mountains and Tennessee, serves as a critical transportation corridor across North Carolina. The stretch of the highway impacted by Helene, going from Waterville just near the Tennessee border to Harmon Den Road in Haywood County, supports around 7,610 trucks daily and a total average daily traffic of over 26,000 vehicles, according to NCDOT Annual Average Daily Traffic statistics.

Beyond rebuilding in some form, the future of the road along the Pigeon River Gorge is unclear. The road has experienced multiple rockslides in the past, and NCDOT has tried to make the road safer in the past 10 years.

"We don't yet know whether the right answer will be to restore things approximately the way they were at this site, or whether a different alignment will be the responsible way forward," Buttigieg said, standing in front of the ruined road. "We have to have an open mind."

Currently, a stretch of the highway is a sheer cliff. Pipes, concrete and steel protrude from the dirt and mud where the road use to be. Asphalt has slipped down the hill, cracking in the river's rushing water. The river rose to nearly 22 feet before the observation gauge below Waterville, a Haywood County town near the Tennessee border, quit responding, according to NOAA's website. Around 14 miles down the road, NOAA reported that the river crested at 30 feet.

As crews from the North Carolina and Tennessee departments of transportation work to restore the highway, their only option to navigate the highway is headed west on the road. I-40 between Exit 20 in North Carolina and Exit 432 in Tennessee remains closed to the public.

"Not rebuilding is not an option. We will rebuild. The question is: How?" NCDOT Secretary Joey Hopkins said.

The question of how the region will rebuild appeared frequently during Buttigieg's visit as he toured the River Arts District in Asheville, Canton in Haywood County and the damage along I-40 near the Tennessee border. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis or Buttigieg often responded that "resiliency" needs to be in the forefront of policy as the region recovers and continues to face extreme weather events.

During a walk-and-talk between the secretary and Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers, the mayor noted that going back to business owners who would help rebuild would likely bring difficult conversations, given that they've already faced hardship recently. During Tropical Depression Fred in 2021, Canton suffered historic flooding and six died. Just a few years later, Helene wiped out businesses and has led to at least five confirmed deaths in Haywood County.

"Three years ago, we were told this was a once-in-a-lifetime storm, and here we are — three years later," Smathers said.

After installing flood mitigation measures, Canton had some success in being able to notify and evacuate local businesses during Helene, Smathers said. Continuing to expand mitigation efforts, given more intense storms may come to the region, is vital, he said.

Impermeable surfaces such as parking lots, roads and roofs, play a key role in rain runoff, which can build up leading to more water in rivers and streams, increasing the possibility for historically high waters and floods. When asked how to address climate resilience while working on infrastructure projects like large roads, Buttigieg said that the assumptions communities and policy makers have about infrastructure need to change.

"It's clear that to do right for the 2030s, 40s and 50s is that: We can't have the same assumptions that led us in the 1950s," Buttigieg said.

"The reality is the United States is in for more frequent and extreme weather events," he said, noting that the assumptions regarding infrastructure America may not "serve us well for the future."

Some resiliency measures may include evacuation routes and reinforced bridges, while others may include reevaluating whether roads make sense in their current location.

Given Helene's destructive force to WNC's infrastructure, Cooper said that public officials "owe it" to taxpayers to insure that policies regarding resiliency are passed and implemented.

"We've got to stop this nonsense of trying to weaken building codes and understand that we are living in an environment influenced by climate change," he said.

Will Hofmann is the Growth and Development Reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA Today Network. Got a tip? Email him at WHofmann@citizentimes.com. Consider supporting this type of journalism with a subscription to the Citizen Times.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times, "We have to have an open mind" - Sec. Buttigieg urges patience as he visits I-40 wreckage', Times-News, The (online), 21 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E372B4E68>



# Satellite mode a lifeline after hurricane

October 21, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Felecia Wellington Radel; USA TODAY | Section: News | 913 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

The phone wasn't working.

Power and cell service had been out for a couple of days after Hurricane Helene, and Jeff Twersky was trying – again – to see if he could get a connection.

Twersky, 69, a retired trial lawyer, was with his wife, family and friends in Weaverville, North Carolina, just outside Asheville, when the hurricane hit. The group rented an Airbnb in the small town earlier in the week to celebrate a birthday and explore the mountainous region, but they weren't expecting the stormy forecast or the fallout that followed.

Roads were blocked, water was running out, and the ability to reach out to anyone via mobile phone calls or texting was limited, if it worked at all. Thousands across the Southeast were isolated without power or cell service in the days after Helene.

Twersky, who had traveled to the area from Vashon Island, Washington, went outside the night of Sept. 28 hoping there would be more luck at the late hour for getting a connection on his iPhone 16, and it happened.

"My phone switched to satellite," Twersky said, adding he was unaware of the feature. "I managed to get ahold of my daughter in San Francisco."

Satellite mode and cellular networks

A satellite mode or "satellite SOS" feature has been introduced on many newer mobile phone models. The feature allows users to text when cellular or Wi-Fi coverage is unavailable, like in remote areas or during natural disasters.

For Apple, iPhone 14 and newer devices that have been updated to iOS 18 can use the feature. Google has Satellite SOS mode that can be activated on its Pixel 9 models for contacting emergency services. In addition to the tech companies making the devices, cellular networks also work with companies for satellite support, including AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile, which partnered with SpaceX's Starlink.

The satellite SOS solutions are "a new technology that's been integrated into the phone so that if there is no cellular network available, they can fall back to a satellite connection," said John Wojewoda, AT&T's assistant vice president of Tower Strategy and Roaming.

Satellite connection is limited to text messaging, and it requires certain conditions to work, including a clear line-ofsight of the sky and, depending on the device, may require additional steps to activate.

But with few other choices in the midst of a disaster and widespread outages, it's good to have even a limited option.

Satellite SOS isn't the only service solution using satellites.

"AT&T also uses satellite to support the wireless network, the cellular network," Wojewoda said.

When there's a disaster, such as a storm coming in and knocking out power and cell towers, there's a national

team, the Network Disaster Recovery, that not only works on restoring coverage but can turn up service temporarily for a cell site using satellites.

Verizon partnered this year with Skylo, a satellite service provider, to launch direct-to-device messaging service on certain smartphones. Both Verizon and AT&T work with AST SpaceMobile, a satellite communication company, with deals that would bring space-based cellular broadband network accessibility.

T-Mobile and Starlink direct-to-cellular service, which allows wireless emergency alerts and SMS, including texting 911, was enabled in Florida ahead of Hurricane Milton's landfall and in areas that had been hit by Helene, according to a statement from T-Mobile.

'It was a lifesaving thing'

Being able to use satellite mode on his iPhone was a lifeline, Twersky said.

Once he was able to text his daughter, he and his group were able to get crucial information about the storm, roads and access that they couldn't get otherwise with the cell outages.

The group also worked to cut fallen trees and clear other debris, but many roads remained blocked.

"At that point, it was three days in," Twersky said. "We basically had no food left. We were running out of water. A couple of us needed medications that were running out. It was a lifesaving thing to find the satellite."

Twersky eventually reached family who could pick them up.

Seeing all the devastation, especially as they left, was difficult. But there's a silver lining.

"We saw a side of community that you don't always see, and I think maybe disaster brings it out," Twersky said.
"The way that the community got together and helped everyone was just incredible."

**Evolving technology** 

Satellite SOS is rather limited in capabilities and basically allows texting only. But the technology is evolving, Wojewoda said.

Bringing in the satellite assets helps with temporary solutions, but companies like AT&T are working on long-term solutions, too.

With people relying more and more on cellphones for communication, climate change worsening floods, storms and weather events means expanded and more permanent solutions are needed.

From a technology perspective, cellular networks want to have capabilities that can be used to provide connectivity all the time when there's a disaster, Wojewoda said.

Companies hope to bolster networks, as well. AT&T wants to increase network resilience and is undergoing a refresh of its power backup systems, "investing millions of dollars in generators, batteries and systems to help keep our network up and running when there is a local power outage," according to a statement from Andrea Huguely, an AT&T spokesperson.

The company also worked with Argonne National Laboratory, a federally funded research and development center in Illinois, to look at climate projections and data. AT&T, FEMA and the laboratory created a Climate Risk and Resilience Portal, a hub that provides climate data for public safety and community leaders.

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Felecia Wellington Radel, USA TODAY, 'Satellite mode a lifeline after hurricane', *Times-News, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E50DF4278">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E50DF4278</a>



### Helene ruins peak wedding season in WNC

October 21, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Kara Fohner; Gaston Gazette | Section: News | 1217 Words Page: A10 OpenURL Link

On Sept. 29, Kristi Mayrand tried to drive from Leicester to Weaverville to deliver flowers for a wedding.

"We were probably about a mile from the venue, and there was a culvert that had been partially washed out," Mayrand said. "I just felt really uncomfortable, and a guy that I saw, he was like, 'There's no way that there's a wedding going on up the road.' ... I was like, 'Well, I'm not going over that culvert and risking my life.'"

Mayrand, the owner of Stargazers Designs in Leicester, turned around and went home. She later learned that the wedding didn't happen that day in Weaverville anyway.

"She actually got married in her backyard in Seneca, South Carolina that Sunday," Mayrand said. "My thing is, she had paid for all these flowers, and we did them all, and I sent her pictures of all of it. I even was willing to drive her bouquet and stuff to Seneca so she would have it."

Mayrand has been an Asheville-area florist for nearly 30 years, and she's never seen anything like the damage Tropical Storm Helene leveled on Western North Carolina.

"It was scary in a way, because you had to go through a lot of debris, a lot of downed power lines. It was like driving through a war zone," she said.

The far-reaching effects of the storm have impacted the wedding industry during peak wedding season, according to Mayrand and other wedding planners and vendors. Couples have canceled their weddings, many pushing them to next year, and some companies have been unable to operate entirely.

Tori Frasher, the owner of Asheville-based Sage and Spice Catering, said that many of the weddings she had lined up have been canceled.

"It's been very difficult and very sad. We had so many weddings lined up, and we have I think 30 different events that we were supposed to have in October. A good bit of them have canceled. They've moved to other cities," Frasher said. "A lot of them have been kind and have rescheduled with venues. Some of them are trying to come in spring and fall of next year. It just feels like COVID again."

"It's putting a ton of financial pressure on the whole industry, not to mention how difficult it is for all of the people working in this industry, some of them just come in seasonally and work part-time. Their jobs are just kind of not there," she added.

Tori Delaney, the owner of Delaney Ridge, a venue in Mars Hill, said that after Helene, she turned her venue into a shelter for people who needed help.

"We housed a refugee from Swannanoa, and then we had a couple other ones, friends from the River Arts District, kind of the Biltmore Village area too, that stayed for four to five days," she said.

Delaney said that despite trees falling on the property, her venue came out relatively unscathed.

"We had to reschedule two weekends in a row, and I've been back and forth with a lot of couples that are booked through the fall. I'm just trying to get them to keep their weddings on the books, so we're not losing that revenue as

a business and still able to pay all our staff, keep our staff working," she said.

Other popular destinations for weddings, like the North Carolina Arboretum and the Asheville Botanical Garden, closed after the hurricane. A spokesman for the arboretum said that all of the weddings that were scheduled there for the rest of the year have been canceled.

Kyle Samples, the general manager of LaZoom Tours, said that the comedy tour company often books wedding parties. Prior to the storm, the business was doing well.

"We were booking a ton of reservations, both for, you know, corporate, private groups and individuals. October was looking like a stellar month. It was one of the best Octobers we had in pre-sales in a long time," Samples said. "It was getting back to like pre-pandemic levels of ticket sales."

The company immediately shut down after the storm and has refunded \$76,000 in ticket sales, Samples said.

Wedding planner Shay Brown of Shay & Company said that she has had to furlough staff.

"I would say about 65% of our income happens between the middle of September to the second week of November. This is a huge, huge impact for us," she said.

Brown said she is hoping to recover some of that lost income during the Christmas season.

"I'm really hopeful that we have a huge Christmas, especially for our venues that we manage. .... I'm really hoping that the corporations and places around town will want to do something for Christmas this year, and have a lot of Christmas parties that will help with our income," she said.

Erica Batstone, a wedding planner who owns Rising Fern Events, said that there are layers to the situation. As a planner, she can pivot to serving other communities.

"Everyone's in the same boat, questioning, you know, 'what is it going to look like next year?'" She said. "What's it going to look like in two years? Five years? I think there's a lot of unknowns right now, and ... right now, all I'm focused on is helping my current clients with their current weddings this month, and then also helping the ones that had to reschedule for next year," she said.

She said that she is hopeful that people will see that there are communities that weren't as deeply affected by the storm that are open for tourism, but she's also optimistic that the Asheville will recover in time.

"I hope that people can see that it's still got the heart, because the people that are working on the ground right now to get this rehabilitated and to clean out mud and just put their towns back together and get people resources," she said. "It kind of just makes you want to fight even harder to bring it back, because you see all the love going into it, and like, the endless hours, so I just appreciate all those people who are putting in the work right now."

Zil Senczy said she and her fiancé, Kyle Hia, planned to get married at the Twisty Maple, a wedding venue in Fletcher.

While they live in Raleigh, the mountains are special to them. Hia proposed to Senczy at a waterfall in Brevard.

They rescheduled their wedding for November 2025, but they plan to elope in a private ceremony at a plant nursery in Chapel Hill.

"It's been tough. We decided to do a little elopement minimony, just to get it legally done. So it feels a little bit like being a COVID bride, where you're gonna go elope and then have the ceremony later," she said.

This Saturday is going to be something a little more simple. I've got a nice little white church dress, and we're

going to go out to dinner afterwards and make the best of it," she said.

The best part? They found a restaurant in Carrboro called Glass Half Full that has a private dining space, and the dining space is called The Other Half. The names seem, under the circumstances, serendipitous, Senczy said.

"And so it's something almost a little magical that it just happened to work out," she said.

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### • Citation (aglc Style)

Kara Fohner, Gaston Gazette, 'Helene ruins peak wedding season in WNC', *Times-News, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 A10 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E27E9B278">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E27E9B278</a>



### Rare copy of U.S. Constitution fetches \$9M at Asheville auction

October 21, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Houston Harwood; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 915 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE — A rare, signed copy of the U.S. Constitution that wound its way from an 18th-century North Carolina plantation to an Asheville-based auction house sold for \$9 million on Thursday.

Brunk Auctions accepted bids for the "printed archetype" U.S. Constitution — one of only eight such copies known to exist — during a sale at its Tunnel Road gallery after the tight-knit, family-run firm overcame a slew of logistical challenges from Tropical Storm Helene.

Andrew Brunk, who leads the company as president and CEO alongside his wife, Lauren, said during an interview that 10 interested buyers battled over roughly seven minutes Thursday evening to outbid each other. A private buyer, who hasn't been named, ultimately offered the \$9 million sale price.

According to Brunk, it's one of the highest amounts ever fetched at auction for an American historical document.

"The rarity of it is extraordinary," Brunk said of the newsprint-like, broadsheet copy of the U.S. Constitution, which was discovered at the historic Hayes Plantation in Edenton, North Carolina, after the longtime owners prepared to transfer the 18th-century site to state ownership.

"The fact that this thin piece of paper survived 237 years, tucked away, out of sight and out of the public eye, is part of what's so remarkable," Brunk added. "It's a fragile, fragile thing."

Tropical Storm Helene delayed sale of historic document

Tropical Storm Helene upended Brunk Auctions' operations when rain and wind funneled through the Blue Ridge Mountains in late September. Authorities across the Southeast had, as of Tuesday, attributed at least 228 deaths to the powerful storm.

Brunk said the auction house his father founded in 1983 had meticulously choreographed its planned sale of the U.S. Constitution copy over a span of months, setting an initial auction date of Sept. 28: the 237th anniversary of the document's printing.

The auctioning of other historical American records was scheduled to begin on Sept. 27, the same day Tropical Storm Helene moved into the region with full force.

"As we sat looking out our windows, I'm thinking, 'Can we still do it? Should we still do it?'" Brunk recalled. "My wife and I are sitting there and watching out our window as two gigantic oak trees come down right beside our house... And at that point, it's still so early in what was happening with Helene, that nobody really had any idea what was coming."

Brunk said the auction house "pulled the plug" the morning of Sept. 27. The firm's 25 employees — some of whom suffered major storm damage — couldn't return to their Tunnel Road building for about two weeks. With the help of generators, buckets of water donated by staff members who owned private wells and a Starlink internet terminal, Brunk Auctions began to mount its comeback this month.

"It wasn't particularly easy," Brunk said. "We didn't have lights, we didn't have water... But at some point, we had to get started back up."

The company held three bidding sessions on Wednesday and Thursday, culminating with the sale of the printed archetype of the U.S. Constitution. Brunk Auctions had intended to allow the to public attend the session, but again, Tropical Storm Helene's aftermath upended those plans.

"We didn't get running water in the building until three days before the auction," Brunk said. "You can't really be open for a big crowd and not have water."

What's the historical significance of the \$9 million 'official' copy?

The copy of the U.S. Constitution auctioned in Asheville this week traces back to 1787, when the nation's founders convened in Philadelphia to replace the weak and ineffective Articles of Confederation with a constitution that would bolster the federal government's power.

But the men in Philadelphia lacked the power to adopt the Constitution they had so arduously crafted. Congress first had to sign off on sending the then-proposed foundation of American democracy to the 13 states, which in turn had to adopt and ratify the new Constitution. As part of that process, they printed 100 copies of the text and sent them to the states, Brunk explained.

That includes the copy recovered from a filing cabinet at Hayes Plantation. The document bears a signature from Charles Thompson, who in 1787 was the Secretary of Congress, adding to its rarity and historical significance.

"The copy that we just sold had (Thompson's) signature on it, indicating that it was an official copy and had been sent for the purpose of review for ratification," Brunk said. "The whole idea of government by the people is embodied in this piece of paper."

The copy also features a written statement by then-President George Washington outlining the rationale behind the Constitution and a plea to ratify and adopt it: "Individuals entering into society must give up a share of liberty to preserve the rest," Washington wrote.

In Brunk's view, the letter still has a message to send more than two centuries after its printing.

"If you read through all of this, (Washington) is asking for compromise and unity and looking beyond your own personal needs to the greater good," Brunk said. "With the hurricane, with politics and the election coming and all of that, a call for people to sort of look toward the greater good is really profound."

Houston Harwood may be contacted at wharwood@gannett.com

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Houston Harwood, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Rare copy of U.S. Constitution fetches \$9M at Asheville auction', *Times-News, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 A3 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
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### High School Football - Mountain Heritage helps community rally

October 21, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Evan Gerike; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: Sports | 570 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

MARSHALL — In the postgame huddle after his team's first game since Tropical Storm Helene ravaged Yancey County and Western North Carolina, a 44-7 win over Avery County, Mountain Heritage coach Joey Robinson did something a little different.

As fans and parents came down from the bleachers at Madison High School, the neutral site for Saturday's game, Robinson invited them into his team's huddle for a prayer before they broke down with a Mountain Heritage chant.

Weeks ago, Robinson didn't know when — or if — his team would return to the field. Burnsville, and Yancey County as a whole, was destroyed as bridges were washed away, trees felled and communities isolated by flooding that occurred throughout WNC. Multiple Cougars players lost their homes.

But on Saturday, just over four weeks since the storm arrived, Mountain Heritage was back.

"This was one of the best days I've ever had coaching," Robinson told the group.

Mountain Heritage (5-0, 1-0) needed little time to dispatch Avery County (1-5, 1-1), scoring their first touchdown within two minutes and putting up all 44 points in the first half. Quarterback Brandon Quinn rushed nine times for 52 yards with three touchdowns and was 4-for-8 with 94 passing yards and a touchdown.

More important than the result, though, was getting back on the field again, providing the Yancey County community something to root for while escaping the past few weeks of storm recovery.

"This is our way that we can support our community, giving them something they can be hopeful about," Quinn said. "We're going to come out here and do every single thing we can to be the best football team for them."

All the Cougars were accounted for the day after the storm, Robinson said, but some, like junior defensive end Braxton Batchelor, lost their homes.

Batchelor wasn't in Pensacola when the storm hit, washing away his grandmother's house. Since, the storm, Batchelor has been living with a former Mountain Heritage assistant coach in Mars Hill while his grandmother stays with her niece. His teammates have offered clothes and money to help, and returning to the field was a sense of normalcy for him, too.

"It's something our community needs," Batchelor said. "We haven't had any (normalcy). ... This gave our community hope."

Mountain Heritage entered the season with state-championship hopes, embracing the bull's-eye on its back after returning nearly the whole roster from last year's 10-3 team. As Robinson and the players were helping in the community, collecting donations and cleaning debris, fans wanted to know if that was still on track.

"The first question that gets asked of you is, 'Are we going to get to play?'" Robinson said. "You knew the community wanted it, and they were starving for something positive."

Though they had to shake off some rust, a commanding victory Saturday served as a reminder that the end goal hasn't changed, even as everything else in Yancey County has.

"It never came off our minds," senior tight end Cason Jones said. "We got worried for a little bit that we wouldn't get to play, but now it's back to what we were doing."

Evan Gerike is the high school sports reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Email him at egerike@citizentimes.com or follow him on X, formerly Twitter, @EvanGerike. Please support this type of journalism with a subscription to the Citizen Times.

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### Harris urges Ga. voters to 'turn the page' on Trump

October 21, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Maya Homan; USA TODAY | Section: News | 513 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

Amid Georgia's record-shattering early voter turnout, Vice President Kamala Harris returned to Atlanta to urge voters to usher in "a new and optimistic generation of leadership."

U.S. Rep. Nikema Williams delivered opening remarks alongside Sen. Jon Ossoff, Georgia high school student and gun safety activist Tyler Lee, and eight-time Grammy-winning recording artist Usher.

"This is Georgia, and we know a little something about breaking history," said Williams, who chairs the Georgia Democratic Party.

Usher, who was scheduled to perform at Atlanta's State Farm Arena on Sunday, told attendees that he had taken time away from his national tour to stump for Harris.

"It doesn't matter where you're from - she has a vision for our future that includes everyone," he said.

Harris' last visit to the Atlanta metro area – a rally for reproductive rights that was held in Cobb County – was somber, as she shared the story of Amber Nicole Thurman and Candi Miller, whose deaths have been linked to the state's six-week abortion ban.

But as early voter turnout soared to 1.3 million in the first five days of voting, Harris' return to the state took on a different energy: excitement.

"It is time to turn the page," Harris told the crowd of roughly 11,000 attendees. "It is time to turn the page, and America is ready to chart a new way forward."

Rally attendees echoed Harris' enthusiasm. Tinesha Cole, a 52-year-old small-business owner, said Harris' rally was the first one she has attended and that she had been eagerly watching as Georgia's early voter count soared.

"We got great turnout numbers," she said. "Already, over a half a million people have done early voting, which is unprecedented out here. I'm optimistic about what the outcome is going to be."

Another rallygoer, 63-year-old nonprofit worker Philip Rafshoon, said he was feeling "nervous but optimistic" about the upcoming election. He hasn't cast his ballot, but he's planning to do so before the end of early voting.

"I'm waiting for my husband to get back so we can vote together," he said.

Harris' roughly 30-minute speech contained a few somber moments. She began by thanking the workers who have been helping residents recover in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which devastated wide swaths of the state late last month. She also criticized Republican former President Donald Trump's economic plans, and shared a campaign video featuring Thurman's family members that seeks to link Trump's legacy more directly to abortion bans that have been enacted across the South.

Additionally, Harris highlighted Trump's refusal to participate in future debates and mocked his recent spate of canceled events, one of which was reportedly because of exhaustion.

"I do believe Donald Trump is an unserious man," she said. "And the consequences of him ever being again in the

White House are brutally serious."

With the Nov. 5 election nearing, she urged her supporters to cast their ballots. "Democracy is not a state; it is an act," Harris said. "So Georgia, now is the time to act."

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# • Citation (aglc Style)

Maya Homan, USA TODAY, 'Harris urges Ga. voters to 'turn the page' on Trump', *Times-News, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 A4 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E56FE1FA8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5891E56FE1FA8</a>



### Elkin Elementary rallies to support Boone residents impacted by Hurricane Helene

October 21, 2024 | Tribune, The (Elkin, NC) Author: Amanda Hearl ECS Public Information Officer | Section: News | 259 Words OpenURL Link

In an inspiring display of community support and dedication, Elkin Elementary School, under the leadership of Principal Dr. Emily Rycroft, organized a supply drive in the gymnasium at the school on the afternoon of Monday, Sept. 30. Held in conjunction with the American Red Cross Blood Drive, the event aimed to support the residents of Boone, who are facing uncertainty following the catastrophic damages caused by Hurricane Helene.

Students, teachers, staff, parents, and Elkin Elementary administration worked tirelessly, collecting hundreds of boxes and bags filled with essential household supplies, food, and toiletries. Thousands of items, ranging from non-perishable food and water to clothing and personal hygiene products, were gathered to meet the pressing needs of the Boone community.

The vision was there, the goal was set, and the needs were met. Dr. Rycroft's passion as the leader of Elkin Elementary highlights the collective efforts of the entire school community.

In a heartfelt message, Rycroft expressed, "We are so thankful for our community! Today we were able to save 99 lives through our Red Cross Blood Drive. The amount of donations that came in was staggering. We were able to fill a trailer with water, food, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items, chargers, and bedding. We know this is just a drop in the ocean of need that our friends in WNC are experiencing, and we pray for all of the folks to our west."

The school is grateful for the overwhelming support and generosity shown by all who participated in this critical effort, reaffirming their commitment to helping others in times of need.

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Amanda Hearl ECS Public Information Officer, 'Elkin Elementary rallies to support Boone residents impacted by Hurricane Helene', *Tribune, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5A821334C7A10>



### Angry at my brother-in-law

October 21, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Pam Stone | Section: Ask Aunty Pam - Pam Stone | 430 Words OpenURL Link

Dear Aunty Pam,

My husband and I have a small RV, and last week, we drove it full of supplies up into the mountains to help the people affected by Hurricane Helene. My brother-in-law, Mike, wanted to go, and against my better judgment, I agreed. Mike tends to be very opinionated.

To the best of my knowledge, he has never volunteered for any charity or even donated, so I thought maybe the disaster had changed him and that he really wanted to help.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Halfway up the mountain, he starts spouting off about people 'being stupid to build houses on a river' and 'why should the government help people who make poor choices?' I tried to ignore him but finally said that we're not to judge other people, only help. Then he said judging people is the only way to stop them from getting ripped off.

Aunty Pam, I got so angry I couldn't see straight. When we got home, I told my husband that Mike was no longer welcome in our home. Then my husband said that even though Mike behaved badly, I shouldn't be judging him either, that I was being unchristian.

I'm trying to forgive Mike, but I'm still so mad! Am I wrong?

Ellen

Dear Ellen,

Oy vey. Well, perhaps you shouldn't judge, but Aunty Pam will.

Mike behaved like a boor. I don't think I've ever heard anything as loathsome, hard-hearted, disgraceful, and cruel. This was a storm of biblical proportions. Even meandering streams became massive walls of water.

Not everyone can afford to live in a perfectly safe place— and exactly where is a place that is perfectly safe from tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, anyway? I'll wait while you google. Many people also live on inherited land that's been part of their family for generations and are doing their best just to get by.

Listen, I wouldn't want Mike in my house either, and yet one can't deny that there is something going on with him that has resulted in a complete lack of compassion or empathy for his fellow man in dire need. People are prone to bandy about the terms 'sociopath' and 'narcissist' today, but those labels can only be confirmed by a mental health professional in the clinical presence of an individual. I don't see Mike considering therapy, but boy, does he need it.

And in the meantime, feeling some pity for anyone who behaves so callously will take a big edge off your anger, along with something chilled and fizzy.

Cheers, dears!!

**Aunty Pam** 

The post Angry at my brother-in-law appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Pam Stone, 'Angry at my brother-in-law', *Tryon Daily Bulletin, The*(online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5DA1D04C8F9C0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5DA1D04C8F9C0</a>



### Landrum Farmers Market hosts AG & FFA Day

October 21, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Storme Smith| Section: Community | 294 Words OpenURL Link

LANDRUM—On Saturday morning, the Landrum Farmers Market hosted Ag & FFA Day to celebrate Landrum High Schools' outstanding Future Farmers of America program from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The celebration featured pumpkin painting, face painting, farm animals from Farmers Market vendors, a bake sale, and live music. Foothills Humane Society was also on hand with several adorable pups available for adoption.

FFA is a student organization for students interested in agriculture and leadership. It is one of the three components of agricultural education. Jessie Hyder, the school's Agricultural Educator, runs the Landrum FFA program.

"This is a great opportunity for our students to get out and visit the Farmers Market and see all the different agribusinesses at the Market," Hyder said. "They also get a chance to meet and help the community."

Hyder thanked the vendors and volunteers who helped organize the event.

Shelby Bishop, a senior and the President of LHS FFA said, "I joined FFA thanks to the encouragement from my teachers, and I enjoy helping the community and getting to work outside. It's also fun to see the Farmers Market and all they do here."

The Landrum Farmers Market also held a raffle for the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, which provides grants for farmers affected by Hurricane Helene. ASAP is a group out of Asheville that provides farmers with valuable resources and support for fresh and local markets. The raffle consists of several gift baskets featuring items from their vendors, with tickets costing a dollar each through November 2.

The Market also served a hot dog lunch thanks to the Landrum Methodist Church Men's Club, which provided the grill and the chefs. Together, they raised over \$650 for ASAP.

The post Landrum Farmers Market hosts AG & FFA Day appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Storme Smith, 'Landrum Farmers Market hosts AG & FFA Day', *Tryon Daily Bulletin, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5DA1D14D3E8C0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5DA1D14D3E8C0</a>



# Trump holds campaign at Minges Coliseum 15 days out from Election Day

October 21, 2024 | Washington Daily News (NC) Author: Holly Jackson | Section: News | 628 Words OpenURL Link

Presidential candidate and former President Donald Trump held a campaign rally at Minges Coliseum in Greenville on Monday, Oct. 21.

"I am thrilled to be back in this incredible state with thousands of proud, hardworking, American patriots," Trump said to kickoff his speech.

Monday makes the seventh visit for Trump to the Tar Heel state. Since July, he has held a campaign rally at Bojangles Coliseum, spoke to the National Fraternal Order of Police and has held events in Mint Hill, Wilmington, Asheville and Asheboro, according to Charlotte news outlet WBTV. The GOP candidate spent Monday morning visiting victims of Hurricane Helene in Swannanoa, the Citizen Times reported. Trump spent the evening in Concord for an "11th Hour Faith Leaders Meeting."

In Greenville, Trump spoke for over an hour on a variety of topics from economic control to border security.

Trump promoted his plan to place significant tariff hikes. The Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan tax policy nonprofit, says the proposed tariff increases "would hike taxes by another \$524 billion annually and shrink GDP by at least 0.8 percent, the capital stock by 0.7 percent, and employment by 684,000 full-time equivalent jobs. Our estimates do not capture the effects of retaliation, nor the additional harms that would stem from starting a global trade war...We estimate the Trump-Biden tariffs will reduce long-run GDP by 0.2 percent, the capital stock by 0.1 percent, and employment by 142,000 full-time equivalent jobs."

"We will give our companies the lowest taxes, the lowest energy costs, the lowest regulatory burden and free access to the best and the biggest market on the planet, but only if they make their products here in America and hire American workers," Trump said. "And if these companies don't make their products here – in other words, if they are going to make them in another country and they bring them here – then they will pay a very stiff tariff. They will send their products into the United States with a privilege of competing with our workers and our companies – they're going to have to pay a very big tariff."

He told supporters that, if elected, he will bring back manufacturing jobs. "We will bring back our jobs, our factories, our wealth and our dreams."

Moving to border security, Trump pitched his plan to supporters closing U.S. borders near Mexico and in Texas. He claimed closing the border and having a wall separating Mexico and the U.S. could have been achieved in less than one month which is what "border patrol and ICE wanted," he said on Monday.

If elected, Trump would ask Congress to pass legislation increasing the number of border patrol agents by 10,000 and give a 10% raise to existing agents in addition to \$10,000 in a retention and signing bonus, NBC News reported last week.

Election Day is 15 days away and seems as if it will end in a photo finish between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. According to a new poll from USA Today and Suffolk University, the candidates are "essentially tied" with Harris earning 45% of support to Trump's 44% of support nationwide. The poll surveyed 1,000 likely voters between Oct. 14-18.

In North Carolina, more than one million voters have submitted their ballots according to the State Board of Elections. As of Sunday, Oct. 20 at 4 p.m., the turnout total is 1,008,123 ballots cast. That figure broken down looks

#### like:

"The ballots cast number represents a statewide turnout of about 13 percent of North Carolina's nearly 7.8 million registered voters," the North Carolina State Board of Elections shared on Sunday.

Trump's visit follows Vice President Harris as her campaign rally was also held at Minges Coliseum last Sunday (Oct. 13).

The post Trump holds campaign at Minges Coliseum 15 days out from Election Day appeared first on Washington Daily News.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Holly Jackson, 'Trump holds campaign at Minges Coliseum 15 days out from Election Day', *Washington Daily News* (online), 21 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5DA38EA6ABBF0>



### Sen. Hise speaks at Watauga EDC meeting in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 21, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff Report news@wataugademocrat.com | Section: Local | 552 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — In its first meeting since Watauga County was deeply impacted by the remnants of Hurricane Helene, Sen. Ralph Hise (R — District 47) presented recovery updates and took questions from a full audience of local officials and business leaders at the Watauga County Economic Development Commission meeting held on Oct. 17.

Senator Hise was scheduled to attend the meeting prior to the storm to provide updates from the North Carolina General Assembly, but instead used the majority of his time focusing on the impacts of Helene on Western North Carolina.

"Because the legislature has been successful in its goal of building key reserves, we are in a good position financially for issues like this," said Senator Hise. "We consider the initial \$273 million approved by the General Assembly to be a down payment on storm recovery."

Senator Hise, who was in Mitchell County during the storm, shared additional recovery details:

Damages to homes, roads, bridges, and core power and communications infrastructure were found throughout Western North Carolina. Thirty five percent of homes in Mitchell County were reported as damaged. Several municipalities in the region lost their water plants and some are even beyond repair. State officials are still gathering data from impacted counties to measure the financial amount of storm related loss. This task has been made more difficult in some areas because nothing remains of structures or businesses that existed prior to the storm. Hise expects the final cost of damages to surpass \$2 billion. Many rail lines in the region are a complete loss and may not be rebuilt. A \$273 million aid package was passed unanimously by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Roy Cooper. This initial package includes many of the required local and state match dollars for FEMA assistance. Hise expects legislators to consider forgivable loans as part of future storm related aid packages. The General Assembly resumes its current legislative session on Thursday, Oct. 24.

Senator Hise urged local government officials in the room to be diligent in gathering time-stamped documentation for reimbursement purposes and echoed the same plea for individuals and business owners. He then answered questions about future storm preparation and highlighted the need for communication and emergency supply redundancies to be evaluated by each community as they review their own storm response.

Senator Hise did spend time discussing other key legislative items such as early childhood stabilization grants, health care and long-term care, and the state's housing crisis. Other than consideration of storm related aid and small bills already out for discussion, he expects most other business to be carried forward to the beginning of 2025.

Following Senator Hise's comments, the Watauga EDC members discussed its role in disaster recovery.

The following suggestions and comments were made.

Determine how the EDC could best help local businesses. Contact EDC's in surrounding areas to explore cooperative efforts. Review current messaging toward tourist and visitor traffic Members should use their collective voice for advocacy as needed. Gather information from impacted businesses to aid in future preparedness conversations.

Joe Furman, Director of Economic Development for the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, closed the meeting with a report on ongoing EDC activities, mentioning the fundraising work of the Chamber Foundation as well as the establishment of SBA Business Recovery Center and FEMA Disaster Recovery Center at the Appalachian Enterprise

# Center.

The next meeting of the Watauga EDC is scheduled for Nov. 21 at Seven Devils.

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Staff Report news@wataugademocrat.com, 'Sen. Hise speaks at Watauga EDC meeting in wake of Hurricane Helene', *Watauga Democrat, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5AAF4811EBA58>



### Pioneers roll past Cougars in first game since Hurricane Helene paused season

October 21, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Zach Colburn | Section: Sports | 1080 Words OpenURL Link

TAYLORSVILLE — Maddox Greene did a little bit of everything for Watauga's football team during a 49-21 win over Alexander Central at Cougar Stadium Friday night.

The senior quarterback completed 11 passes for 162 yards and two touchdowns, rushed for 200 yards and two touchdowns and caught a pass at the receiver position.

And that was just on the offensive side of the ball, where Watauga piled up an impressive 595 yards to remain undefeated this season at 6-0.

"We really wanted to play good tonight because we've been off for 28 days," said Greene, who also recorded a trio of tackles on defense. "We just wanted to get back here on the field, as we're serving our community, and we felt like this would help our community grow closer together through football."

Greene's biggest contribution, which might've served as a momentum swing, came on the defensive side when the Pioneers led 14-0 early in the second quarter.

Alexander Central (3-4, 1-1 Northwestern 4A/3A) began building momentum, and Wade Queen, the Cougars quarterback, threw a pass intended for Garrison Millsaps — the team's six-foot-six tight end.

But Greene was able to out-jump Millsaps to intercept the pass, putting the Pioneers deep in Cougar territory with a chance to extend their lead.

"It felt good, just being able to be on the field on defense because the defense is the (most fun) part of the game, I feel like — it just felt good to be able to help the team out in that way," said Greene.

As Watauga moved the ball, it faced fourth-and-11 from the Cougar 31.

Everett Gryder managed to pick up just enough to earn the first down and two plays later, the junior rushed 14 yards into the end zone for the touchdown. The score was part of a 21-point second quarter as the Pioneers led 28-7 at halftime.

For Watauga head football coach Ryan Habich, Friday's conference-opening win served as a good change of pace for a community that needed a win after Hurricane Helene.

"We were able to get them behind the chains, offensively, that way you can get them off the field and then when we get the ball, you've go to take care of the ball and score touchdowns and that's how you beat Alexander," said Habich. "We're really proud of our football team, really very proud of our players, the way they responded for not playing for a month and barely practicing and our assistant coaches to get our kids ready, so (it's a) big win for us."

The Pioneers padded their lead out of halftime when Greene connected with Landon Smith on a 32-yard touchdown pass — the second time the two had hooked up in the game.

The tandem connected earlier in the night after Alexander Central got on the board in the second quarter thanks to a Sawyer Chapman Mays 1-yard touchdown.

Greene and the Pioneers responded 34 seconds later as he found Smith on a 47-yard connection.

Smith, who finished with 79 receiving yards, was one of seven Watauga players to catch a pass in the game, which has become a nice complement to its always dangerous rushing attack.

Evan Burroughs, who found the end zone on the ground early in the second quarter, had a game-high five receptions for 37 yards.

"He (Smith) made a nice catch. We just got to get him lined up right and some other guys. We played four wide receivers tonight, so we have to do that because Landon plays defense, too. But, you know, when we catch the football, we can be very effective offensively," said Habich. "I thought all our guys caught the football really good and that makes us dangerous — it gives Maddox some weapons."

After Sawyer Chapman-Hays cut the deficit to 35-14 with a 1-yard touchdown run, Watauga put the game well out of reach with fourth-quarter touchdown runs from Greene (13 yards) and Cade Keller (32 yards), who finished with with 95 yards on five carries.

Despite a 75-yard touchdown run from Jeremiah Whitaker in the final minutes of the game for a portion of his 112 yards, the Pioneers held Alexander Central, which will travel to South Caldwell next Friday, to just over 200 yards of offense for the game.

Luke Edmisten led Watauga, which hosts Hibriten next Friday, with seven tackles while Trathan Gragg and Dillon Zaragoza added six apiece; Carson Gunnell-Beck registered five tackles to go along with a quarterback sack.

In addition to Gunnell-Beck's sack, Zaragoza also intercepted a pass in the first half, and placekicker Jack Wilson also had one of his kickoffs go for a touchback to go along with seven extra points.

Watauga 49, Alexander Central 21

Watauga 7 21 7 14 — 49

Alexander Central 0 7 7 7 — 21

First Quarter

WHS — Maddox Greene 3-yard run (Jack Wilson kick) 8:11

Second Quarter

WHS — Evan Burroughs 8-yard run (Wilson kick) 11:10

WHS — Everett Gryder 14-yard run (Wilson kick) 6:37

ALEX — Sawyer Chapman-Mays 1-yard run (Cory Mays kick) 2:06

WHS — Landon Smith 47-yard pass from Greene (Wilson kick) 1:32

Third Quarter

WHS — Smith 32-yard pass from Greene (Wilson kick) 7:49

ALEX — Chapman-Mays 1-yard run (Mays kicks) 3:13

Fourth Ouarter

WHS — Greene 13-yard run (Wilson kick) 11:46 WHS — Cade Keller 32-yard run (Wilson kick) 4:06 ALEX — Jeremiah Whitaker 75-yard run (Mays kick) 2:43 **Team Statistics** Alexander Central — Watauga First Downs 8 — 27 Total Offense 206 — 595 Turnovers 2 — 0 3rd Down Conv./Att. 3/7 — 5/10 4th Down Conv./Att. 0/1 - 3/3Penalties/Yards 3/25 — 6/55 Time of Possession 15:19 - 23:28Individual Statistics Watauga Rushing — Maddox Greene 19-200 and 2 TD; Cade Keller 5-95 and 1 TD; Everett Gryder 9-40 and 1 TD; Matthew Leon 11-52; Evan Burroughs 5-15 and 1 TD; Dillon Zaragoza 1-14. Passing — Maddox Greene 11-13-0 for 162 yards and 2 TD; Cade Keller 3-3-0 for 30 yards Receiving — Evan Burroughs 5-37; Landon Smith 2-79 and 2 TD; Everett Gryder 2-21; Dillon Zaragoza 2-18; Matthew Habich 1-14; Maddox Greene 1-13; Matthew Leon 1-10 **Alexander Central** Rushing — Jeremiah Whitaker 10-112 and 1 TD; Sawyer Chapman-Mays 10-46 and 2 TD; Wade Queen 4-17; Blake Combs 2-5 Passing — Wade Queen 2-10-2 for 22 yards Receiving — Garrison Millsaps 2-22. Defensive Stats (Watauga only) Evan Burroughs 4 tackles Maddox Greene 3 tackles, 1 INT Hayden Walker 1 tackles

Thomas Dieters 3 tackles

Caleb Dewey 2 tackles Matthew Leon 1 tackle Dillon Zaragoza 6 tackles, 1 INT Luke Edmisten 7 tackles (5 solo) Callan Riordan 2 tackles Carson Gunnell-Beck 5 tackles, 1 sack Trathan Gragg 6 tackles Nyle Pearys 2 tackles Crue Stoddard 2 tackles Coy Greer 1 tackle Josh Adams 1 tackle Cooper Greene 1 tackle Northwestern 4A/3A Conference standings (as of Week 9) Watauga 6-0/1-0 Ashe County 4-2/1-0 Freedom 4-3/1-1 Hibriten 2-4/1-1 Alexander Central 3-4/1-1 South Caldwell 2-5/0-2 ©2024 Watauga Democrat - Mountain Times Publications, All rights reserved.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Zach Colburn, 'Pioneers roll past Cougars in first game since Hurricane Helene paused season', *Watauga Democrat, The*(online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5ED3ED78D5BA0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5ED3ED78D5BA0</a>



### Commissioners take steps to honor fallen deputy

October 21, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Nick Fogleman nick.fogleman@wataugademocrat.com| Section: Local | 723 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — The Watauga County Commissioners expressed their support for naming the Hwy 105 bridge over the Watauga River near Broadstone Road in memory of Watauga County Sheriff's Office Deputy Logan Fox at its Oct. 15 meeting.

The board will hold a public hearing at its Nov. 19 meeting to meet North Carolina Department of Transportation requirements, after which they can send their recommendations.

The name would be given to the existing bridge over the Watauga River, and once construction on the new bridge is completed, it would be transferred.

Logan's father, along with other community members, wrote letters in support of the resolution.

"It is with gratitude for your consideration and great sadness that I write this letter to have this bridge named for my son, to honor his memory, and the ultimate sacrifice he made toward the protection and safety of the good people of Watauga County," Logan's father, Timothy Fox, wrote in a letter supporting the naming of the bridge.

On April 28, 2021, WCSO Sgt. Chris Ward and Deputy Logan Fox were killed in a standoff that included the deaths of Michelle Ligon and George Ligon. Isaac Barnes, Michelle Ligon's son and George Ligon's stepson, was also killed.

Grant Project Ordinance for Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief

County Manager Deron Geouque requested the Board adopt the Grant Project Ordinance for Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief. North Carolina General Statutes require the adoption.

The amount of the ordinance recognizes \$10,000,000 and may be amended in the future to recognize additional funding.

Adoption of the Grant Project Ordinance for \$10,000,000 for Hurricane Helene expenses requires board approval.

The county will front these funds and are expected to be reimbursed by FEMA.

Geouque said the reimbursements will take time and will be an ongoing process.

Strap Creek Award

Mikey Woodie, Watauga County Soil and Water, requested that the Board accept \$200,000 from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services — Division of Soil & Water Conservation for the StreamFlow Rehabilitation Program project to restore 672 linear feet of Boone Creek.

Soil and Water will work with New River Conservancy to meet the required installations and standards.

The board approved the motion unanimously.

"I hope you can get more because we're going to need it," Eggers said.

School Maintenance

Watauga County Schools Assistant Superintendent/Director of Human Resources Chris Blanton requested the release of \$825,000 from the Lottery Repair and Renovation (R&R) and \$480,000 from the State Education Lottery.

These funds will go toward general maintenance and repairs on Watauga County Schools, including carpet and tile replacements, roof renovations, fire alarm replacements, cafeteria equipment, and other maintenance projects.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Queen Street Parking Deck

Bill Dixon, Appalachian Architecture P.A., requested the board approve the final change order for the new parking deck on Queen Street.

"Am I going to get to park in it once before my term of office ends?" Commissioner Ray Russell asked.

Dixon said they are expecting to hand it over to the county by the end of October.

The total amount of the change order is \$52,063.24. Adequate funds are available in the project budget to cover the expense.

The motion passed 3-2, with Todd Castle and Braxton Eggers voting no.

DOJ Update

Holly Jones, Program Manager at North Carolina Department of Justice gave a presentation on the work the DOJ has been doing for Watauga County.

"We are very concerned about price gouging as well as scams happening," Jones said. "We've gotten over 300 complaints and we've opened four civil investigations to date."

Watauga County will receive about \$5.5 million won by the DOJ through the opioid settlement. These funds will be used to support and prevent addiction and overdose in Watauga.

According to Jones, the DOJ has won \$6.3 million for Watauga County, including the opioid settlement funds.

The DOJ initiative to complete the sexual assault kits has led to 44 kits being submitted to the national DNA database. Six of these kits matched samples already within the system.

Jones congratulated Watauga County Sheriff Len Hagaman, who was recently honored with the Attorney General's Dogwood Award.

National American Indian Heritage Month

The board unanimously approved a proclamation acknowledging National American Indian Heritage Month.

"The Board of Commissioners hereby proclaim November 2024 as the National American Indian Heritage Month in Watauga County and urge all our citizens to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities," Chair Larry Turnbow said.

The Nov. 5 board meeting will be canceled to accommodate voters and the next meeting will be held on Nov. 19. ©2024 Watauga Democrat - Mountain Times Publications, All rights reserved.

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Nick Fogleman nick.fogleman@wataugademocrat.com, 'Commissioners take steps to honor fallen deputy', *Watauga Democrat, The* (online), 21 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5ED3E9AB22AE0>