

Polls shows continuing fallout for Robinson

October 7, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER Staff Reporter | Section: Main | 730 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

The latest round of polls on the North Carolina governor's race shows that the continuing fallout from September's CNN report has severely damaged the campaign of Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson.

According to the CNN report, Robinson called himself a "Black Nazi" and said that he enjoyed watching transgender pornography as well as supported a return of slavery - all in comments made on a porn website called Nude Africa between 2008 and 2012.

Robinson, who has vowed to continue his campaign, has hired a law firm to investigate the CNN report.

Of late, Robinson is facing another controversy - this time not making himself available for Gov. Roy Cooper's Council of State vote in late September to authorize Executive Order 315, which released state emergency funds and supplies in response to the devastating flooding from Hurricane Helene.

Robinson was quoted by multiple media sources at an appearance last week in Franklin that he was busy with his own private relief efforts and that the executive order "was going to pass with or without my vote," which it did 9-0 with the support of five Republicans and four Democrats.

Meanwhile, nine polls released since the CNN report have Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein widening his lead.

The biggest margin is 19% - 52% to 33% - by Emerson College/Real World Politics conducted Sept. 27-29 among 850 likely voters.

'He was lying'

Robinson has faced criticism from both parties for rarely fulfilling his lieutenant governor duties that include presiding over the state Senate chamber sessions and on the State Board of Elections.

Robinson wrote on social media early last week that the government has "failed to act" in response to Helene and that Biden and the federal response is "of little or no consequence to me."

Cooper, meanwhile, has made several appearances in western North Carolina since the storm hit, including with President Joe Biden. Biden has approved Cooper's request for a Federal Major Disaster Declaration that provides immediate federal help for 25 counties - including Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes - and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Trump has posted on social media that Cooper and Biden's relief efforts are neglecting conservative-leaning counties in the western part of the state.

Biden responded by saying Trump "is lying ... and the governor told him he was lying."

"I don't know why he does this," Biden added. "I don't care what he says about me. I care about what he communicates to people that are in need. He implies that we're not doing everything possible. We are."

More poll results

The latest East Carolina University Poll, released last week and covering Sept. 23-26, has Stein ahead 50% to 33% among 1,005 likely voters. The same poll has Trump leading by a 49% to 47% margin.

"The recent scandals surrounding Mark Robinson have had a major impact," said Peter Francia, director of the ECU Center for Survey Research. "What was once a competitive race in the election for governor of North Carolina no longer is."

A Washington Post poll of 1,001 likely voters, taken Sept. 25-29, has Stein ahead 54% to 38%, while Trump is ahead 50% to 48%.

And a Quinnipiac University Poll of 953 voters has Stein leading 52% to 39% and Trump ahead 49% to 47%.

Although Robinson has denied making the salacious posts, four Southeast Republican governors - Georgia's Brian Kemp, South Carolina's Henry McMaster, Tennessee's Bill Lee and Virginia's Glenn Youngkin - have withdrawn their endorsements.

Lee's decision is particularly noteworthy given he is chairman of the Republican Governor's Association. The association stopped placing new campaign ads on Robinson's behalf as of Sept. 24.

John Dinan, a political science professor at Wake Forest University and a national expert on state legislatures, said "the question at this point is not whether Robinson has a path to victory in his own race because that is now off the table. The only question is whether his campaign continues and continues to attract news coverage.

"Any day that he is still in the race and is the subject of news stories is a gift to Democrats running for office in North Carolina and a headache for Republicans on the ballot."

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After Helene, congregation - returns to worship, fellowship

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 732 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

WAYNESVILLE First Baptist Church returned to its pews Sunday morning for the first time since Helene devastated Western North Carolina.

Before the service, parishioners gathered in small groups, checking in on each other, asking how they'd fared.

"Did you lose power?" one woman asked another.

"Four days," came the response.

At the door, Bill Teague told a pair of newcomers that his farm had largely done all right but that he'd spent the last week tossing everything from a neighbor's flooded home - clothes, furniture, appliances - before starting in on the drywall.

About 100 people attended service at First Baptist in Waynesville on Sunday. A week before, with cell service and the power grid still hindered, First Baptist held a prayer service in the parking lot.

The power may have been back on Sunday - the microphones worked, and the lights, and the screens showing the words of hymns - but the air conditioning for the worship hall and many of the church's other spaces was still out, damaged when the power went out during Helene. And the company that services the systems for the church can't even access its offices yet.

At the beginning of Sunday's service, the Rev. Robert Prince, First Baptist's lead pastor, called those who wanted to the front to say a prayer for those impacted by the storm. About 25 people came to the front of the chapel, some kneeling on one knee, others on two. Some worshipers shrouded their eyes with their hands.

"In the midst of our devastation, we turn towards you. We do wait for you, Lord, we do seek you. There's been so much loss, so much grief in our area and across this whole part of the state, in other states. And God, in this moment, we humbly turn to you. We need your power, we need your strength, we need your perseverance," Prince said.

Those praying were seeking help from God to grapple with the shock of witnessing Helene's destruction and with the emotions that come in the aftermath, Prince said. They were also seeking guidance as a congregation to provide aid to those in need in Western North Carolina.

As Prince gave his sermon Sunday he leaned forward, braced on his right arm and gesturing with his left hand. He addressed uncertainties, ranging from why the storm happened in Western North Carolina, to why it was so devastating, to why certain people died.

"When people ask us why, I think the word from the Lord is, we don't really know," Prince said.

At the same time, Prince said, he is sure that God is present in Western North Carolina, working through the people who are responding to the storm.

"God is here, God is with you and God is going to bring us through this," Prince said.

First Baptist is also trying to help its neighbors, including efforts to help people grapple with the scope of the disaster and participating in countywide disaster relief efforts.

Nina Atwood, First Baptist's pastor for community engagement, told the parishioners that the church is planning to open its chapel from 10 am to 2 pm every weekday to afford people a place to pray as they try to understand the disaster.

"There are folks who just need a way to pray," Atwood said.

When First Baptist did that Wednesday, six people came in. Four of those prayed by themselves, two needed someone to pray with them.

"Let them feel what they feel, let them think what they think and just be there with them through it," Atwood said.

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Meck County residents hit by Helene can apply for federal aid, Harris says in Charlotte

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Author: Mary Ramsey; Staff Writer | Section: News | 500 Words

Page: 3A OpenURL Link

Mecklenburg County is now part of the federal disaster declaration issued in the wake of Hurricane Helene, unlocking more aid for homeowners impacted by the storm.

Vice President Kamala Harris announced the designation Saturday while in Charlotte to meet with state and local officials about the recovery from Helene, which last week made landfall in Florida as a Category 4 hurricane.

Downgraded to a tropical storm when it reached North Carolina, it still brought widespread flooding, wind damage and power outages across much of the state, with areas in Western North Carolina bearing the brunt.

Mecklenburg wasn't among the 25 counties included in the federal declaration initially - meaning the federal government wouldn't have helped with home repairs, temporary housing, property damage or other expenses in the same way as communities to the west.

That drew the ire of residents and leaders in north Mecklenburg, where flooding along the Catawba River near Mountain Island Lake damaged multiple homes.

"All the water from the mountains makes its way here, or a significant amount," County Commissioner Elaine Powell said previously. "I feel like a lot of people forgot, and it makes sense, there's so much trauma in Western North Carolina ... but this neighborhood was underwater, and four houses went down the Catawba River."

Now, individuals in that neighborhood and the rest of the county can apply for federal aid. Additional public assistance will also be available to state and local governments.

"We're going to be getting substantial resources in to help folks," Harris said Saturday.

Also announced Saturday: \$100 million in federal funding to repair and reopen roads and bridges damaged by Helene in Western North Carolina.

But some Charlotte-area counties - Iredell, Rowan, Stanly and Union - are still left out of the disaster declaration, according to FEMA's website. Those were among counties Gov. Roy Cooper included in his initial request that weren't included in FEMA's declaration.

FEMA officials briefed Harris at a Charlotte National Guard base Saturday afternoon on their recovery efforts. She was joined by state and local officials including the mayors of Charlotte and Asheville, Gov. Roy Cooper, state Attorney General Josh Stein and U.S. Reps. Alma Adams and Jeff Jackson.

Harris praised residents and leaders for their response, saying she's heard stories "about strangers who are helping each other out, giving people assistance in every way that they need, including shelter, food, and friendship, and fellowship."

"I think that these moments of crisis bring out some of the best of who we can be and who we are," she said.

Harris also met with National Guard soldiers who've responded to the storm and helped prepare care packages to send west with the NC Counts Coalition, a nonprofit that's been sending food, water and hygiene supplies to some of the state's hardest hit areas.

Observer reporter Nora O'Neill contributed to this report.

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Hospitals brace for IV, dialysis fluid shortages after Helene shuts down NC producer

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Mary Helen Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 593 Words Page: 5A

As a key IV fluid manufacturer in the North Carolina mountains works to rebuild after Hurricane Helene, medical facilities around the country are bracing for shortages.

A McDowell County plant, operated by Baxter Healthcare Corp., is closed due to flooding. Heavy equipment can't reach the site because of a bridge failure that may take weeks to repair.

Until then, Baxter is limiting what its customers can order according to available inventory and medical necessity.

IV products that will be rationed include:

Saline: Used to rehydrate patients and replace electrolytes.

Dextrose: A sugar solution used when patients are dehydrated or have low blood sugar. (Saline and dextrose are also used in combination with other drugs that need to administered by IV.)

Dialysis solutions: Used to treat patients with kidney failure.

Baxter, which opened its North Carolina plant in 1972, says it is the largest manufacturer of these solutions in the United States.

The American Hospital Association says before the storm, the plant produced 1.5 million bags of IV fluid daily - 60% of the nation's supply.

Gregory Pauly, president of Duke University Hospital, said on Friday that teams across the university's health system are impacted by the shortage.

"Our teams have been working to assess inventory, deploy conservation strategies, and triage future distribution in an equitable manner across the health system," Pauly said in a statement shared with The News & Observer.

"At this time, we are making case-by-case assessments of our ability to safely perform certain surgeries and procedures going into the weekend and next week.".

The Food and Drug Administration said last week it was monitoring the situation and working with Baxter to try to increase production at its other facilities as well as trying to find other sources of the fluids. But as of Sunday, the FDA had not declared a shortage.

1 foot of rain fell on NC health care plant

Baxter's IV manufacturing plant is located in the North Cove township near Marion, a heavily damaged area that was lashed with rain when the remnants of Hurricane Helene swept through Sept. 27.

The state climate office reports more than 12 inches of rain fell on the area in just three days.

Baxter said a levee breach allowed water to permeate its plant.

Roads leading to the site are damaged, but Baxter said Thursday that 500 workers were already at the plant working on repairs.

"We expect this number to double in the week ahead," the company said in a news release.

A bridge failure has prevented heavy equipment from reaching the plant, and made it impossible to deliver inventory that wasn't damaged in the storm.

"We expect a permanent bridge will be installed by the Army Corps of Engineers and North Carolina Department of Transportation in the coming weeks," the company said in the Thursday update.

Baxter reports it's been able to contact most of its 2,500 employees, and that it's established assistance center a few miles from the plant. There, staff can take showers, wash clothes, charge devices and receive food, water and other basic supplies.

"We will spare no resource - human or financial - to resume production and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," president and CEO José Almeida said in a news release the morning after the storm.

The company said it will work with the FDA to "leverage Baxter's global manufacturing network" until the Marion facility is back operating at 100% capacity."

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Reality Check - Officials: Misinformation hurting Helene relief efforts

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Chantal Allam and Joe Marusak; Staff Writer Section: News 1484 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Emergency officials responding to the Hurricane Helene disaster in Western North Carolina say false rumors on social media are impeding their efforts to help tens of thousands of people in need.

"False information is being widely shared on social media channels, including AI-generated content and images," N.C. Department of Public Safety officials said in a statement. "Nefarious actors and those with ill intent may be taking advantage of this situation by spreading false information."

False rumors even spread claiming the government had created the hurricane.

The public should find and share information from trusted sources and discourage others from spreading information from unverified sources, NCDPS officials said.

On social media Friday, the American Red Cross said misinformation is hurting its Hurricane Helene relief efforts.

"Misinformation can spread quickly after a disaster, causing confusion and distrust within communities struggling to recover," the Red Cross said in a statement. "Unfortunately, we're seeing this during our response to Hurricane Helene."

Here are rumors being spread on social media and the facts offered in response by government agencies:

Rumor: Governments aren't responding to the disaster.

Facts: The N.C. State Emergency Response Team is working 24/7 to save lives and provide Helene relief. The team includes local, state, federal and military units; power and cell phone companies and other businesses; and volunteer organizations.

On Saturday, Mooresville Fire Chief Curt Deaton said his team alone has rescued 11 people and two animals in Ashe County and will remain there until it is safe for residents and their first responders.

"This work is very strenuous," Deaton said. "These men spend most of the time walking and climbing through dangerous debris piles, searching for any survivors or victims ... Some of our team, they've been there for 10 days straight now, working around the clock."

Rumor: Donations, volunteers turned away at checkpoints.

Facts: Western N.C. roads are still dangerous and impassible in many places, and landslides remain a threat. Traffic is being rerouted on some roads so emergency vehicles, disaster relief efforts and local traffic can still access them.

Rumor: Governments are discouraging and confiscating donations.

Facts: The state encourages financial donations to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund and to N.C. volunteer organizations responding to the disaster. The state is working with the organizations to collect and distribute physical donations coming in from across the state and country.

Coordinated volunteer disaster relief efforts are needed in Western North Carolina, according to the NC Department of Public Safety.

"We strongly encourage neighbors to continue helping neighbors in impacted areas," department officials said. "Those wishing to volunteer should register at www.nc.gov/volunteer," and not "self-deploy" to the region.

Rumor: The government created the hurricane

Facts: Helene formed from an organized band of showers and thunderstorms in the Gulf of Mexico, the National Hurricane Center in Miami reported.

Rumors that the government created the storm were fueled by U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene's tweet late Thursday that "Yes they can control the weather. It's ridiculous for anyone to lie and say it can't be done."

Rumor: The FAA is restricting access to the airspace.

Facts: The FAA is not restricting access for recovery operations but is trying to keep people safe. There has been a 300% increase in air traffic in the region, the FAA says.

"The FAA is coordinating closely with state and local officials to make sure everyone is operating safely in very crowded and congested airspace," according to a statement by the N.C. Department of Public Safety.

When President Joe Biden visited the area on Wednesday, the Secret Service took painstaking care to keep all search-and-rescue and relief flights going, a U.S. official told The Charlotte Observer.

The official said recovery-related flights that are coordinated by the N.C. Emergency Operations Center are assigned special Beacon codes and allowed to proceed. If a pilot lets the EOC know they are planning to deliver aid, the plane would be pre-cleared by the FAA.

The only flights affected would have been by pilots unknown to members of the relief or search-and-rescue community, the official said.

Rumor: "The Red Cross isn't here."

Facts: At least 1,300 Red Cross disaster responders are helping people in the Carolinas, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia with safe shelter, food, hygiene items, medications and emotional support.

Before Helene made landfall, the Red Cross positioned hundreds of disaster responders and thousands of relief supplies across the Southeast.

Rumor: The Red Cross is confiscating or discarding donated items.

Facts: The Red Cross is not "confiscating, removing or discarding donated items," Red Cross officials said in a statement Friday. The Red Cross focuses on providing shelter, food and relief after disasters.

"While we don't accept physical donations, as managing them takes time and resources away from our mission, we work with community partners who are better equipped with these resources to handle and distribute these items," Red Cross officials said.

Call 211 to find out where donated goods are available.

Rumor: The Red Cross is taking over shelters.

Facts: The Red Cross does not take over shelters. Rather, it provides management support at the request of local

partners.

Rumor: The Red Cross is taking over volunteer groups.

Facts: While the Red Cross is working alongside other volunteer groups, the Red Cross is not taking over their efforts or services.

Rumor: FEMA does not have enough money to provide disaster assistance for Helene.

Facts: FEMA has enough money right now for immediate response and recovery needs.

In North Carolina alone, FEMA has provided more than \$26 million in housing and other types of assistance to over 25,000 households, it said in an Oct. 5 release.

More than 700 FEMA staff and over 1,200 urban search and rescue personnel are on the ground. Over 1,000 National Guard troopshave also been deployed to the state.

Rumor: FEMA is no longer accepting applications for housing assistance.

Facts: FEMA is still accepting assistance applications throughout areas affected by Helene, it said.

Over 1,400 people who cannot return home are currently staying in safe and clean lodging through FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance program.

FEMA said residents in declared counties who have applied for disaster assistance may be eligible to stay temporarily in a hotel or motel paid for by FEMA while they work on their long-term housing plan. People do not need to request this assistance. FEMA will notify them of their eligibility through an automated phone call, text message, and/or email, depending upon the method of communication they selected at the time of application for disaster assistance.

Twenty-two shelters are housing just over 1,000 people, FEMA said. Mobile feeding operations continue to help survivors in hard-hit areas, including three mass feeding sites in Buncombe, McDowell and Watauga counties.

For current application timelines, visit disasterassistance.gov or FEMA's state-specific Helene disaster site for North Carolina.

Rumor: Funding for FEMA disaster response was diverted to support international efforts or border-related issues.

Facts: This is false, FEMA said. No money is being diverted from disaster response needs. FEMA's disaster response efforts and individual assistance is funded through the Disaster Relief Fund, which is a dedicated fund for disaster efforts.

Commodity distribution, mass feeding and hydration operations are underway in areas of western North Carolina, FEMA said. Commodity shipments are also en route.

"The agency is on track to meet requested delivery timelines for meals and water," it said in a statement released Oct 5. "Voluntary organizations are supporting feeding operations with bulk food and water deliveries coming via truck and aircraft."

In North Carolina alone, the Salvation Army has nine mobile feeding units and has served over 7,100meals, 6,600 drinks, and 3,700 snacks, it said.

Resources:

Residents can visit: ncdps.gov/helene to get information and additional assistance.

Residents should not travel to western North Carolina to keep the roadways clear for search and rescue teams and utility crews.

Residents can get in touch with loved ones by calling 2-1-1 or visiting unitedwaync.org to add them to search and rescue efforts.

Rumor: FEMA is in the process of confiscating Helene survivor property. If I apply for disaster assistance and my land is deemed unlivable, my property will be seized.

Facts: FEMA cannot seize your property or land. Applying for disaster assistance does not grant FEMA or the federal government authority or ownership of your property or land, FEMA said.

When you apply for disaster assistance, FEMA said an inspector may be sent to verify the damage on your home. "This is one of many factors reviewed to determine what kind of disaster assistance you may be eligible for," it said. If the results of the inspection deem your home uninhabitable, that information is "only used to determine the amount of FEMA assistance you may receive to make your home safe, sanitary and functional," it said.

If you were affected by Helene, apply for disaster assistance. The fastest way is through DisasterAssistance.gov. You can also apply through the FEMA mobile app or by calling the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362. If you use a video relay service, captioned telephone service, or other communication services, provide FEMA the specific number assigned for that service.

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When cell towers and internet fail, ham radio operators can still talk. How to get involved

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Renee Umsted; Staff Writer | Section: News | 579 Words Page: 8A OpenURL Link

When Helene swept across the Southeast on Sept. 27, including Western North Carolina, cell phones and internet-based communication became unusable.

People still needed a way to talk - to check on friends and family or receive updates on the storm's aftermath - especially as roads and bridges were washed away, isolating communities.

But there's a way to communicate without cell signals or internet, and about 750,000 people across the country know how to use it: amateur radio.

Also known as ham radio, this old-school method of technology allows people separated by large distances to stay in touch.

"People might think that cell phones have made amateur radio obsolete," said Chuck Till, the vice president of the Raleigh Amateur Radio Society. "As you can see, that's far from the truth."

RARS, which has more than 450 members, is a nonprofit organization and one of many radio clubs across the country. While the club offers many services, helping the public during times of emergency is among its goals.

"It's a tireless activity, and these hams are so dedicated to it," said Fin Gold, the president of RARS. "And people don't realize that they're out there, and they're there to help."

How hams help during disasters

Across North Carolina, amateur radio operators have helped with search and rescue efforts and condition reports, Gold said.

Many of the repeaters, which are automated relay stations that have broad coverage, were offline because of Helene. But one repeater on Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in North Carolina, was still operational, and the hams on the mountain were able to help check on people and pass along radio messages, Gold said.

There's a program called AUXCOMM, developed by the Department of Homeland Security, in which certain hams work with government agencies including North Carolina Emergency Management, Till said. Other hams may assist with health and welfare messaging.

"The more people that join us, the more we can help," Gold said.

How to find a ham

Search for amateur radio operators in a given area on the Federal Communications Commission's website.

Search online for a local radio club.

Some operators may have a special license plate with their radio call sign.

How to get involved with ham radio

There are many reasons why people are drawn to radio, Till said. They may want to socialize, compete in contests, perform a public service or experiment with building the technology.

Anyone in Raleigh who is interested in becoming an amateur radio operator can contact RARS.

Hams are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission and must pass an exam to become licensed, said Till, who earned his first license in 1970. RARS and other radio clubs offer classes to prepare for exams, and people may also purchase study materials online.

Equipment costs vary depending on what a person wants to do with the radio.

"You can get into it for as little as \$50," Till said. "I know people who have spent tens of thousands of dollars on their station, but you don't have to do that."

Other ways to communicate without cell signal

Satellites such as Starlink systems can be used for communication. In Western North Carolina, counties reported that the systems allowed emergency responders to receive calls and members of the public to check on family, The News & Observer reported.

Satellite phones may also be used when there's no cell service.

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Feds to send \$100 million to repair Helene-damaged roads and bridges in Western NC

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 193 Words Page: 3A OpenURL Link

The federal government is sending \$100 million in emergency relief to repair and reopen roads and bridges damaged by Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina, the Federal Highway Administration announced Saturday.

"Working in close coordination with North Carolina, we are providing this initial round of funding so there's no delay getting roads repaired and reopened, and re-establishing critical routes," U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in an email statement. "The Biden-Harris administration will be with North Carolina every step of the way."

The money will "help get transportation networks back up and running safely and will be followed by additional federal resources," Buttigieg said.

North Carolina requested the money, and federal highway officials OKed sending the amount to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the Secretary said.

"It has been devastating to witness scenes of the North Carolina families, neighbors, and communities destroyed by Helene explain what it means to have access to significant aid relief slowed or even cut off," Acting Federal Highway Administrator Kristin White said in the statement.

The aid to North Carolina followed a quick release of money by the Federal Highway Administration to South Carolina earlier in the week.

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In off-the-grid Egypt, NC, - not even helicopters can get close enough to deliver relief

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Julia Coin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 625 Words Page: 2A

Page: ZA
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Egypt, North Carolina, doesn't show up on most maps.

Less than 800 people lived there before the floods of Helene rushed roads and widened rivers on Friday. How many survived? Unknown.

On Wednesday, five people could be spotted from a helicopter lowering toward the township's tin-roofed volunteer fire department. A shoulder-width hole was sawed out of the top.

"Oh, so that's how the firefighter got out," said pilot Gary Heavin, who hovered above the cracked, cliffed road now caked with orange paste - a mixture of mountain dirt and water.

"This is a job only helicopters can do," Heavin said. But his black chopper with a United States of America seal stickered on couldn't do this job.

The ravished lanes below - the only border between total ruin and semi-salvageable devastation - were too narrow to land on. The closest field was too sloped, the next clearing too far away.

Heavin pulls up. None of the five people flag down his helicopter that's holding three others - an N.C. fire marshal, a friend and a Charlotte Observer reporter. He assumes the people visible down below have what they need to survive, for now.

He flies south, to Burnsville, to drop the supplies stacked in his "bird," as he and everyone else flying supplies west out of Hickory via Operation Airdrop call their copters.

Everyone is ready to pivot.

"The mission is to do whatever needs to be done," says Sam Parks, Heavin's friend from Statesville.

Bringing people out of flooded areas

The day before, they rescued a woman with Stage 4 cancer and looked for two kids. The kids were gone, possibly dead somewhere beneath branches and sludge, he said.

In Burnsville, Gordon Higgins, a volunteer firefighter of nearly 30 years, waves the chopper into a field adjacent to powerlines. Heavin unloads some of the 300 Starlinks flown in by Ivanka Trump hours before.

And the water in the back will go to the 50 rescued from Pensacola, N.C., - a town next door, where Hurricane Helene's remnants pushed houses into rivers, says volunteer Kayti Ledford.

"It's just horrible in Florida, too," she said. "But at least there it's flat. Here, there's no quick rebuild. The landscape isn't just changed. It's gone."

Heavin, the founder of Curves fitness franchise from Waco, Texas, volunteered to fly with Operation Airdrop, a nonprofit that drops supplies and leads rescues to help those stranded in disasters.

He and most of the other 50 volunteer pilots at Hickory Regional Airport were ready to rebel against a no-fly order as President Joe Biden descended into Asheville on Wednesday.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued a temporary flight restriction Wednesday afternoon over the area, with some exceptions. Matt McSwain, the nonprofit's Hickory organizer, said he wouldn't abide by it. He wasn't going to stop pulling people out of the rubble for one person to visit it, he said.

A U.S. official told The Charlotte Observer flights coordinated with the North Carolina Emergency Operations Center or that otherwise make it known they intend to deliver aid could proceed without any delay. But the restrictions could have affected other types of aircraft that were "freelancing," the official said.

Heavin lifted off 10 minutes into the modified no-fly order, spotting military helicopters not showing up on his radar. Minutes after he lifted off, his radio went down; no one could hear him trying to get approval to touch down.

He called the tower on his cell, an unlit cigar between his bottom lip and the phone's microphone. They told him to land anyway, and the 73-year-old woman and her dog stepped out and into nurses hands.

Julia Coin: 7042189350, @juliamcoin

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1222500C6B718>



Free legal assistance available for Helene - storm victims in NC. - How to get help

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 231 Words Page: 7A OpenURL Link

As thousands of North Carolinians continue to pick up the pieces from the destruction left behind by Hurricane Helene, free legal help is now available to help those in need.

The North Carolina Bar Association and Foundation, Legal Aid of North Carolina, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have teamed up to launch a pro bono legal program with local lawyers.

The Disaster Legal Services hotline (866-219-5262) is available for low-income survivors to connect with volunteer attorneys to assist with any storm-related questions and disaster benefits, including:

FEMA appeals

Disaster Unemployment Assistance

Insurance claims

Home repair contracts and contractor disputes

Contractor fraud and consumer protection matters

Replacing destroyed legal documents

Mortgage-foreclosure

Landlord or tenant issues

The toll-free hotline is available 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays. To be connected to a volunteer lawyer, explain which county you are located in and ask for Disaster Legal Services assistance.

According to Legal Aid of North Carolina, 26 continues have been approved for the federal assistance: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

You can find more information about the Disaster Legal Services hotline and Legal Aid's resource library with tips for replacing lost documents, property taxes, unemployment assistance and more online at legalaidnc.org/disaster.

Chyna Blackmon: @chynablackmon

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Chyna Blackmon, Staff Writer, 'Free legal assistance available for Helene storm victims in NC. How to get help', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 7 Oct 2024 7A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C122260B3120A8>



Pet adoptions 'urgently needed' at Wake SPCA for displaced NC animals after Helene

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Chyna Blackmon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 362 Words

Page: 3A OpenURL Link

Following the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Helene, a Triangle animal group is pleading to the public to help pets that were displaced during the storm.

As local, state and federal officials continue rescue and recovery efforts in Western North Carolina, the SPCA of Wake County says pet adoptions are "urgently needed" to free up space and resources for other affected shelters who are asking for help in taking in as many evacuated pets as possible.

"We have seen how devastating natural disasters can be for both people and animals," Darci VanderSlik, a SPCA Wake spokesperson said in a statement. "By adopting a pet from a shelter like ours, you are not only bringing joy and love into your own life, but you are also helping to save a life and provide a second chance for an animal in need."

The Triangle nonprofit has a variety of animals dogs, cats, rabbits, and other animals in need of homes that were already up for adoption at other shelters before the storm hit.

"The affected shelters need to clear animals out to safe areas like Raleigh in order to create room for incoming lost pets so that they can reunite them with their owners," Samantha Ranlet, Communications Manager for SPCA of Wake County, told The News & Observer.

"Otherwise they would face this inundation of lost pets with facilities that are already at max capacity, which would either mean turning lost pets away with nowhere to go, or having to euthanize adoptable animals to create space."

How to adopt from SPCA of Wake County

If you're interested in making a furry friend in need a part of your family, here's how the adoption process works at SPCA of Wake County:

Submit an adoption survey to meet with an Adoption Specialist

Schedule an appointment to ask questions and learn more about a potential pet

Finalize paperwork and pet adoption

You can find more information about the adoption process and fees, which include spaying/neutering, vaccinations, microchipping, and more, online at spcawake.org or visit the shelter open everyday from 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Chyna Blackmon: @chynablackmon

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Chyna Blackmon, Staff Writer, 'Pet adoptions 'urgently needed' at Wake SPCA for displaced NC animals after Helene', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 7 Oct 2024 3A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C12226102400F8>



Shame on Trump for Helene lies

October 7, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: the Editorial Board | Section: Editorial/Opinion | 572 Words

Page: 11B OpenURL Link

Western North Carolina is trying to pick up the pieces left behind by Hurricane Helene, which decimated the region, leaving communities destroyed and a death toll in the triple digits.

This is not a situation to capitalize on for political gain. But former President Donald Trump has politicized the situation at every turn, spreading falsehoods and conspiracies that fracture the community instead of bringing it together.

The worst example is a social media post Trump made on Monday, in which he accused the federal government and Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper of "going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas. MAGA!" That same day, Trump also posted that the Biden administration has "left Americans to drown" in North Carolina and other states.

Trump has also said that Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp couldn't get President Joe Biden on the phone to help his state with hurricane relief - a claim that Kemp himself debunked - and falsely claimed that the government doesn't have enough money to respond to the disaster because "Kamala spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants." He's called it "the worst response in the history of hurricanes" and suggested it would be the Biden administration's own Hurricane Katrina.

There's no evidence to support any of those ridiculous claims. And by every indication, state and federal agencies have been working to help people in need. They've been airlifting food and other supplies to affected areas. Helping families get information about missing loved ones. Providing monetary assistance to folks whose homes were destroyed. Working to clear and repair roads and get critical infrastructure back up and running.

It may not be enough, because this is one of the worst disasters our state has ever seen. It will take months and years to rebuild, and we still won't be able to recover everything that was lost. But the people of North Carolina have not been left out to dry. Their government has not abandoned them. The Republican governors of Georgia and South Carolina have expressed satisfaction with the federal response.

Trump knows that. So does Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, who accused Cooper and Biden of not doing enough to prepare for and respond to the storm. Robinson has used the tragedy for photo ops and posts on social media and predicted he will be called a "hero" for his efforts to help victims, despite the fact that he missed a key vote to declare a state of emergency in preparation for the storm.

Trump's claims are as hypocritical as they are harmful. POLITICO's E&E News reported this week that, as president, Trump could be "flagrantly partisan" in times of disaster and "on at least three occasions hesitated to give disaster aid to areas he considered politically hostile or ordered special treatment for pro-Trump states." According to the report, Trump was hesitant to send disaster aid when California was ravaged by wildfires in 2018 until he learned the affected part of the state was saturated with Trump voters.

Let's be clear: Western North Carolina is not a political football. This is not a campaign opportunity. The most unhelpful thing any politician - or anyone else - can do right now is spread misinformation and tell people that their government isn't doing anything to help them.

Sowing the seeds of political division is always an unnecessary and tiresome endeavor. But doing so in times of great need, when unity is paramount, is particularly shameful.

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the Editorial Board, 'Shame on Trump for Helene lies', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 7 Oct 2024 11B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C12226154CA300



Pet supplies in Hickory: Veterinary hospital brings pet food, beds for Hurricane Helene relief

October 7, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Sarah Johnson | Section: Pets | 692 Words OpenURL Link

A load of about 6,000 pounds of dog and cat food arrived at Viewmont Animal Hospital on Friday to help those impacted by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

The food was delivered by an animal hospital out of Wilmington. Leashes, cages, carriers, water and dog beds were also donated, Eastern Carolina Veterinary Referral Emergency and Specialty Hospital Director Gary Walker said.

"Anyone that needs anything, if you can get here (to Viewmont Animal Hospital)," Walker said. "Come and get what you need. Get as much as you need. It's open access and free to the public."

The pet food and supplies can be picked up at Viewmont Animal Hospital during regular business hours, Hospital Manager Melissa Hammer said.

Charlotte Quinney works the front desk at Viewmont Animal Hospital. She said some of the calls she received by people seeking help for their animals have been heartbreaking.

"One lady was looking for a certain cat food. She called from Black Mountain," Quinney said. "She'd just gotten cell service, and she was desperate. She said, through her panic, her house and car are fine, but she was rambling, 'The neighbors are dead. All the cars are crushed.' Her daughter lives in Hickory, so she was trying to make her way down here and then the phone disconnected. I tried to go back and see if I could find her number, but it wouldn't pull up."

Quinney said another elderly woman came down from Banner Elk in Avery County. The woman had her 14-year-old dog with her. She came to get medication for her dog, Quinney said.

Quinney said Viewmont Animal Hospital can fill emergency prescriptions for people's pets.

"(The Banner Elk woman's) house is gone. She's just displaced and she's probably in her 80s," Quinney said. "Everyone I have talked to is elderly."

Hammer said seeing the devastation up close has been mentally difficult for her and other staff members. Quinney agreed.

"Face-to-face you get more of an impact," Quinney said. "Versus watching it on your Facebook and your TV. It's the emotion you are actually feeling. It's gut wrenching. I think that's what's affected me is actually talking (to victims of Hurricane Helene.)"

Chris Johnson lives in Brevard in Transylvania County, which is a little less than an hour south of Asheville. Johnson volunteered to bring his truck and a trailer. After loading the trailer and bed of his truck, Johnson said he would take the supplies directly to places with heavy impact like Old Fort in McDowell County and Black Mountain and Swannanoa in Buncombe County.

"Send more stuff," Johnson said. "They need help. Send anything. Nothing's too small. I feel like a lot of people that I've talked to don't know how to help. They think it's too small or it's not enough. I think it all adds up quickly."

Walker said the supplies taken up the mountains by Johnson will be made available to the public. "(Johnson) is going to deliver it house to house if he needs to," Walker said.

Hammer said she is overwhelmed and thankful for the support from the North Carolina coast to help the mountain communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. The donations filled a large U-Haul box truck and four cars. The lobby and several exam rooms at Viewmont Animal Hospital were full of supplies.

"When we first decided to come out here, people said, 'You can't get to Asheville,'" Walker said. "And I said, 'I know, but I know I can get to Hickory.' We're part of the same parent company, so I called them on Monday morning and said, 'We have a plan that we're going to bring food, and I need to deliver it to you. Will you allow us to drop it off?' They said, 'Absolutely.'"

Walker said when Eastern Carolina Veterinary Referral Emergency and Specialty Hospital started taking donations, the lobby was filled within 72 hours. Walker said he plans to bring another shipment to Hickory on Wednesday since the Wilmington hospital filled up again with donations.

Hammer said monetary donations can be made to Viewmont Animal Hospital to help pay for emergency treatment for animals. To make a monetary donation, call or text 828-328-2448.

Viewmont Animal Hospital is at 2870 Second St. NE in Hickory.

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Sarah Johnson, 'Pet supplies in Hickory: Veterinary hospital brings pet food, beds for Hurricane Helene relief', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 7 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
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BAXTER PLANT IN MARION CLOSED BY FLOODING

October 7, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal | Section: News | 541 Words OpenURL Link

The North Cove manufacturing plant of Baxter International Inc. has experienced significant flooding damage from the remnants of Hurricane Helene, the company said Tuesday.

The Marion campus is closed for production. It is Baxter's largest manufacturing facility with more than 2,500 employees.

Production primarily involves making intravenous and peritoneal dialysis solutions. Baxter is the largest U.S. manufacturer of these solutions.

"Our hearts and thoughts are with all those affected by Hurricane Helene," said José Almeida, Baxter's chair, president and chief executive.

"The safety of our employees, their families and the communities in which we operate remains our utmost concern, and we are committed to helping ensure reliable supply of products to patients.

The company said "it is working around the clock in close coordination with local, state and federal officials to assess the extent of the damage and implement a plan to bring the plant back online as quickly as possible to help mitigate supply disruption to patients."

"Remediation eff orts are already under way, and we will spare no resource — human or financial — to resume production and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," Almeida said.

The damage occurred in spite of Baxter's preparation eff orts, which included evacuation plans for workers, moving products to higher ground or secure storage where feasible.

However, the company said the heavy rain and storm surge triggered a levee breach, which led to water permeating the site. The bridges accessing the site have been damaged.

The Baxter International Foundation has committed \$1.5 million in donations to help address recovery needs, including allocating additional funds to its Employee Disaster Relief Fund, and is matching employee donations \$2 for \$1 toward relief eff orts.

Baster said the temporary closing of the Baxter plant is expected to "negatively impact the company's financial results."

"Once the company can more fully assess the damage, it will be in a better position to estimate any expected impact and plans to provide an update in its third-quarter earnings announcement."

On Tuesday, the N.C. Division of Employment Security listed McDowell County among 25 counties in northwest and western N.C. whose citizens have been declared eligible for federal disaster unemployment assistance benefits.

The eligibility is a byproduct of the Biden administration's declaration of a state of emergency in North Carolina.

The assistance covers individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of Hurricane Helene. Business owners and self-employed individuals affected by the storm also may qualify for benefits. Benefits would be made retroactive to Sept. 29 and may last for up to 26 weeks.

The other counties, along with the Cherokee Indians of N.C., are: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey.

The division said additional counties may be added at a later date.

Eligible individuals have until Dec. 2 to file an application for disaster unemployment assistance at des.nc.gov or the DUA Hotline at 919-629-3857.

Individuals must first apply for state unemployment benefits. For those determined to be ineligible for or have exhausted regular state benefits, they may be eligible to make a federal disaster unemployment assistance claim.

Eligibility is determined weekly, and individuals must continue to be out of work as a direct result of the disaster each week to get unemployment benefits.

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Catawba, Burke County businesses, owners pitch in to help western NC hurricane relief efforts

October 7, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Billy Chapman | Section: Business | 1330 Words OpenURL Link

After Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina, Olde Hickory Brewery co-founder Stephen Lyerly knew he wanted to take action.

Lyerly said the brewery had about 100 cases of new cans that had not been filled. Volunteers at the brewery began filling those cans with water instead of beer on Oct. 1.

More cans were donated by Tap Hopper out of Greensboro. Lyerly said Olde Hickory planned to can about 340 more cases of water.

Co-founder Jason Yates said the group plans to provide about 10,000 cans of water. Enough, he said, for a 30-day supply for about 100 people.

Some of the water will go to a nursing home in the Asheville area and some will go with Hickory Wrecker Service to areas where the service is dispatched.

Asked why the brewery decided to help this way, Lyerly paused and thought for a moment before shrugging and saying confidently, "It's obvious."

While volunteer organizations from within and outside of North Carolina use Hickory Regional Airport as a staging area for rescue missions, businesses around Catawba County have also decided the need to help was obvious.

Local businesses have committed to donating a portion of sales to relief efforts. Some are collecting donations or providing meals to workers in the area helping to clean up after the storm.

Other businesses and business owners have taken a more direct approach, delivering supplies and meals to residents in nearby counties where infrastructure has been destroyed and communication is challenging.

Some business owners expressed the desire to help residents in distress in nearby counties.

These are not the only examples of businesses and residents aiding those affected by Helene, but provide a look at how some residents responded when fellow North Carolinians needed assistance.

Providing meals

Cranford Hospitality contracted with North Carolina to provide three meals per day to areas affected by Helene.

Zack Cranford said several of the business' restaurants are providing about 1,500 meals per day to areas around Hendersonville. Flat Rock and others.

He said Cranford Hospitality is providing 200 meals per day to Pardee Hospital in Hendersonville. Another 100 meals are going to a location in Flat Rock.

Some of the 1,500 meals are being distributed to volunteers assisting with search-and-rescue operations in the western part of the state. Meals also are being distributed to shelters.

Cranford said it took about two-and-a-half to three hours each way to travel to Hendersonville due to closures along

Interstate 40 earlier after the storm.

Cranford said he expects to provide meals for the foreseeable future.

"We're just trying to help our community more than anything," Cranford said. "We're thankful for the opportunity and to be in a position to step up."

'A bunch of 12-year-olds should not be having to do this'

Garrett Osborne went to work on Sept. 30, but it didn't feel right.

"I just thought, 'This feels weird,'" Osborne said. "I've been seeing all these videos and pictures and all this kind of stuff, and it just feels weird. We lived through ... all these natural disasters that are hours away and even in other countries and it's unique, it hits a little bit different when 30 minutes away from my house there are people that literally lost everything they own."

Osborne, owner of Osborne Real Estate Group, connected with colleagues and friends to provide help to western North Carolina.

With a convoy of pickup trucks, many towing trailers, Osborne and others traveled to Canton, West Asheville and Black Mountain on Oct. 2 to deliver about 100,000 pounds of supplies, food and water.

Osborne said his eagerness to help caused him to learn some lessons from that first day about coordinating with churches or other officials in areas impacted by the storm. Some places did not have the ability to accept donations, but he did donate in Canton and found a church in Black Mountain also willing to accept donations.

"The churches in those areas are inundated," Osborne said. "They're inundated with supplies and they're overwhelmed. They're not meant to be distribution hubs. They're meant to be churches."

Osborne said a youth group at the church in Black Mountain was managing the incoming donations.

"It's cool to see because it's the power of what people can do when they come together and there's love and support," Osborne said. "But a youth group, a bunch of 12-year-olds, should not be having to do this."

On Oct. 2, he coordinated with a fire station in Spruce Pine with help from the city of Hickory. When he got there, Osborne said the town did not have power or water.

"It's unclear how soon those areas will get infrastructure back," Osborne said. "You've got an entire town that's operating with no power, no water."

Osborne said he's developed a way for people to request welfare checks on friends and family. He and others in Hickory are coordinating with Baptists on Mission in Spruce Pine, who send individuals out to conduct welfare checks.

On Oct. 3, Osborne said welfare checks were conducted on 20 people. That night, he said requests for checks were received on 70 new addresses.

He said the list for requests for welfare checks and missing persons reached the thousands.

Helping neighbors

Isaac Crouch, owner of Simply Green Recycling in Morganton, said while not able to collect recycling due to inaccessible roads, he wanted to keep doing what his business does: "Pick stuff up and take it somewhere else."

"As of Friday (Sept. 27), we couldn't do that (collect recycling)," Crouch said. "We pretty much transitioned to using all of our operations for the relief efforts."

Crouch and Simply Green employees started assisting Sept. 28.

On Friday, Sept. 27, the city of Morganton said it lost power to its water treatment plant. The city said it would take several days to restore operations at the water treatment facility.

"When we started to learn about how destructive (the storm) was, we had no idea how long it would be before we got power and drinkable water," Crouch said. "We started to put the word out on our personal social media pages and our business social media for people to reach out to anyone and everyone they knew outside of the disaster area that could get us enough water to pick up in our box truck."

On that Saturday, Crouch traveled with four SUVs and a trailer to meet friends and family around Statesville. There, water was collected to bring back to Burke County.

Crouch said they took water to Broughton Hospital and distributed some from the Simply Green parking lot in Morganton.

"Those first few days, there was a lot of hope and people helping each other, people willing to do anything and everything to get their neighbors what they need," Crouch said.

On Monday, Sept. 30, 5,500 pounds — 140 cases — of bottled water was collected. Simply Green collected another 8,000 pounds of bottled water that Tuesday and Wednesday.

Employees Ben Pannenbacker and Jon Gromm also delivered needed supplies in a 20-foot box truck to the Jonas Ridge community in northern Burke County.

On the morning of Oct. 2, the city of Morganton reported the city was no longer under a boil water advisory and water operations were returning to normal.

Crouch will return to business operations now that areas around Morganton have drinkable water. He plans to continue to collect donations and take them where they are needed.

On Friday, Crouch picked up another 12,000 pounds of bottled water and 35 empty fuel cans to be filled and distributed in western North Carolina.

Crouch, who lives in Burke County and was also affected by Helene, said driving to collect, organize and distribute supplies was emotionally taxing. Seeing an area he grew up in, people he knows, devastated by flooding and mudslides caused him to have two emotional breakdowns.

He knows there is much work to be done but is hopeful that resilient communities in the region can continue to band together.

"Our ancient mountains have lost entire towns, and we are a long way from knowing how many have perished," Crouch said by email. "Those of us that continue on have also lost the lives we had before this. Give yourself grace and be kind to your neighbors."

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'Now it's all gone.' Old Fort faces future after Hurricane Helene leaves part of town in ruins

October 7, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: CONNOR MCNEELY Winston-Salem Journal | Section: Travel | 1216 Words OpenURL Link

A brown fog of dust and dirt billowed through Old Fort, N.C., as Amy Davis served chicken and dumplings to every person who wearily climbed the steps of her country store.

By her rough estimation, it seemed as if half the town of about 820 had become homeless by the end of Hurricane Helene's devastation. The wind and water had tossed mobile homes hundreds of yards and washed away cars into the Catawba River, leaving the town's residents to wait for the restoration of cell service and the arrival of help from across North Carolina.

In the days after the flooding, the sun beat down on Old Fort and froze a thick layer of mud and muck around the houses, stores and churches that residents and visitors from surrounding counties now worked to break up and clear.

Power and running water had become an afterthought. Everyone who remained either walked the streets of the town in a daze, worked feverishly to clear debris, or a bit of both.

Davis positioned a "check-in" list on a poster board near the stairs of her store, which collected names of individuals and families from the edges of the town to then post on the Old Fort Facebook page as "safe."

There were still many families and elderly couples unaccounted for in the outer edges of the town. Feeding the rescue workers and wandering Old Fort residents was how Davis figured she could make the biggest difference.

With her family and fellow neighbors, Davis spent the weekend following the storm clearing the streets and cutting down trees until they reached the country store. When they realized the building was still intact, Davis and her family started putting together plans for free meals.

"It's not just that they're getting hot food and a hot meal, but that they know the family that's making it, and they know that we're from here," Davis said. Her husband's family traced their lineage to the mid-1700s, when English and Scottish settlers had arrived in the area, before it became a fort in the Revolutionary War.

As the lunch hour arrived Wednesday morning, construction workers climbed the stairs in grime-soaked T-shirts and pants. With about a dozen others, they cleaned a number of properties that lined the town's main street, Catawba Avenue, including the Hillman Beer brewery, which opened in 2020.

The brewpub is one of two breweries in Old Fort, which is a dry town situated in the dry McDowell County. It was only relatively recent state laws that allowed breweries across North Carolina to serve beer, wine and cider in dry counties, but only what they made themselves.

Residents felt a deep sense of connection to the brewery as a new kind of meeting place that attracted tourists traveling from Charlotte to Asheville.

Jeff Parker, the landlord that owned the property in addition to many others in the downtown area, said the brewery had become the social hub of the Old Fort community.

But now the building's upcoming Oktoberfest decorations were caked in mud. A twisted smell of yeast rose from sludge of the taproom, where dozens of kegs were stacked on top of one another.

"It's all concrete masonry and stainless steel," Parker said of the building. "It's going to be a lot of work, but we're not giving up."

In the streets of the town, employees from the N.C. Department of Transportation, Old Fort residents, members of the Coast Guard and others cleared away trees and debris. Caravans of military jeeps, semi-trucks, and police vehicles filled the faded parking lots. Helicopters thundered overhead about every hour, a strange sight for Old Fort.

Chuck Aldridge, a local bed and breakfast owner, pointed to the surrounding buildings with a warning: the sewer system needed to be replaced, and it wasn't something the town could do without help from the state.

What they could do was take care of their own. On Monday, days after the storm had passed, Old Fort's police chief called Bo Cooper, who managed a Columbia Forest Products warehouse, and asked if the town could use it as a distribution center for supplies.

By the next day, Cooper was driving a forklift in the warehouse, surrounded by dozens of others who carried food and supplies to trucks and waiting families.

Residents drove pickup trucks with stacks of water bottles and toilet paper loaded into their beds and drove them down the streets and avenues of Old Fort.

At the edge of the mud-covered parking lot of the Old Fort Elementary School, which is a mere 3 years old, two sister teachers reunited with three students who brought flowers and cards with well wishes.

"We love you, we'll be praying for you," one of the cards read. "We have Old Fort pride deep inside."

"That's the truth! We'll come back," Lindsay Rowland Latham said. "That hurricane will spit out the Rowland girls."

Her sister, Anna Rowland, stared ahead at the old white house she had grown up in. She had been staying in the house with their mother, Emily, and her sister Lindsay, as the floodwaters rose around it.

When they left the house and reached higher ground near the school, their family watched a couple with a 10-month-baby clinging to its mother's chest wade in knee-deep water to break into the school windows. The man had grabbed a tree-limb and broke the glass to get his family in after the waters swept away their car, Rowland said.

Rumors abounded about what would happen to their classes. Both Rowland and Latham worried about many of their students who lived further out from town and mulled over potential meeting places at nearby churches.

"They don't want to split the kids up but what are you going to do?" Latham said.

Inside the elementary school, there was already a strong stench of sewage that choked the hallways. Filth streaked across the terrazzo floors and masked construction crews sawed open the floor of the basketball gym, where the water had buckled and ruined the seams of the hardwood. Outside, the recess yard was an endless field of dried mud.

The surrounding rows of houses and mobile homes was worse. The structures stood on low-lying land now filled with mounds of silt and packed dirt that cracked and sunk around feet, exposing tree roots, fractured fences, tarps and plastic bottles.

Glass scattered across the rooftop of a house, where its owner had punched out a window to escape the rising flood. Back in front of the elementary school, Emily Rowland stood with Belinda Wright, a neighbor from down the street.

Wright said she was asleep Friday morning when she heard a knock on the door. She grabbed pictures, the ashes of her mother and granddaughter, and left. The next thing she knew, the floodwaters were slapping up on the porch

and her daughter was pushing her out of the house.

"We got out about as far as the Old Fort exit, and we watched our life float away," Wright said. "Every last bit of it."

Rowland turned her gaze over to the house her family had built and lived in for the last 20 years.

"That's all they knew," Rowland said of her daughters. "They walked across the street every day for work, and now it's all gone."

After a pause in conversation, the two glanced at each other with small smiles hinting on their faces.

"I'm just glad you're OK, honey," Rowland said, pulling Wright into an embrace.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

CONNOR MCNEELY Winston-Salem Journal, "Now it's all gone.' Old Fort faces future after Hurricane Helene leaves part of town in ruins', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 7 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C24732073419D8>



Hickory playing like title hunters. Bunker Hill leans on Willis brothers

October 7, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Jason Koon | Section: Football | 769 Words OpenURL Link

With half of the 2024 high school football season in the books, here are five reasons for optimism in Hickory and Bunker Hill

Hickory is playing on another level

Brady Stober's 10-for-14, 282-yard performance against St. Stephens on Saturday was a far cry from his 452 yards against North Lincoln three days earlier, but it was still a top 12 passing game in Hickory High School history.

Stober holds the top four games in school history and nine of the top 12. It's just one example of Hickory playing on another level.

Jamien Little had 210 yards and three touchdowns on seven receptions against North Lincoln. Nobody could catch him. There were times it seemed like Stober could just throw the ball up and trust that Little would get under it and make something happen.

Ellis Chappell has been big this season too. He is virtually tied with Little as Hickory's leading receiver with 482 yards and four touchdowns on 19 receptions this season.

Stober said having receivers like Little, Chappell, Damarion Lee and Austin Ballard makes his job easier.

"My job is just to get the ball to them ... and let them work," Stober said.

Football is a team sport

The only thing Stober wanted to talked about after the North Lincoln game was his teammates.

"I couldn't ask for a better five up front to protect me," he said. "The wide receiver corps. We only lost one last year, so the chemistry is still there ... there's a lot of unseen hours where we're running routes, getting the timing down."

Football is a team sport. And Hickory is winning as a team.

On defense, 12 different players have either grabbed an interception, forced a fumble or recovered a fumble this season. Linebackers Quenshea Abernathy, Kasen Tuttle and Carter Toney, fly to the ball, fill gaps and hit hard. Defensive backs Dorian Medley, Brett Rowland, Jamir Norwood and Tylar Johnson pester receivers, breaking up plays. Hickory has amassed 15 team interceptions in just six games.

The defensive line makes it all possible. The Hickory line gets great movement, tying up opposing blockers, pressuring quarterbacks and freeing up the secondary to step up and make big plays.

Hickory's title hopes hang on discipline

From back-to-back games against two of the toughest opponents in the conference to the chaos of Hurricane Helene, Hickory has come through what will likely prove to be the toughest part of its schedule unscathed.

That doesn't mean head coach Joe Glass doesn't have some ideas on what his team needs to do to keep winning.

"We have to stay disciplined," he said. "That's the biggest question mark I've had about this team all year long ... that's the biggest difference and the thing we've got to fix."

Glass' players are going to have to answer that question if they hope to repeat as state champs again this year.

"It's going to come down to discipline," he said. "We've got talent. Our coaches do a great job. It's just going to be being disciplined, doing the right thing on and off the field."

Bunker Hill is on the rise

Bunker Hill is securely in the Catawba Valley Athletic Conference driver's seat with a 35-21 win over West Lincoln on Saturday.

With Bandys losing to Lincolnton on Saturday and West Lincoln taking down Maiden on Wednesday, Bunker Hill is the lone undefeated team in conference play. The remaining seven teams each have one loss conference loss.

There is a lot of football left. Bunker Hill has to face Maiden and Bandys later this season. The Blue Devils and Trojans will battle each other on Friday.

Willis brothers are carrying the load

This year's Bunker Hill team features a host of new starters on the offensive line and a quarterback who came into the season with virtually no varsity experience.

So Bunker Hill is relying heavily on two of the top rushers in the 2A classification.

Jason Willis Jr. started things off on Saturday with a 95-yard touchdown run early in the first quarter. He finished with 230 yards on the ground and three touchdowns. He has piled up 934 yards and 13 touchdowns on 92 carries this season. He ranks third among 2A players in the state in rushing yards and his 10.2 yards per carry average ranks sixth among players with at least 30 attempts.

His brother, Jaylan, would be in fifth with 10.4 yards per carry if he had enough attempts. Jaylan has 142 rushing yards on 13 carries and 267 receiving yards on 17 catches. He also has four touchdowns.

After a shaky start, junior quarterback Eli Davis Helms is coming into his own. In the last two games, he boasts a 73% completion rate and has thrown for 237 yards.

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Jason Koon, 'Hickory playing like title hunters. Bunker Hill leans on Willis brothers', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 7 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C10FC1F2843488



HPU, business, team up for relief

October 7, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER | Section: News | 387 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH POINT — People in western North Carolina ravaged by Tropical Storm Helene are getting an infusion of help from High Point University.

On Monday a truck and driver donated by City Transfer and Storage took students with supplies to Boone for a donation to Harvest House Church, which is coordinating relief efforts. HPU students in the near future plan a similar trip to contribute supplies to Haywood Street Congregation in Asheville.

In 2 1/2 days last week before fall break began, students collected bottled water, cleaning supplies, diapers and other personal hygiene products, said Sam Carr, director of student leadership and university relations.

In addition, the HPU Student Government Association donated \$10,000 to the relief effort and students on their own raised about \$6,500, which included contributions by parents of students and university employees. Carr told The High Point Enterprise that financial contributions will be split between the two western North Carolina churches.

"This speaks to the hearts of the students," said Carr, an HPU graduate who served as student body president.

Carr, a High Point native who graduated from Wesleyan Christian Academy, said students reached out to the university about helping when the devastation from Helene became apparent. Students set up drop-off sites on campus for contributions of supplies.

City Transfer and Storage became involved when leaders with the High Point-based company contacted HPU about helping, said Debbie Prince, director of national accounts.

"We're happy to join forces with the university," Prince said.

City Transfer and Storage has its own drop-off points for donations at its facilities at 1100 Redding Drive in High Point and 2895 Ridgewood Park Drive in Winston-Salem. Donations of supplies can be made from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Fridays.

Carr said the relief effort at the university will continue at least for the next month with the intention of making a series of drop-offs to help people in areas impacted by Helene.

"I just think it's a super important thing to give back to the people who live so close to us," said Emma Higgins, HPU's current senior class president from Yonkers, New York. "All the students who are out here are into helping them as they go through this really hard time, and I think there's no place we'd rather be on fall break than to help them."

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Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER, 'HPU, business, team up for relief', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 7 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C148C96EDE7960



Local Brewery hosted Benefit for BeLoved Asheville

October 7, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Amanda Astillero, Staff Reporter | Section: Archives | 311 Words OpenURL Link

On Sunday, The Brewer's Kettle played host to a benefit concert for a nonprofit organization in Asheville that is helping get aid to people devastated by Tropical Storm Helene.

Michelle Kennedy, one of the owners of the Brewer's Kettle, said supplies and clothing also were being collected. There also was a silent auction and bingo.

"We were and still are so devastated by what happened. It is unimaginable," Kennedy said.

Proceeds and items collected were to go to BeLoved Asheville, which was started in 2009. It has worked on such things as food access, affordable housing, health care, racial equity, culture celebrations and educational opportunities for children but since the storm has shifted its focus to storm recovery.

The other owner of the Brewer's Kettle, Andy Kennedy, started working to help storm victims soon after Helene struck, Michelle Kennedy said.

"Andy immediately got on the phone with a couple friends to organize a trip to go help, while I immediately reached out to some of my favorite bands to put together a benefit show that needed to happen quickly. Andy left Wednesday morning, and he is still there," she said.

The Brewer's Kettle is still collecting relief supplies and other types of donations.

"We will collect any items and monetary donations needed for as long as it takes. Our next blood drive with The Blood Connection will take place on November 2 at 3:30 p.m.," Kennedy said.

Other businesses around Kernersville have sent teams to western North Carolina to distribute relief aid.

When asked about how it feels to see the business community of Kernersville come together for a greater cause, Kennedy replied, "Seeing how fast everyone and every business has supported our fellow North Carolinians has been incredible. It certainly helps restore faith in this disastrous time."

The benefit concert featured performances by Hunter McBride, The Deluge, BDL Trio, and Drew Foust & the Wheelhouse.

For more information, please visit:

https://www.facebook.com/thekettlekernersville

https://www.belovedasheville.com/

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Budget

October 7, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Budget| 65 Words OpenURL Link

Tuesday, Oct. 8, Vol. 45, No. 96

Guy Lucas 804-980-0079

Α1

Centerpiece: KRNNWS-10-08-24 BENEFIT - with photos (use one or two on A1)

News lead: KRNNWS-10-08-24 MANSLAUGHTER

KRNNWS-10-08-24 SONDHEIM

A2-8 and A11

KRNNWS-10-08-24 BOARD

KRNNWS-10-08-24 EAGLES

KRNNWS-10-08-24 RELIEF - package of 3 photos, no story

KRNNWS-10-08-24 T1D WALK

KRNNWS-10-08-24 EVENTS

Obits

Jumps from A1

News wire to fill, listed in order of priority:

KRNNWS-10-08-24 HELENE

AP-US--Hurricane Helene-FEMA

KRNNWS-10-08-24 HOSPITALS

KRNNWS-10-08-24 ROADS

KRNNWS-10-08-24 MILTON

KRNNWS-10-08-24 DEBT

AP-CAR-NASCAR-Talladega

BC-FBN--Panthers-QBs

AP-GLF-Sanderson-Farms
BC-BKLLiberty-Finals
A9
10-08-24 COMICS - TIER 2 + HISTORY
A10
10-08-24 FEATURE - FULL

A12

Classified

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