

# When you are both a journalist and a firefighter, which comes first when a hurricane hits?

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Scott Fowler, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north\_carolina | 1109 Words OpenURL Link

Many journalists have covered the damage that Hurricane Helene wrought in Western North Carolina when it devastated much of the area in late September.

Very few of them, though, have had to make the same sorts of choices that 25-year-old Moss Brennan has.

Brennan is the editor of the Watauga Democrat in Boone, where he supervises three other staff writers and several freelance photographers and also helps oversee the publication of four other neighboring community newspapers.

Meanwhile, Brennan also serves as a volunteer firefighter for two local rescue units in the Boone area — the Deep Gap Fire Department and the Watauga County Rescue Squad.

"I have my rescue hat and my journalism hat," Brennan, a 2021 graduate of Appalachian State, said in a phone interview. "And I try to keep them as separate as possible."

Moss Brennan in rescue gear. JPGJournalist Moss Brennan in his rescue gear. Brennan spent the first few days after Hurricane Helene alternating going on first-responder calls with his duties as a journalist.

That has proved challenging over the past couple of weeks. Hurricane Helene caused mayhem all over Western North Carolina. Brennan found himself wanting to help in two disparate ways — getting important information to the public through the newspaper and its various social media platforms and literally helping to save lives as a first responder.

In the first few hours and days of the storm, as Helene downed trees, flooded rivers, provoked landslides, knocked out power and caused dozens of deaths in Western North Carolina, Brennan stuck mostly with his volunteer work on the rescue units. He participated in several swift-water rescues, helping get people and animals out of cars that were stuck in floodwaters or out of houses where the water had risen too high for a safe exit.

"On those swift-water calls," Brennan said, "I was part of rescuing 11 people and three dogs."

Then it came time to put out the newspaper — or actually multiple newspapers, since Brennan is also the executive editor of Mountain Times Publications. The company owns community newspapers in neighboring counties like Ashe and Avery, too. All of the publications combined — there are five of them altogether — have a staff of nine full-time journalists. Most of those reporters are in their 20s, Brennan said.

Brennan is most closely associated with the Watauga Democrat, which he reports for and edits each week and which prints once a week on Wednesdays. For the Oct. 2 edition, the first after Helene, Brennan wrote the top story on the front page and also took the 1A centerpiece photo.

The headline was stark: "DEVASTATION."

front page Watauga DemocratThe front page of the Oct. 2nd, 2024, Watauga Democrat. The newspaper was printed shortly after Hurricane Helene ravaged Western North Carolina. Reporter Moss Brennan wrote a front-page story and took a front-page photo, although he had spent many of the hours following the hurricane working in his second job as a volunteer first responder.

The newspaper decided to print close to a thousand extra copies of that edition, since so many places were without power and Wi-Fi. Brennan and the staff dropped off free copies of the newspapers at central distribution areas like community centers and fire departments.

"I went to one fire department and they said, 'This is the first news we've had since Friday (five days before),'"

Brennan said. "It just goes to show you that local journalism — and the printed paper — can still be very important."

Brennan grew up in Durham and attended high school at the Durham School of the Arts. He traveled 200 miles west across North Carolina to go to college at Appalachian State, where he majored in journalism and at one point was editor-in-chief of The Appalachian, the student newspaper.

Before he had even finished college, the Watauga Democrat had offered him a full-time job as a reporter. Brennan jumped at it — this was during the COVID era and almost all of his classes were online. When the editor job at the newspaper came open, Brennan was first appointed as interim editor and then got the job permanently — at age 22 and only three months after his college graduation.

Shortly after that, Brennan had to report on a spate of fires in Deep Gap, which is an unincorporated area in Watauga County. He grew somewhat interested in the process of fighting fires during this reporting, as well as the people who do it.

Moss Brennan headshotJournalist Moss Brennan grew up in Durham and then went to Appalachian State, where he served as the editor of the student newspaper, The Appalachian.

"I had always been interested in helping people anyway," Brennan said. "That's kind of why I got into journalism, too — to tell people's stories and hopefully help them. And then the Deep Gap fire chief was like, 'Hey, if you want to come to one of our trainings, we have one on Tuesday night.'"

Curious, Brennan stopped by and was enthralled by the work. He lived only 10 minutes from the station. So he joined Deep Gap as a volunteer firefighter in January 2022. A few months later, he got trained as an emergency medical technician (EMT). By February 2023, he had also joined the Watauga County Rescue Squad, also as a volunteer. Since he was volunteering, Brennan could mostly pick and choose what calls he assisted on and make sure he had time for his reporting and editing.

"My journalism job is flexible enough that if I'm not in the middle of an interview or a deadline, I can typically leave work if it's a serious enough call," Brennan said. "I probably go on a couple of calls a week. The majority of calls are medical, but there is the occasional car crash or fire."

Moss and roy cooper.jpgJournalist Moss Brennan (in foreground, back turned) asks a question of North Carolina governor Roy Cooper in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

With input from his bosses, Brennan said he decided early on that he shouldn't and couldn't report on calls that he was working on as a first responder. Compartmentalization would be key.

As for Brennan himself, he was fortunate. He lost power for only three hours during Hurricane Helene. Wi-Fi has been a thornier issue. Brennan has filed some stories from McDonald's (this is an age-old reporting trick, since McDonald's are often open late and generally have reliable Wi-Fi).

As the rescue calls have slowed and Western North Carolina concentrates on recovery, Brennan has been more focused on the reporting side of his life lately. As for his long-term plans, he said: "I really don't know what the future holds. I just know that I love what I do right now — both the rescue side and the journalism side."

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Scott Fowler, The Charlotte Observer, 'When you are both a journalist and a firefighter, which comes first when a hurricane hits?', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3E46A98C310C8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3E46A98C310C8</a>



# They bought the town's oldest restaurant and renovated it. Then Helene destroyed it.

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Melissa Oyler, The Charlotte Observer | Section: c5\_development | 2014 Words OpenURL Link

When the brand-new owners of Helen's Restaurant, Donna Stafford and her mom, Mary Stafford, posted a sneak peek of the Bakersville diner's remodel in July 2023 on Facebook, they couldn't have known that just over a year later, it would all be gone.

Of course they couldn't. None of us could.

Bakersville is a small town — population 1,757, per the 2020 census — in Western North Carolina. Its nickname is the "Gateway to Roan Mountain," and it is the county seat of Mitchell County.

The town has experienced flooding before — including the infamous Flood of 1977 and the Flood of 1998 — but it had never experienced anything like it would with the devastation of Hurricane Helene.

Helen's Restaurant front.jpgHelen's Restaurant in Bakersville, North Carolina, around the holidays in 2023.

Decades of memories at Helen's Restaurant

There are only a few restaurants in Bakersville, and Helen's was its oldest.

In our first conversation, Donna couldn't remember which year it opened — she would have to look at the newspaper article framed on the restaurant's wall to confirm — and that's not an option anymore.

She then texted the daughter of the owners who sold her the restaurant (yes, Helen's daughter), who confirmed the restaurant opened in 1956. The Mitchell County Historical Society said it started as a drive-in.

Helen Hopson, along with her husband, Wiley, owned and operated the restaurant from 1961 until she died in 1996. It was a town fixture for decades — and for a time, it was the only eatery in town, Donna said.

back of Helen's Restaurant Google Street View.pngThe white building to the right of Cane Creek is the back of Helen's Restaurant, shown before Hurricane Helene arrived in Bakersville, North Carolina.

Helen's sits along NC-226, one of those winding mountain roads surrounded by lush green fields, houses on hills and peaks off in the distance. Take a left at the flashing light in downtown if you're coming in from Spruce Pine, then you've found it — it's on your left.

Behind the restaurant, a walking path runs along Cane Creek, which feeds into North Toe River. It's part of the town's Creekwalk project, which also includes a playground, sports fields and more.

Photos: Helen's Restaurant was destroyed after Hurricane HeleneHelen's Restaurant was one of only a few places to eat in the small town. What happens next?

Renovating a relic

Donna and Mary purchased Helen's Restaurant in 2023, then got to work.

"We completely remodeled the restaurant with focus on maintaining a cozy, small-town community vibe, keeping the counter barstools," Donna said.

They were putting in 16-hour days. Mary is 80. And Donna, who is 60, became ill just before the restaurant's reopening. She was diagnosed with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Lyme disease, meningitis, Bell's palsy, myocarditis and other co-infections.

But all the labor felt worth it. The Stafford family goes back several generations in Mitchell County. Donna was born here; her brothers, too. It wasn't just the town's legacy they were investing in — it was personal.

Helen's Restaurant owners copy.jpgDonna Stafford, left, and her mom Mary Stafford opened Helen's Restaurant in August 2023 in Bakersville, North Carolina.

Helen's reopened in August 2023

With the community cheerleading their efforts the whole way, they reopened the restaurant in August 2023. A Rhododendron Dining Room with a collage wall celebrated Bakersville's annual Rhododendron Festival. A black bear on a clock proclaimed the restaurant was "on mountain time." Joe Cole, a Mitchell County native who worked at Helen's in 1965, gifted the restaurant a signed dulcimer that he made using locally sourced wood.

Helen's Restaurant Bakersville before.jpgHelen's Restaurant in Bakersville, North Carolina, was renovated (shown above) and reopened in August 2023. In September 2024, the restaurant was destroyed by Hurricane Helene.

For the next 13+ months, the restaurant served up hearty meals, including impressively sized double cheeseburgers, hot ham and cheese sandwiches and Southern chopped steak. Breakfast was available on the weekends, and Saturdays were for live music.

At times, Helen's needed to close unexpectedly due to staff illness, including Donna's. These short-notice closings were posted to the restaurant's Facebook page, and customers would comment with well wishes and shares, getting the word out.

"We were just past our first year of operations and were not making a profit yet, putting every dime towards salaries and food vendors," Donna said.

Helen's Restaurant guests.pngGuests at Helen's Restaurant in Bakersville, North Carolina, around the holidays in 2023.

The week of the hurricane

On Wednesday, Sept. 25, a powerful storm came through. "The basement flooded like never before," Donna said.

Photos of the damage show freezers knocked on their sides, food spilled out and covered in sludge. A crumpled cardboard container in a puddle on the floor of the basement displays "KEEP FROZEN" in block letters under a layer of cracked mud. Fresh broccoli florets in bags surround other food, including a bread-and-butter pickles jar. Boxes lie everywhere, mud lines are on the walls and splattered on the side of the stairs. A mop bucket has surrendered, turned on its side and coated in the slushy mess.

IMG\_9166.jpegThe security camera at Helen's Restaurant shows owner Donna Stafford looking at the damage of her flooded basement at 6:50 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 26. A powerful storm in Bakersville, NC, caused the basement to flood two days before Hurricane Helene arrived.

The basement flooded 4-5 feet that day, Donna said. "We obliviously closed Thursday and spent the day throwing away the lost food and scooping out as much water and mud as possible."

When she went to bed Thursday night, she knew Helene was on its way, and she figured there would be more flooding. "I was exhausted and already devastated from our losses from Wednesday's storm."

She pulled up her restaurant security cameras from home, where she watched helplessly as the basement flooded, again. She watched her freezers fall over, again. The outside cameras showed the water even higher than Wednesday.

She watched until she couldn't watch anymore — until 5:30 a.m. Friday, Sept. 27, when her power went out.

Then Hurricane Helene arrived.

Hurricane Helene

Hurricane Helene was particularly hard on Bakersville. Roads were decimated. Flash floods destroyed everything the water could reach.

"We had a tropical storm with hurricane-force gusts as the remnant eyewall moved through and collapsed; these winds lasted well over an hour. We are still working on an overall wind analysis, but Mount Mitchell gusted to over 100 mph, and with 20-30" of rain," said Trisha D. Palmer, Warning Coordination Meteorologist in NWS Greenville-Spartanburg, SC.

"This was an incredibly devastating event; absolutely nothing that anyone in this area has ever experienced (in recorded history)," Palmer told us.

Bakersville's park was demolished and so were the playground and soccer fields. Downtown was completely flooded, along with the businesses there.

And Donna was trapped in her home, which had also been damaged in the storm. "I had no way of getting my car out and no means of communication."

Three days later, her brother was able to make his way to her. He had stopped to check on the restaurant and showed her photos of its damage. A wall of the restaurant's lower level was gone, along with six freezers, all the food, a washer/dryer and a walk-in cooler.

Even the supports holding up the two-story building were gone.

back of Helen's IMG\_9296.jpgAfter Hurricane Helene, a wall at Bakersville's Helen's Restaurant is gone, and the support beams for the building are also gone. This photo was taken a few days after the storm, after the water had receded.

Three days after that, Donna was finally able to get her car out and go see her businesses — and her town — for herself.

"It was shocking. It still is. My shock set in even before I arrived at the restaurant. Roads are gone, forests are no longer forests as trees are all lying down in a tangled mess. Electricity poles are broken in half and lying on top of what is left of homes, buildings and roads."

And without its support beams, the restaurant's building could collapse at any time.

On Oct. 5, Helen's Restaurant was officially condemned. "We are no longer allowed to enter the building. Praying for us all," the Staffords wrote on Facebook.

Donna said inspectors told her she will never be allowed inside again — it's not safe. That means the newspaper article about Helen's and its opening date will forever hang on the wall, but with no more diners to read it while

waiting for their orders of biscuits & gravy or chicken & dumplings.

Helen's Restaurant IMG\_9266.jpgAfter Hurricane Helene, Helen's Restaurant lost a wall, several pieces of equipment and the building's support beams. This photo was taken a few days after the storm, after the water had receded.

Donna's nephew started a Go Fund Me campaign for the Stafford women, asking for a modest \$5,000 to help them recoup just a tiny bit of their life savings, which they had poured into the restaurant renovation just a little over a year ago. "Hopefully in the future, they will be able to rebuild but unfortunately it will not be in this same building," her nephew wrote.

Some of the town's other local restaurants were also damaged or closed temporarily due to lack of power and water, including Mammie's Breakfast Barn and Southern Ridge Cafe. Bonnie & Clyde's, which has been open since the 1970s and is also on NC-226 closer to North Toe River, experienced flooding. "The restaurant is still standing; however, the cleanup needed is overwhelming," its Go Fund Me campaign stated.

What happens next at Helen's Restaurant?

The truth is, Donna told us doesn't know what will happen next.

If she gets anything from insurance, she told us it may only be enough to pay off her mortgage, she said.

But even if she could rebuild Helen's Restaurant, it could not be on the same property, she said. What would that look like? She would need funds to buy land, build a new restaurant, purchase new equipment, replace lost food ...

And on top of all of the damage: "I am very ill so not sure how the future looks."

Right now, Donna is spending her days trying to cope with the day-to-day tasks that Helene made difficult, including figuring out a massive amount of paperwork, all while battling her illnesses. She had no power, water or internet until a few days ago. She communicated with CharlotteFive from the fire department or a showering and laundry facility.

"There are times when I begin to let anxiety reach onto my soul," she said. "How am I going to survive financially? I can't work a normal job somewhere else now because I'm bedridden some days and won't be able to show up for another job. How will I get my medications? How will I pay for my doctor appointments? How will I pay my rent, electric, Wi-Fi, phone, car insurance, gas or food?

Helen's Restaurant dining room before.jpgHelen's Restaurant in Bakersville, NC, was a gathering place for family and friends before Hurricane Helene. Owner Donna Stafford is shown at right with some family friends.

But right now, the neighbors, like in all of the small towns across Western North Carolina, are taking care of each other. On week one, a woman who was new to the area walked up to Donna's house to check on her, which is how they met for the first time. They became fast friends.

This is a community, among many other communities, that have lost so much.

And in Bakersville, North Carolina, one of those permanent losses may ultimately end up being the 68-year-old restaurant.

"But then I pray and am reminded of the losses that are so much greater than mine. Loss of life. One of my employee's grandfathers was swept away," she said. He didn't make it.

"Another employee's parent's house was washed away, and she and her parents are sleeping in a tent. So many in the community lost lives and so many more are still missing." Helen's Restaurant collage.JPEGHelen's Restaurant in Bakersville, North Carolina, was destroyed during Hurricane Helene. A wall on the lower level is gone, and the support beams for the building are also gone. Shown at top and left are Google Street View images from before the storm.

Editor's note: This story has been updated to clarify information about winds and rainfall totals at nearby Mount Mitchell.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Melissa Oyler, The Charlotte Observer, 'They bought the town's oldest restaurant and renovated it. Then Helene destroyed it.', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 16 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/19C3E613BA82AEF8>



### UNC Asheville basketball teams relocate to Charlotte after Helene. 'We're not victims'

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Shane Connuck, The Charlotte Observer | Section: college | 763 Words OpenURL Link

Josh Banks' mother led a convoy down Interstate 26 toward Charlotte.

Three UNC Asheville men's basketball players were in the back seat as Banks' mother drove alongside his stepfather on a recent Saturday night. Fellow Charlotte natives Jordan Marsh and Kameron Taylor were driving cars behind Banks, among eight players who were heading to the Queen City.

Head coach Mike Morrell left the following day, taking four more Bulldogs players with him. He'd happened to be watching his mother's dog — named Kobe — who came to Charlotte with the players as well. Basketball was the least of his worries.

The Bulldogs' men's and women's basketball teams have been in Charlotte for roughly three weeks amid devastating flooding in Asheville from Hurricane Helene. They've been living in hotels in University City and practicing all over, from the Charlotte Hornets' facilities in uptown to Johnson C. Smith to West Charlotte High School.

"All that we've been going through, we're just very thankful and appreciative," Banks, a fifth-year guard who rose to prominence during a standout career at Olympic High School, said Tuesday at Big South preseason media day in Charlotte. "We're not victims. It's just the situation that we've been in the past couple weeks, we're just blessed and thankful that we still have a season coming up, and now we're just locked in and focused.

"The past two weeks have been tough. It has been tough to see the place that we live and the place where we are most of the time in the condition that it's in now."

'We still get up every day smiling'

This season, UNC Asheville women's basketball is pushing to understand the applications of basketball into life.

New head coach Tynesha Lewis, who won North Carolina's "Ms. Basketball" honors in 1996-97 at Southwest Edgecombe, enters her first season. She previously led Elizabeth City State University, the Division II school in eastern North Carolina, to three straight Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association championship games after playing at N.C. State and in the WNBA.

Just like her first season as a head coach — she started at Elizabeth City State in 2020 — she's had to navigate uncharted waters. She's made an effort to hold regular check-ins with her players, and mental health specialist Dr. Laura Jones has been meeting with them, as well.

The Bulldogs have been practicing at Johnson C. Smith in the morning, and then they use the Hornets' facility in the evening to work on shooting. Queens University and the Charlotte 49ers have also hosted them when they can't get inside J.C. Smith or Spectrum Center.

"The hurricane has shown us: If we show up every day, no matter how I'm feeling — I'm aching, I'm sore — and I look to the right and my left, everybody else is still pushing," said Nycerra Minnis, a fifth-year forward from the Washington, D.C., area who started at University of Virginia. "We are really strong. It's not even just the hurricane, the emotional aspect has came with it. Everything we've had to overcome thus far, and our season is less than 30

days away.

"And we still get up every day smiling. I feel like, 'Wow.' We are strong, and we can do anything we put our mind to. Because we're doing it right now."

UNC Asheville teams understand the bigger picture

Morrell, who enters his seventh season as men's basketball head coach at UNC Asheville, has a diary.

There are "a lot more words in that thing" over the past few weeks, he said. He said if he ever ends up writing a book, these experiences will take up an entire chapter.

Janet Cone, the athletic director at UNC Asheville, has been integral, making a passionate effort to understand how the student-athletes are doing and ensure that the Bulldogs have places to play.

It might be "delayed gratification," as Morrell put it, in terms of how the totality of this experience will really end up helping them in the long run. But he knows it'll mean even more once they get a chance to return to practice inside Kimmel Arena.

"We ain't victims here," Morrell said. "I think too many times in these situations, it's like what we're going through. We're inconvenienced. And we'll be home, hopefully soon. When that time comes, hopefully, we'll learn a lot from it.

"But you go back to Asheville. Walk around, go down the front — I live a half-mile from the River Arts District — you find out really quickly when you get to walk into your own door, that you ain't no victim. There are people there going through a lot, lot more than we are."

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Shane Connuck, The Charlotte Observer, 'UNC Asheville basketball teams relocate to Charlotte after Helene. 'We're not victims'', Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 16 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/19C3E613AFE78108>



# These North Carolina craft beers have been ranked among the best in America

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Heidi Finley, The Charlotte Observer | Section: c5\_food\_drink | 247 Words OpenURL Link

North Carolina beers took top honors at the Great American Beer Festival in Denver, which featured more than 1.800 breweries from across the nation.

In all, eight North Carolina breweries — half of which were in Charlotte — took home gold, silver or bronze wins at the festival out of nearly 9,000 entries.

"The Great American Beer Festival continues its commitment to recognizing exceptional beverages from across the country in the 2024 competition," Chris Williams, competition director for the Brewers Association, said in a news release. "Congratulations to this year's winners!"

Here's a look at the local craft beer selections that were crowned some of the best in America:

#### Gold winners

Appalachian Mountain Brewery in Boone's Down South in the American-Style Lager categoryPilot Brewing in Charlotte's Pub Ale in the Extra Special Bitter categoryResident Culture Brewing in Charlotte's NARC IPA in the Pale Non-Alcohol Beer categorySierra Nevada Brewing Co. in Mills River's Weizenbock in the German Wheat Ale category

[BEST IN BEER: These Charlotte breweries came out on top at the NC Brewers Cup.]

Silver winners

Armored Cow Brewing Co. in Charlotte's HellFire Club in the Herb and Spice Beer categoryGoose and the Monkey Brewhouse in Lexington's Elevated Summer Ale in the English Ale categoryWicked Weed Brewing Pub in Asheville's Lupulin Lab in the Juicy or Hazy Strong Pale Ale category

Bronze winner

Brewers at 4001 Yancey in Charlotte's Sixpoint Brewery Mimic Weisse in the German Wheat Ale category

[AFTER HURRICANE HELENE: Charlotte brewers and restaurateurs had to watch from afar while Helene destroyed their Asheville locations.]

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Heidi Finley, The Charlotte Observer, 'These North Carolina craft beers have been ranked among the best in America', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 16 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/19C3E46A8B152498>



# NC man's arrest after alleged FEMA threat a reminder lies can destroy democracy - Opinion

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Issac Bailey, The Charlotte Observer | Section: opinion | 623 Words OpenURL Link

This past weekend isn't the first time a North Carolina man who had apparently been convinced an extreme conspiracy theory was true allegedly picked up a gun to take matters into his own hands. It's unlikely to be the last time if former President Donald Trump, conspiracy-theorist-in-chief, wins the White House next month — or even if he doesn't. That's the uncomfortable truth we don't grapple with enough.

A 44-year-old man named William Jacob Parsons was arrested Saturday and accused of threatening FEMA workers who are helping western North Carolina recover from Hurricane Helene's wrath. Police said he was armed with a handgun and an assault rifle, the kind of gun that has been a favorite of mass shooters and the young man who tried to assassinate Trump during a rally in Pennsylvania.

MYB\_IssacBailey\_headshots-3Issac Bailey

Parsons likely believed the lies Trump and too many of his supporters have been telling since Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina. They lied about the federal response, lied about the government blocking help from civilians, lied that people in the affected area would receive only \$750. They lied to struggling residents that federal officials are coming into the area to seize property and "bulldoze bodies under the rubble" rather than assist local and state officials and volunteers.

The lies have led to residents refusing help they desperately need, slowed recovery efforts as well as antisemitic and other threats against federal employees.

Though Parsons was the man with a gun — fears of an armed militia descending on Rutherford County convinced FEMA to temporarily remove personnel — he's indicative of something larger, more sinister and disturbing. Shortly after the 2016 election between Hillary Clinton and Trump, then-28-year-old Edgar Maddison Welch drove from Salisbury to Washington, D.C. to rescue imaginary children from an imaginary child sex ring rumored to be run by Clinton and other Democrats. The children were supposed to be in the basement of Comet Ping Pong pizzeria. The restaurant has no basement. There were no children. Welch didn't figure that out until after shooting inside Comet.

The lies have something uncomfortably in common with the FEMA lies. The "Pizzagate" conspiracy was a fantastical demonization of Trump's political opponents. The FEMA lies are designed to make it more difficult for Vice President Kamala Harris to defeat Trump in three weeks. Maybe the worst lies are those that have convinced millions of Trump supporters that the 2020 election was stolen. Those lies led to a violent insurrection attempt on our Capitolthat left multiple people dead, caused millions in damage and gave a black eye to our democracy that remains.

It's disturbing Trump and his supporters are not only quick to believe the lies and conspiracy theories, but to spread them. It's more disturbing that seemingly nothing can convince them to change course.

Trump chose a man as his partner, Sen. J.D. Vance, who refuses to admit the former president lost four years ago or commit to certifying an election if he becomes vice president. Imagine if Harris did the same, decided to not certify next month's election if Trump wins. Imagine the chaos. Imagine the ugliness that would result. As bad as things got on Jan. 6, 2021, they would likely be worse if Harris is as irresponsible as Vance has said he'll be.

That's why the lies being told aren't only bad for western North Carolina, though slowing down recovery efforts

when so many people need help is ghastly.

A man named Parsons apparently following in the footsteps of a man named Welch because each bought into lies is sobering. Because the lies are also affecting the underpinnings of our democracy that should scare every American, no matter who you want to win in November.

Issac Bailey is a McClatchy Opinion writer in North and South Carolina.

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### • Citation (aglc Style)

Issac Bailey, The Charlotte Observer, 'NC man's arrest after alleged FEMA threat a reminder lies can destroy democracy Opinion', Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 16 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/19C3EF00947077B8>



# Oral history: How Rainbow Kitten Surprise went from playing App State dorms to NC arenas

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Théoden Janes, The Charlotte Observer | Section: entertainment | 3285 Words OpenURL Link

It's been 10 years since Rachael McKinney looked the members of Rainbow Kitten Surprise in the eyes and — as the Boone-based indie folk-rock band's brand-new booking agent at the time — gave them the bad news:

"We have to change this name," McKinney, then an Appalachian State University senior, told the group consisting of five musical artists who'd joined forces after meeting as freshmen living on campus in Bowie Hall. "It's not happening. We cannot do this. No one's gonna take us seriously.

"We have to change it."

Then they gave her some bad news right back: "It's too late," one of them replied, matter-of-factly. "People already know us too well for us to change the name."

A decade later, it is happening. They can do this. Save for the people who just haven't been paying attention, the vast majority of the music industry — and the thoughtful music fans who appreciate their emotionally raw lyrics — are taking RKS plenty seriously.

And on Oct. 25 and 26, the Mountaineers-turned-Nashvillians-turned darlings of major festivals like Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza will perform energetic back-to-back concerts at Spectrum Center in Charlotte and Lenovo Center in Raleigh, the largest indoor venues they've ever headlined in their former home state.

McKinney, who has been with the band ever since and is now its tour manager, can't help but laugh at memories of that debate, given how everything panned out for lead singer Ela Melo, guitarists Darrick "Bozzy" Keller and Ethan Goodpaster, and drummer Jess Haney.

"I appreciated that confidence in it, but I also just thought it was silly," she says of their original discussion about the name. "And looking back, I was wrong. Half the time, people, they hear the name, and their original thought is, 'What the hell is that?' And then their second thought is, 'I have to listen to that so I can understand the context.' Because some people think people think it's, like, EDM; some people think it's a kids band. You know, all those things. But I definitely did try to tell them.

"But then you have bands like, what, Diarrhea Planet, and it's like, At least we didn't have that name. I love them, don't get me wrong. But at least we didn't pick that name."

Over the summer, we spoke to McKinney, Melo, Keller, Goodpaster; people who booked them in Boone; and multiple members of their inner circle back at App State, including — in his first mainstream-media interview ever — the man who came up with the name while high on morphine.

Those conversations (lightly edited for clarity and brevity) make up our exclusive oral history of Rainbow Kitten Surprise.

Note: All interviews for this story were completed prior to Hurricane Helene's arrival in Western North Carolina in late September. After the storm, Rainbow Kitten Surprise posted the following message on its Facebook page: "We're heartbroken to see the devastation left behind by Hurricane Helene. Our beloved home of North Carolina needs our help right now." The band listed a variety of ways its fans could help victims. And this month, RKS

pledged to donate \$50,000 raised through its fall concert-ticket sales to recovery efforts related to Helene.

Photo May 24 2024, 9 28 52 PM copy.jpgRainbow Kitten Surprise started in a dorm, got its name from a friend who was jacked up on morphine, and now is headlining the biggest arenas in North Carolina.

'Hanging out, smoking cigarettes, playing songs'

As App State freshmen in the fall of 2012, Melo, Keller, Goodpaster, Haney, and Charlie Holt (the band's original bassist, who parted ways with RKS last winter) all were assigned to the old Bowie Hall dorm. The only ones who knew each other prior to college were Goodpaster and Haney, fellow Robbinsville, N.C. natives who throughout high school were in multiple bands together that mostly just played in Haney's basement.

Ela Melo: I had a lot of things on the list of what I wanted to do with my life, but I wasn't quite sure about any of it. One thing that I did know is I did want to make music that people could get down to, people enjoyed. I had been doing that for years already, in my hometown of Albemarle, just chilling, had a band with some friends there. That didn't pan out. So I came onto the campus with a mantra, almost.

Darrick "Bozzy" Keller: I was definitely a shy kid growing up. But I remember going in for the first week of college and being like, Man, this feels like summer camp. This is never gonna end. I really stepped out of my comfort zone and would try to take my guitar and go jam with people and make friends. ... We played on the steps of the dorm. But it wasn't like a big event or anything. We were just all friends — hanging out, smoking cigarettes, playing songs. We met a lot of people that way; people would just come down and chill, go back up to their room whenever. We had this little community built around it.

Ethan Goodpaster: When I wasn't going to class, I was playing guitar, finding someone to play something with. There was a lot of jamming happening in our dorm.

Melo: College was a magical time, at least for me. It was like Bonnaroo or something — it's just, like, serendipity everywhere. You end up running into people and stuff, and forming relationships really quickly.

Keller: I knew Ela was a musician, but she was so humble about everything. ... She had seen me at an open-mic night play a couple original songs. I was like, "That's really nice of you for coming." Later that night, I bumped into her, and she was like, "Can I show you a song I wrote?" She showed me "All That and More (Sailboat)." And I was just like, "Dude, you have to get this out into the world. This is the best song I've ever heard in my life."

Melo: I played it one time, and he went and got his guitar. He was like, "Show me what you're playing. I want to play it with you." But Bozz was writing, too. So after, he was like, "Well, check my stuff out."

Keller: Until I met Ela, I didn't really know anyone else who wrote songs. I mean, I definitely thought mine were OK. But I definitely wasn't on the caliber of Ela.

Matthew Clonch, who lived in the dorm and became part of their inner circle: Then they started playing together just for fun.

Ethan Goodpaster: Ela and Bozz were always sitting out there in front of Bowie or in the lobby playing, singing Modest Mouse songs, or Bon Iver songs, things like that.

Clonch: And the first show they ever did was an open-mic night at the college. They were just like, "Hey, this could be fun. We should do it."

Keller: That was the birth of RKS.

All That and More (Sailboat)

'What do you think it should be called?'

It was October of the fall semester of their freshman year when Melo and Keller decided to sign up as an acoustic-guitar duo for the open-mic night hosted at Crossroads Coffee House at the Student Union on campus. But they needed to register with the name of their act — and they didn't have one.

Keller: Maybe a week or so before, our friend Noah Toomey got meningitis right after coming back from fall break. And he was really, really sick.

Noah Toomey: It progressed to a point that Matt — my roommate freshman year — literally had to carry me down the stairs of our dorm to get into a friend's car to get me to the hospital. Then once I got to the hospital, for the next 72 hours, absolutely nothing. I'm completely out of it. Then 72 hours later I remember people coming in and out, but nothing too specific until the meds started actually working for me, and I was starting to feel better. That's when they came to me with the question about their open-mic night. It was Bozzy, Matt and Ela.

Keller: To see him like that, it was tough. And Ela was just like, "You can name the band. What do you think it should be called?"

Toomey: I remember doing hand gestures, maybe? And, well, I mean, I love the internet. And there's that cat that has, like, the Pop-Tart body. It's called Nyan Cat. That's kinda what was going through my head. I'm sure I did repeat it quite a bit.

Clonch: I said, "'Rainbow Kitten Surprise?' That's ridiculous." And it was — then they did it anyway.

Keller: My initial reaction was: pretty cool. But we kept telling ourselves, "Ohhh, maybe we should change it."

Toomey, who says the only other time that he's talked about naming the band was when a friend interviewed him for a journalism class: If I could go back, it's always like, Would I have wished the name on them? Because it's a blessing and a curse. I was so morphined up at the time that it sounded like a great idea.

The open-mic night at Crossroads was a success, but after that performance, Melo and Keller focused exclusively on writing and recording music. They wanted, they say, to figure out what they were doing before getting back onto a real stage in front of real crowds. So they returned to using the dorm as their workshop.

Melo: I remember working on stuff over Thanksgiving and working on stuff for Christmas break. And then we were playing some of these songs for people in the lobby. It was kind of a thing at some point. I would write one and come down to play it for everybody, then figure out what the other parts were between me and Bozz. I was working on the mixes of stuff for months — until it was ready to release. The second I was done mixing, we just uploaded it onto Bandcamp. We put out (the three-song EP) "Mary" on May 5th of 2013. And we got a thousand streams the first night.

We knew then; it was like, "Dude, we released this at 10 o'clock at night, and we have a thousand streams overnight." We thought that was success at that point. Like, OK, this is going somewhere!

Toomey: But there's no way that even someone not in that state could have known the heights that they were gonna go to.

Rainbow\_Kitten\_Surprise\_2\_25\_2428213.jpgFrom left: Ela Melo, Jess Haney, Darrick "Bozzy" Keller and Ethan Goodpaster are Rainbow Kitten Surprise.

'Oh my God, this is actually incredible'

Melo and Keller continued writing and recording at Bowie Hall through the spring and into the summer of 2013.

Melo: Ethan would hang out sometimes, and we would play sometimes. He would bring his amp down. I played acoustic, and Bozz played acoustic, but Ethan would play electric — more, like, metal stuff. Something a little different. But Ethan can rock whatever the style is.

So we came back over summer break, going into sophomore year, and we're like, "OK, we gotta play some shows or something. But we need more people, 'cause we don't have enough hands for all these parts." We tracked Ethan down, and had him do kind of an audition. He learned all the songs the night before, but he knew 'em. It was just like, "All right, you're in the band, dude. You don't even need us to tell you how to play this stuff."

Keller: And we were working on the album "Seven" — which, musically, was just a bigger sound.

Goodpaster: So eventually they asked to borrow my roommate's cajón to record some drums on it. My roommate was actually Jess (who would become the band's drummer). Then, when we were looking for a drummer, we actually auditioned one guy before Jess. But he wasn't the fit. So I was like, "Hey, my roommate plays drums a little bit, played drums in band in high school. We should see if he wants to."

Keller: We added them during the process of Ela recording and writing that album. So by the time that album released, we were a full-band kind of thing.

Goodpaster: But Jess had only agreed to play one show with us.

That one show was at the old Galileo's bar and cafe in Boone, on Oct. 26, 2013.

Keller: When we first started, I booked all the shows. I was our agent, and Ethan did a lot of the social media and business management. It was very DIY and self-sufficient. We did everything ourselves.

Mark Dixon, former owner of now-closed Galileo's in Boone: I think, at first, everybody was like, "Rainbow Kitten Surprise? What is this? Are they serious?" But they took their music more seriously than their name, I guess. ... We were their first "out" show — like, not at a house party. I remember they were good dudes. They were nice guys. That's not always the case when you're booking college bands. They showed up on time. They handled everything professionally.

When you're booking local groups like that, you want bands that are willing to put themselves out there and promote, and call everybody they know, and get everybody to come in. And it was clear very early on that they were good at promoting themselves. So I think they got pretty close to packing us out the first time they played. And then it became apparent real quick — 'cause we were a very small room — that they were gonna have to move on to a bigger room. People liked them so much. They were growing so fast.

Goodpaster: And Jess — even though he said, "I'll just do one show" — kept playing with us.

Rachael McKinney, who would become their booking agent and eventually their tour manager: So they did that, then they played Espresso News, another coffee shop, in December 2013. Then they did a Beech Mountain show, a Montreat College thing, Appalachian Mountain Brewery. In June 2014, they did VH1's (reality-competition show) "Make A Band Famous," then Galileo's again — they did Galileo's about four times — then Parthenon Cafe, then Harvest Boone Festival. But that was all before I met them.

The first time I ever even heard of them was when I was on the APPS (Appalachian Popular Programming Society) Council. We were looking for openers for a show with Hunter Hunted back in 2014, and we were sitting in a meeting, and at the beginning of meetings, we would let people play, like, Oh, here's this band I've been listening to, they're local, or they're smaller ... I just want you guys to hear them. Somebody put on the "Devil Like Me" music video. And I was such a judgmental little hipster college kid. I was like, Rainbow Kitten Surprise, what a terrible name. This is gonna be some dumb punk band. Then I heard the music — and I was like, Oh my God, this is actually incredible.

apps hunter huntd.jpgRainbow Kitten Surprise's Ethan Goodpaster and drummer Jess Haney play App State's storied Legends nightclub as the opening act for Hunter Hunted on Nov. 17, 2014.

'They had the audience in their hip pocket'

From there — with bassist Charlie Holt having been added to the mix by Melo, Keller, Goodpaster and Haney — Rainbow Kitten Surprise continued turning heads on campus. After the fivesome opened for Hunter Hunted in November 2014 at App State's storied Legends nightclub, that winter the band signed with the university's student-run record label, Split Rail Records. In March 2015 it played for 300-plus concertgoers on "the small stage" at Legends; then in August, RKS booked "the big stage" — and drew a sellout crowd of 950.

Goodpaster: We started getting added to these big official playlists on Spotify, and our streaming started getting more popular and more popular. But I'd say — for me, at least — when I was like, Okay, this is cool, this could be a thing was when we sold out Legends.

Keller: That was definitely a milestone for us, 'cause in the beginning, Ela and I would walk to the little gas station beside Legends to get cigarettes. And we would just look up at the sign and be like, "Dude, wouldn't it be sick if we played there?"

Melo: The day that I saw "Rainbow Kitten Surprise" on the marquee of Legends, it was just like, This is it. This is as far as we could think to go! We didn't know any better. It was awesome.

Randy Kelly, the now-retired longtime manager of Legends: I was so surprised — and happily so — that at their shows, everybody in the audience knew the lyrics to their songs. That's how popular they were with the rest of their fellow students at ASU. Ela and the gang, they had the audience in their hip pocket. Ela marched back and forth across the stage, and leaned down, sang to the audience, and made them feel that there's no place in the world she'd rather be than right there at that moment.

Goodpaster: When I looked out in the crowd when we were playing that show I was like, Oh, this isn't just all my friends here listening to us. I don't know anyone here, and these people paid money to come see us.

Matthew Clonch, their former dorm-mate, who would become their stage manager and to this day is one of Melo's best friends: I remember that at that time, they played an encore. Then they were called for another encore — and they didn't have any more songs to play. They didn't have enough songs written. So they just played one they'd already played, 'cause they didn't know what else to do. It was a cover of "Float On" by Modest Mouse.

McKinney: I wasn't actually at that show. I was living in New York, working for a boutique agency at the time. But I remember Ethan sending me videos. And I was just like, What the heck is this? It was the craziest. The crowd was just so loud, the video he sent me was shaking. It was just like, Where did all these kids come from?

Kelly: I didn't know how great they were gonna be and how far they were gonna go; but I knew, as they say, they were riding the whirlwind already.

McKinney: It's that whole "when luck meets skill meets opportunity." And truly — I do believe this in my heart — I think Boone is a very, very special place. It's a different feeling when it comes to music than any other place that I've been. People invest themselves in the music there. And the fans — literally, you have one person that's listening to RKS. They're telling everyone about it. They're not keeping that to themselves. It was word-of-mouth, how much the songwriting stands up, how the lyrics that Ela was writing were so relatable for everybody, about experiences that are hard to part into words.

And after selling out Legends and showing those videos on social media, the band kind of just, like, exploded.

apps4.jpgRainbow Kitten Surprise plays a soldout show at App State's storied Legends nightclub on Aug. 27, 2015. Charlie Holt, the band's original bassist, and Darrick "Bozzy" Keller are pictured.

Rainbow Kitten Surprise's 'Love Hate Music Box Tour'

When: 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 25, at Spectrum Center, 333 E. Trade St. in Charlotte; and 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26, at Lenovo Center, 1400 Edwards Mill Road in Raleigh.

Tickets: \$45 and up in Charlotte and \$40 and up in Raleigh, at ticketmaster.com. (\$1 per ticket goes towards supporting organizations delivering mental health treatment and access to care.)

Also: Rainbow Kitten Surprise and opening act The Brook & The Bluff are broadcasting their shows in Charlotte and Raleigh on Nugs.net as a pay-per-view event, with net proceeds going to the PLUS1 Rapid Relief Fund. Details at bit.ly/3Nmyj2F.

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### • Citation (aglc Style)

Théoden Janes, The Charlotte Observer, 'Oral history: How Rainbow Kitten Surprise went from playing App State dorms to NC arenas', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EA09C764AB70">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EA09C764AB70</a>



# FEMA must change course to stop NC from suffering through a broken recovery plan - Opinion

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Pat Ryan, The Charlotte Observer | Section: opinion | 704 Words OpenURL Link

Inspiring stories of heroism and humanity in western North Carolina will almost certainly be followed by years of anger, frustration and insanity. Because right now, no federally-funded rebuilding program — no matter who runs it — can meet any reasonable measure of success. FEMA has two options at its fingertips to change that future.

Brad Gair has managed government-backed disaster recovery around the world since the 1990s. He helped design and execute rebuilding programs after Hurricane Floyd, 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria and more. He's been in Hawaii since the wildfires last year. (Disclosure: I worked for Gair on New York City's Hurricane Sandy recovery.)

In testimony to Congress in 2016, Gair said, "The federal government often speaks of the sequence of delivery in disaster assistance as if there is a coherent plan behind it all, when in reality it is a series of patchwork programs that more than anything else confuse, frustrate and demoralize both those in need of aid and those trying to provide it."

I asked Gair whether this time, after decades of failure which most everybody acknowledges, the federal government could try something different.

To understand his response, you have to understand the status quo. After every declared disaster, impacted residents can avail themselves of relatively small grants through FEMA. If that is not enough to return a home to habitable condition, then residents hole up in FEMA trailers or FEMA-funded hotel rooms. These "temporary" sheltering options, which sometimes last years, can cost billions. In the meantime, damaged homes fall further into disrepair.

Sometimes, Congress passes a special bill authorizing billions in additional aid. A headline-grabbing relief package seems likely after Helene and Milton.

But there is no quick gameplan for that money. Well-meaning officials must spend months creating from scratch what's in effect a multi-billion dollar corporation "while tens of thousands of desperate customers wait anxiously for help as hope dwindles," Gair said in 2016.

Two federal initiatives offer promise in improving upon the status quo, Gair told me. FEMA could begin executing them tomorrow if it wished.

The first is a successful pilot program called "Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power" (STEP), which FEMA first launched after Sandy. Rather than spend huge sums on temporary housing, FEMA instead pays for contractors to return damaged homes to safe and sanitary conditions, allowing displaced residents to move back in while they await permanent repairs.

In New York City, the program repaired 20,000 homes in three months for \$640 million. Estimates suggested temporary housing would have cost six times as much, money that would have been doubly wasted because no homes would've been repaired. The STEP pilot saw similar success elsewhere.

FEMA ended the program in 2019. Gair told me that "every advocacy group since 2019 has been asking (FEMA) to do something like STEP where you're quickly repairing homes and not flushing money away on temporary

solutions."

Indeed, FEMA's National Advisory Council warned at the time the agency was "turning away from a promising, demonstrably practical and cost-effective mass sheltering option."

Gair said FEMA could restart the program tomorrow. "They could just turn the pilot program back on and begin making repairs in North Carolina in a matter of weeks instead of months and years."

Second, Congress in 2018 directed FEMA to create a new program granting states direct access to federal funds to quickly start their own housing repair programs, rather than wait months for money to wind its way through a different federal agency.

"FEMA's own funding could be used for that," Gair said. "It's part of the Disaster Relief Fund. It could start tomorrow, but FEMA still hasn't gotten it done." A July Office of Inspector General report took FEMA to task for its years-long delay in implementing the program. "FEMA missed opportunities for (state and local) governments to play a greater role in identifying and implementing innovative, cost-effective and locally tailored disaster housing solutions," the report said.

FEMA didn't respond to a request for comment.

It's not too late for FEMA to change course. If it doesn't, western North Carolina will almost certainly join the long list of American communities suffering through years of a broken recovery process.

Contributing columnist Pat Ryan, a former spokesperson for Republican N.C. Senate leader Phil Berger, does political communications and consulting work in North Carolina.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Pat Ryan, The Charlotte Observer, 'FEMA must change course to stop NC from suffering through a broken recovery plan Opinion', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3E46A90B64A30">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3E46A90B64A30</a>



# JazzArts Charlotte celebrates 15 years of using music to bring the community together

October 16, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Liz Rothaus Bertrand, The Charlotte Observer | Section: entertainment | 1549 Words OpenURL Link

As JazzArts Charlotte celebrates its 15th anniversary this fall, the organization is focused as much on its future as on its past.

The nonprofit has grown significantly since its earliest days, when it started with a series of free performances at Festival in the Park and an educational program with a handful of students. It's also been a major force behind building a jazz community in Charlotte.

Today, it serves thousands of children and adults with performances and educational initiatives.

For years, the group was considered one of the area's best-kept secrets, said JazzArts Charlotte's president, CEO and co-founder Lonnie Davis. It has evolved from an organization with a small budget and big ideas to an anchor arts organization in the region.

According to its 2023-24 Impact Report, the organization's annual revenue and expenses now top \$1 million.

One of the accomplishments Davis is most proud of is the way JazzArts has worked to connect people of all ages and backgrounds in Charlotte. Jazz, she said, has served as a "tool to bring people together who otherwise would never cross paths."

JazzArts 3.jpegRavi Coltrane performing as part of The Jazz Room season in 2024. JazzArts Charlotte's signature jazz series began with one monthly show but now offers four performances a month.

Diversity and growth among jazz audiences

In 2018 and 2022, JazzArts Charlotte commissioned audience analyses from ArtsMarket, a consulting firm. According to its findings, JazzArts Charlotte's audience is "the most diverse among local arts organizations."

"That's something we're proud of, but we're very intentional about being diverse," Davis said. "And that is measuring diversity in every way. That's not only ethnic diversity but it's age, it's socioeconomics, it's education and... life stages."

Davis credits JazzArts' varied programming and affordable pricing as essential factors that allow it to serve so many different types of audiences. That's possible, she said, thanks to a variety of funding from individuals, community partners, foundations and corporate donors.

"Through our program, we've been able to bring people together in a very organic, unique way... and build valuable social capital... amongst the community," she said.

Those efforts have not only brought in a more diverse audience but also brought in many more people to its programs. Between 2019 and 2022, Davis said JazzArts doubled its audience base.

The organization's signature jazz series, The Jazz Room, which began with one monthly show now offers four performances a month. It features local, regional and nationally-known artists throughout the year.

JazzArts Charlotte mission embed

Shows include popular tributes to artists of the past, like the upcoming Sasha Masakowski concerts featuring the Bossa Nova sounds of Brazilian legend Antonio Carlos Jobim. They also highlight innovators who stretch the genre in new directions, like five-time Grammy nominated trumpeter and multi-instrumentalist Chief Adjuah (formerly known as Christian Scott).

JazzArts growth also comes from a commitment to building a jazz audience in Charlotte through music education, workshops and ensemble opportunities for young musicians.

According to JazzArt Charlotte's website, the organization has reached more than 50,000 local K-12 students since 2011 through its JazzArts Academy, with 38% of those students coming from low-income communities.

The organization's educational programs have expanded and been greatly enriched, Davis said, by hiring JazzArts Charlotte's first Education Director, Patrick Brown, two years ago.

"We're really thrilled to have him and, you know, all of our other amazing team members that do this work day in and day out to... move our mission forward."

Programs include youth ensembles, jazz in school workshops and summer camp opportunities.

One of the newest groups is the Nuestro Tiempo Latin Jazz Youth Ensemble, now in its second year. The program introduces students in 7th to 12th grade to the fundamentals and history of the Latin jazz genre as they rehearse and play together.

"There are not many programs like this around the country," Davis said. "But the goal... is to expose our young musicians to the contributions and the culture and the rich heritage of Latin Jazz, Afro-Cuban music and American music."

JazzArts 1 .jpegiliana Rose instructing JazzArts' Nuestro Tiempo Latin Jazz Youth Ensemble. The program introduces students in 7th to 12th grade to the fundamentals and history of the Latin jazz.

The program, which is directed by Cuban jazz pianist and vocalist iliana Rose along with Afro-Caribbean and Latin percussionist Johnny Vergara, meets weekly. About 20 students, selected via audition, currently participate. Many come from families with South American or Latin American roots, Davis said.

It's also a free program, thanks to grants from the Arts & Science Council, NC Arts Council and the Albemarle Foundation.

How JazzArts is marking its 15th anniversary

The organization is adding several educational and financial initiatives as it ushers in its 15th year. A new adult webinar series will debut in spring 2025.

Davis said one thing that sets JazzArts Charlotte apart from some other jazz organizations around the country is how it aims to provide educational opportunities for adults as well as youths.

"As part of our model, it's important that we educate everyone."

JazzArts Charlotte is also introducing a band director academy next spring, in partnership with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, to enrich music education through work with local band and orchestra directors. That program is possible with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

JazzArts 2.jpegStudents from the JazzArts Summer Music Camp in 2024. JazzArts is committed to building a jazz

audience in Charlotte through music education, workshops and ensemble opportunities for young musicians.

The organization recently introduced merit-based scholarships that offer full tuition for JazzArts programs to reward the hard work by some of the community's most dedicated young musicians. That's in addition to existing financial aid opportunities for youth programs.

Davis said JazzArts is also rolling out a new Legacy Society, providing opportunities for donors to contribute to the organization's endowment "to help secure long-term stability for this music and the work that we do in the rich tradition of jazz in our community."

According to its latest Impact Report, the organization had a shortfall of more than \$117,000 during its last fiscal year. Davis said the Legacy Society is one of a number of strategies the organization has implemented to address this concern.

On the performance side, Davis said JazzArts will highlight fan favorites during its upcoming season of The Jazz Room. This will include "spotlighting some of the most beloved musicians that we have featured over the years," she said.

"Our audience can expect new collaborations with familiar artists that really helped to shape... what The Jazz Room has become."

In November, a special alumni concert will feature former students who are now professional musicians performing around the globe.

Other events this season include the popular family-friendly holiday show "Piano Night, A Charlie Brown Christmas, featuring the music of Vince Guaraldi."

#### Adrian Crutchfield embed Prince

For Valentine's Day weekend, Charlotte's own rising star, saxophonist Adrian Crutchfield returns to play a special concert dedicated to the music of Grover Washington Jr. Crutchfield's resume includes collaborations with artists including Branford Marsalis, Bette Midler and Prince.

And in March, acclaimed saxophonist and vocalist Camille Thurman, who previously performed at the Charlotte Jazz Festival, will make her Jazz Room debut.

That festival last took place in 2019 and was previously organized by Blumenthal Arts. Davis said she'd like to bring it back to the city, and is aiming for it to make a comeback in the next three to five years.

JazzArts 5.jpegPedrito Martinez performing at The Jazz Room in Charlotte in September 2024.

#### Looking towards the future

Davis said the organization not only wants to continue contributing to the local arts economy with its monthly shows but also wants to attract visitors to Charlotte as a tourist destination.

JazzArts has become a model for other organizations around the country, something Davis said is an honor. Outside of Charlotte, Davis also recently finished a two-year term as board president of the Jazz Education Network, a global community advocating for expanded jazz education and performance.

Among her goals for JazzArts is working toward a day when it has its own center for jazz in Charlotte to present educational programs and host the community.

But the recent devastation in Western North Carolina from Hurricane Helene has also been a surreal reminder for

Davis. The New Orleans native relocated with her family to Charlotte in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"It's really heartbreaking and... I feel the pain of that community and our state very deeply," Davis told The Observer during her interview a week after the hurricane made landfall.

"My heart personally goes out to everyone experiencing loss and you know trying to recover... or looking for their loved ones... and don't know where they are right now. I know that, I know that too well."

The organization is discussing how it can support the people of North Carolina who are dealing with the hurricane's aftermath. Davis hopes it can be something meaningful "that will help them to... move forward from this tragedy."

That's something she managed to do herself many years ago with her vision for JazzArts Charlotte. And 15 years later, Davis is still looking for ways to use music to bring the community together.

JazzArts 4.jpegCyrille Aimee performing at The Jazz Room in 2024. The JazzArts series features local, regional and nationally-known artists throughout the year.

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Liz Rothaus Bertrand, The Charlotte Observer, 'JazzArts Charlotte celebrates 15 years of using music to bring the community together', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3E613B3FA1B48">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3E613B3FA1B48</a>>



# Debunking hurricane response myths

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC) Section: Opinions | 796 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

Editor's note: U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards (R-N.C.), who represents Cherokee and surrounding counties in the U.S. House of Representatives, posted this last week. The Cherokee Scout thought it was important to share with readers. u Over the last two weeks, I have been proud of how our mountain communities have come together to help one another. We have seen a level of support that is unmatched by most any other disaster nationwide; but amid all of the support, we have also seen an uptick in untrustworthy sources trying to spark chaos by sharing hoaxes, conspiracy theories, and hearsay about hurricane response efforts across our mountains. While it is true, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's response to Hurricane Helene has had its shortfalls, I'm here to dispel outrageous rumors that have been circulated online: u Hurricane Helene was NOT geo-engineered by the government to seize and access lithium deposits in Chimney Rock. u Nobody can control the weather.

u Charles Konrad, director of the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's Southeast Regional Climate Center, has confirmed that no one has the technology or ability to geoengineer a hurricane. Current geoengineering technology can serve as a large-scale intervention to mitigate the negative consequences of naturally occurring weather phenomena, but it cannot be used to create or manipulate hurricanes. u Local officials have confirmed the government is NOT seizing Chimney Rock. There was no "special meeting" held in Chimney Rock between federal, state or local governments about seizing the town. u Local officials are NOT abandoning search and rescue efforts to bulldoze over Chimney Rock. Chimney Rock is NOT being bulldozed over. Rutherford County emergency services personnel are going to extensive lengths to search for missing people, including in debris by using cadaver dogs to locate any remains of individuals trapped in the debris. Just as every other community in western North Carolina, Chimney Rock officials are focused first and foremost on recovery efforts, followed by plans to rebuild in the future. u FEMA is NOT stopping trucks or vehicles with donations, confiscating or seizing supplies, or otherwise turning away donations. FEMA does not conduct vehicle stops or handle road closures with armed guards - all road closures are managed by local law enforcement who are prioritizing getting resources to their fellow community members, u FEMA has NOT diverted disaster response funding to the border or foreign aid. Disaster response efforts and individual assistance are funded through the Disaster Relief Fund, which is a dedicated fund for disaster efforts. FEMA's non-disaster related presence at the border has always been of major concern to me, even before Hurricane Helene. I will continue to condemn deployment of personnel to the Southern border, but we must separate the two issues. u FEMA is NOT going to run out of money. FEMA officials have repeatedly affirmed that the agency has enough money for immediate response and recovery needs over the next few months.

In the coming months, western North Carolina is going to need more disaster relief funding than is available to assist with recovery efforts. I'm confident that supplemental disaster relief funding will be considered in the House once we return to session in mid-November. u 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. u The Federal Aviation Administration is NOT restricting access to airspace for Helene rescue and recovery operations. Nobody seeking to fly resources into western North Carolina will be prohibited from doing so by the FAA or N.C. Emergency Management so long as they coordinate their efforts with N.C. Aviation. If you are looking to conduct an airdrop of resources but don't know who to contact for approval, please reach out to my office and we will share that information with you. u FEMA is NOT only providing \$750 to disaster survivors to support their recovery. The initial \$750 provided to disaster survivors is an immediate type of assistance called Serious Needs Assistance that may be made to individuals in need as soon as they apply for FEMA assistance. The \$750 is an upfront, flexible payment to help cover essential items like food, water, baby formula and medication while FEMA assesses the applicant's eligibility for additional funds. This award is just the first step of a longer process to provide financial assistance to disaster survivors. As an application moves through the review process, individuals are eligible to

receive additional forms of assistance for other needs such as temporary housing, personal property and home repair costs, etc. I encourage you to remember that everything you see on Facebook, X or any other social media platform is not always fact. Please make sure you are factchecking what you read online with a reputable source.

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'Debunking hurricane response myths', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 4A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549D57E2E98">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549D57E2E98</a>



# North Carolina death toll 88, 100 estimated missing

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC) Author: Alan Wooten; The Center Square | Section: News | 647 Words Page: 7A OpenURL Link

Raleigh - Eighty-eight are reported dead and more than 100 may be unaccounted for in North Carolina. No stranger to hurricanes, a 10-term congresswoman says her beloved mountain region has seen "nothing like this." Hurricane Helene came ashore in Florida on Sept. 26 and eventually dumped what seems like a Biblical proportion of rain on the Appalachian Mountains. U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx (RN.C.) told Fox News Radio on Thursday, "It's really one of the saddest things I have ever seen." Helene has killed at least 230 across six Southeastern states, the fourth most in the last three-quarters of a century. Only Katrina (2005, deaths 1, 392), Audrey (1957, deaths 416) and Camille (1969, deaths 256) were worse. In the interview with Jessica Rosenthal, Foxx shared the range of emotions hurricane recovery elicits and is more commonly known in the eastern part of her state. The biggest difference is indeed location, where rugged mountain terrain and October's steady drop in temperature combined with the loss of infrastructure in a way rarely experienced. At 2 p.m. Thursday, DriveNC.org reported 628 road closures statewide from Helene. The breakdown is three interstates, 46 federal highways, 54 state roads and 525 secondary roads. The number is climbing, up six in 48 hours, as search and rescue moves to the cusp of a third week. Gov. Roy Cooper on Thursday signed legislation authorized by the General Assembly on Oct. 9 that appropriated \$273 million in state aid. Lawmakers said it's the first of many fiscal steps.

"The passage of this disaster recovery aid is just the first step in the state's response to Hurricane Helene," said state Rep. Karl Gillespie (R-Franklin), who represents Cherokee and surrounding counties in the General Assembly. "The state Legislature will be appropriating additional funds in the weeks ahead as we remain fully committed to the longterm recovery of western North Carolina. I ask that you continue to keep the victims of this storm, along with those who have lost loved ones, in your thoughts and prayers." The temperature is predicted to drop here in the Boone, Banner Elk, Blowing Rock area down to 36 degrees next week, Foxx said, speaking of a time that is usually the end of peak "leaf season." "I have told people we often have a major snowstorm around Halloween. It turns cold usually the end of October," she said. "So, I am very concerned that people will not have heat in their homes because many of them heated with outside heat coming into the home, kerosene or oil or propane. And that's going to be a major issue, getting heat into people's homes so they can be warm." The number unaccounted for has become somewhat elusive. On Oct. 8, the Citizen-Times in Asheville reported more than five dozen in the Lake Lure and Chimney Rock communities alone "I keep hearing the number over 100 that are unaccounted for," Foxx said. "I don't know whether that's in my area or down west from me, but in my area, I think there are still many people that we haven't been able to get to because of the washout of the roads." Yet, help has poured in from government agencies both federal and state, and untold volunteers. "There are people stranded who can't get out," Foxx said. "There are folks who are going in and helping every way they can. "Utility workers, first responders, firefighters, all the fire departments are the hubs of the little communities that are out there. So everybody's working very well together. It warms your heart to see individual citizens doing what they're doing."

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Alan Wooten, The Center Square, 'North Carolina death toll 88, 100 estimated missing', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 7A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549EA40ECD0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549EA40ECD0</a>



# Delay in food bank deliveries impacting area

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC) Author: Aiden McCoy Williams; Staff Correspondent | Section: News | 474 Words Page: 7A OpenURL Link

While Cherokee and Clay counties were spared from the destruction of Hurricane Helene, some effects are being felt locally. The MANNA Food Bank warehouse along the banks of the Swannanoa River in Asheville was destroyed by flooding, and many non-perishable foods stored there were also lost. MANNA has been a major supplier of food banks in this region, providing food boxes to local food pantries, senior centers and Weekend Wellness Bags for students in need.

Marlana Baker, a Cherokee County family & consumer sciences agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension, said the three local locations that receive MANNA Family Boxes are the Andrews Senior Center, Bellview Community Center and Hiwassee Dam Senior Center. In addition, eight schools Cherokee and Clay counties are supported with Weekend Wellness Bags for students.

The Cherokee Clay Food Alliance was able to provide 50 family boxes to the Bellview Community Center and will continue to aid as they can while shipments from MANNA are delayed. The nonprofit has also teamed up with the Town of Murphy, Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce and Clay County Community for Students & School personnel to fulfill the Weekend Wellness Bags.

MANNA is bouncing back quickly; of-ficials have secured a new warehouse they are working to set up while temporarily stationed at the Western North Carolina Farmers Market. They are also working to provide food to the dramatic increase of people in need as a result of Hurricane Helene, which means MANNA may not be able to resume providing good for another few weeks.

"This is an opportunity to think about our food system and what we want that to look like going forward," said Megan Lambert, president of the Cherokee Clay Food Alliance.

With the number of people dealing with food insecurities on the rise, Lambert and other officials would like to see the community continue to work together against this long-term problem.

"I'd love to see our energy put towards creating a future where there is less hunger and need for nutritious food on a daily basis so that we are better able to respond to emergencies," she said.

Food donations are momentarily paused at major donation sites, like Tri-County Community College, to allow collection sites to assess the most vital needs. Locals who want to donate food can help by contributing supplies to go to the Student Weekend Wellness Bags.

Non-perishable, single-serve snacks and meals are being accepted. Drop-offlocations for these items are the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce in Murphy, Cooperative Extension in Murphy and Matt's Ministry in Hayesville. Monetary donations can also be made to local food banks or the Cherokee Clay Food Alliance.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Aiden McCoy Williams, Staff Correspondent, 'Delay in food bank deliveries impacting area', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 7A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549E6A82228">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549E6A82228</a>>



# Snowbird helps in flood relief

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC)

Author: Cannon Crompton sports@cherokeescout.com | Section: News | 1555 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Andrews - Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters has had boots on the ground in areas of western North Carolina affected by flooding as a result of Hurricane Helene. Brody Holloway, lead pastor and CEO of Snowbird, has helped lead the charge in getting help to areas hit hard by flooding. He said they have been helping by doing Car, necessary things like home repairs. "We've been working in Clyde with a team of our interns right along the Pigeon River. Houses along the Pigeon River were flooded. So we've been working in one trailer park down there, and then a couple of streets where the houses just needed to be gutted. We've been getting furniture out of houses, all those houses had a couple inches of mud," Holloway said.

"If I understand, the Pigeon River right through there was like 26 feet high, and I think that was the most it had ever been. Maybe the last time it flooded there it was up 19 feet. So it was pretty crazy. And in Clyde, you can see where the water went along, and so before Duke could turn power back on to those houses the insulation had to be pulled out of the drywall. "We have a team there doing that [Monday]. We've been doing that every day, just going to house to house. We started because I drove down there the week after the water kind of subsided and just went door to door. No organizations were there yet, so that got the ball rolling. "The other two places we're working and doing stuffis Bat Cave and in Henderson County. That has been primarily supply runs where the road is washed out, bridges are washed out and using quads. "We focused a lot on the elderly and widows. The crew has removed probably 30-35 trees so far that have fallen on houses or across the roads and driveways. So we've been doing tree work down there. "Then in Yancy County, we've been working along the Cane River. There are a lot of people way up in those hollers that needed supplies and things like firewood. So we've been running loads of firewood where People that lived along some of the creeks. "The Cane River in Yancey County, their barn and sheds got washed downstream. We've got a 1-ton dump truck, filled with firewood, and I'll run it up into Yancey. "We have a firewood distribution spot. So just dump a load of wood and we'll move it up and Sending firewood into these little back creeks and hollers. And so that's kind of the three different things that we're doing right now." Holloway added that, based on the places he has been, any of the areas near a river have been affected the most. Some of the areas he mentioned include Haywood, Madison and Yancy counties, as well as Chimney Rock, Green Mountain and Spruce Pine. "Of the rivers, what happened was the rivers got so high that anything that was in close proximity to that river got washed. So in Haywood County, everything along the Pigeon River, from Bethel through Canton, through Clyde, got wiped out. In Buncombe County, anything along the French Broad or any of the tributaries, wiped out.

Same thing in Yancey County," he said. "I've been up Jackson Creek and the Cane River. Everything along the river was just wiped out. I haven't seen one specific community, but all the communities that are along those rivers, that's what got hit the hardest. So like down in Chimney Rock, Lake Lure, Bat Cave, where you know it caused so much damage was the swelling of the river. So all the communities along those rivers are what have been hit so hard." After seeing it firsthand, Holloway said food and water is not a necessity right now because distribution centers have been set up to get people those supplies. He said the biggest need will be rebuilding and remodeling damaged homes. "Well, initially the needs were, you know, basic food, water. Some people that needed to get to Their prescriptions and things like that, the elderly, that was a big deal, but all of that's pretty stabilized. Now what I'm seeing, It doesn't seem like there's a need right now for food and water," he said. "All the distribution centers that have been set up by people like the N.C. Baptist Relief Organization and Samaritan's Purse, those organizations, they've got large distribution centers They are just loaded with supplies, and they're doing a good job of distributing and delivering those supplies. "What we're doing is today, our team is working just cleaning and tearing material out of homes that were underwater. "I think the next thing is going to be the rebuilding process for so many people because of the devastation. Up the Cane River in Henderson County, where we're running supplies and firewood and things like that the road to get in there's still large sections of it missing. And so they're trying to rebuild even just the main road to get to the farthest parts of the county up in Yancey County. And then the power

lines. I've been all the way up into a community called Green Mountain in Yancey County and the power lines are laying in the river. "All the way from like down at (U.S.) Highway 19 all the way up to the head of Jacks Creek, all the poles are washed, they're laying in the river, I think it'll take months to restore power. But I think the homes that were devastated all along the river bottoms, they're gonna have to be remodeled, rebuilt and I don't know if people didn't have flood insurance. "They're going to, I guess, have to do this out of pocket, so I think the biggest need people are going to have moving forward is going to be how do they put their homes and lives back together. The initial triage work of isn't getting them food and water and supplies. I think that's pretty stable. Right now, I think there's a few people yet in places like Bat Cave who are still needing supplies, but there's a good supply chain to get things to people, but the rebuilding is gonna take, I would imagine, years." Holloway added that the ministry plans on working with other churches in the area to help those affected.

"We're still just trying to help people like those homes in Clyde that we're working in... We're just trying to get those homes cleaned out right now. Once there's no more of that to be done, we'll try to network churches that are in our network," he said. "Snowbird works with about 500 churches a year from all over the country. We'll try to help network churches that can put together work teams that can help you know, remodel and restore some of those houses in the areas hit by the flood." Holloway recommends for those wanting to help, that they make donations to groups who will be helping for a long time, not just in the short term. "I think right now the biggest immediate need would be to look for reputable, trustworthy organizations that you can make financial donations to because there are some organizations that are proven and trustworthy that are going to be in this for the long haul, organizations like Samaritan's Purse," he said. "So that's immediately, but then I'm going to be watching to see once this initial wave of help and aid is gone, How many people are going to still be investing in those communities to try to help? I think, moving forward, the effort to rebuild homes. There's going to be a lot of need there. "So I think the people that I've seen that are most involved have been Christian organizations, and that's brought me a lot of joy and peace knowing that people are really trying to be the hands and feet of Jesus, because the church of Jesus Christ should be leading the charge on something like this, not the government, not a non-government organization. That's the church, and from what I've seen, that's exactly what's happening in all of these communities. "The primary distribution centers for food and water and blankets and supplies have been churches, church parking lots, down in Henderson County at Fruitland Bible Institute and Fruitland Baptist Church. There's a massive distribution center we've been working out of there of The Cove, the Billy Graham Training Center. That's where Samaritan's Purse is based. And it's like that in all the communities we've been in - churches are leading the way. "I'm really encouraged by that. And so I think looking for how to partner with those organizations that are reputable and that are doing the work long term. That's what I would encourage people to look into."

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Cannon Crompton sports@cherokeescout.com, 'Snowbird helps in flood relief', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 1A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549C3F5D6F8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549C3F5D6F8</a>



# In-person voting starts Thursday despite storm

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC) Author: Elyse Apel; The Center Square | Section: News | 656 Words Page: 9B OpenURL Link

With just 10 days until inperson early voting begins in North Carolina, the State Board of Elections voted unanimously last week to pass a resolution to assist with voting in the 13 most hard-hit counties. Since Hurricane Helene first came ashore on Sept. 26, more than 230 lives have been lost across six different Southeastern states, with many still remaining missing. Damage estimates from the storm is in the tens of billions according to multiple analyses, with counties in western North Carolina being devastated. "This is an unprecedented amount of damage and destruction that's been caused by this storm," said board member Stacy Eggers, who lives in western North Carolina and gave an emotional statement during the board meeting. "Not only has it resulted in loss of life and personal property, but it has severely damaged the road systems, water systems, and communication systems up here in the High Country." Despite the damage, the board says voting will continue. "We will begin early voting in all 100 counties in 10 days from now, and we will hold the election on Nov. 5 in all 100 of those counties," Eggers said. "We have a dedicated team of elections professionals across the state who are committed to making that happen." The resolution grants a number of counties with significant storm damage ability to modify their early voting plans, Election Day precinct sites and adjust poll worker assignments, all by a bipartisan majority vote of the county board of elections. The county changes are subject to state board approval. This counties include Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.

"The resolution would provide flexibility to the county boards of elections to ensure that they do have in person voting opportunities available to all the voters, both with early voting and with Election Day voting," said Paul Cox, general counsel for the board. The resolution will also allow displaced voters to drop offtheir absentee ballots in counties other than their own, as well as allow Multi-partisan Assistance Teams to go into the devastated communities and receive absentee ballots to deliver to the county boards. All absentee ballots must still be received by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day. The board worked together, in conjunction with county boards, to refine the measures and make sure voters still have access to vote. "We really have two critical issues here," Chair Alan Hirsch said. "One is to ensure that our citizens have access and that no one is denied the right to vote because of these logistical problems. And second, that we maintain the integrity to ensure that the count is correct and that everyone can have confidence in the ultimate outcome of the election." Republicans and Democrats on the board came together to support the resolution. Eggers said he is confident in the resolution and its necessity. "We will continue to make voting accessible to the voters, whether we need four wheelers, horses, or helicopters," he said. "This disaster highlights the need for consistency in our work and making sure that we get to the locations that the voters expect us to be." Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the board, said progress is already evident, as all county offices are open again. "We have had ongoing response efforts with these counties to assess what their needs are and to assess how we can best continue to deliver voting to all North Carolinians," Bell said. "We also plan to provide as many voting opportunities as we can for Election Day voting sites as well, recognizing that we may need to take voting to the people." The board is also working with the N.C. Division of Emergency Management to provide for election-related aid, including procuring temporary voting facilities, generators, temporary restrooms, and any other needs that may be required to set up voting facilities. Bell said the board will continue to address any ongoing needs as needed.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Elyse Apel, The Center Square, 'In-person voting starts Thursday despite storm', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 9B <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D54A1FF69A18">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D54A1FF69A18</a>



# Good neighbors

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC) Section: News | 95 Words

Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Cherokee County Sheriff Dustin Smith announced the deployment of Lt. Payne, Agent Henderson, Agent Myers, Sgt. Wood, Det. Dore, Deputy Leslie and himself to Buncombe County for seven days to assist Sheriff Miller during recovery from Hurricane Helene. "We are proud of our members for stepping up to help our sister counties and will do so for as long as there is a need," Smith said. "I also wish to express my appreciation for all of the assistance Cherokee County citizens and those surrounding us have provided. I am truly proud to be from Appalachia."

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'Good neighbors', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 6A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549E522FD10>



### Grateful for Bladen 911 - MURPHY

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC)

Section: News 174 Words

Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Cherokee County commissioners' extended their gratitude to Bladen County, which provided 911 services during an outage in the western part of the state following Tropical Storm Helene. The Cherokee County Board of Commissioners issued a resolution of appreciation giving "heartfelt thanks" to Bladen County, which is located in eastern North Carolina. "Bladen County government, and specifically the 911 Communications and Bladen County Sheriff's Of-fice, took over and provided 911 service for seven full days for Cherokee County while the 911 infrastructure was repaired," according to the resolution, which was approved unanimously by the board on Oct. 7. "Cherokee County owes a debt of gratitude to Elizabethtown, Bladenboro, Clarkton, White Lake, East Arcadia, Tar Heel, Dublin and all of Bladen County," according to the resolution. "Though nearly 400 miles may separate us, the kinship shown by a fellow North Carolina County is genuinely appreciated." Cherokee County emergency services officials said the arrangement between Bladen and Cherokee County was expected to benefit Bladen County, which is near the coast and more often affected by tropical cyclones.

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'Grateful for Bladen 911 - MURPHY', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 2A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549CCA00A58">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549CCA00A58</a>



# Cold temps pose new threat to hurricane victims

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC) Author: Aiden McCoy Williams; Staff Correspondent | Section: News | 494 Words Page: 7A OpenURL Link

With predicted temperatures dropping below freezing this week in Asheville, Black Mountain, Burnsville, Spruce Pine, Swannanoa and other areas severely affected by Hurricane Helene, the need for cold weather items is crucial. According to J.C. Milam, operations and planning manager with the Cherokee Clay Food Alliance, many areas are struggling with inadequate heat due to loss of electricity. "This may continue into even the colder months in some places further outside of the larger towns, and that's a population at risk today already," Milam said. Without proper heating Megan Lambert, president of the Cherokee Clay Food Alliance, is also concerned about victims trying to rig up unsafe heating solutions that could potentially lead to carbon monoxide issues or fires. The Cherokee Clay Food Alliance helped James Ellis of Andrews collect 110 new propane canisters. Ellis was also able to collect 66 indoor safe heaters, three kerosene heaters, 40 large propane takes, 15 gallons of kerosene, heater filters and hoses to be delivered to Little Creek in Burnsville.

The Cherokee Clay Food Alliance has worked closely with Tri-County Community College to deliver cold-weather gear throughout western North Carolina. Mary Mason of Murphy has created Operation Blanketing Asheville, which is collecting new or gently used items. Donation bins will be set up at Appalachian Realty, Cherokee Guns, First Citizens Bank, Murphy Health & Fitness and the Cherokee Scout office in downtown Murphy through Friday, Oct. 25. Items should be cleaned, bagged and labeled (based on item type, gender/age, and size) before donation. Items needed are coats and sweaters (of all genders and ages), comforters and blankets. Some organizations are only accepting new clothing, as this eliminates the need for volunteers to sort, clean and size-match. If you are donating used clothing, please clean the items first, then bag and label them based on size, gender or age to ease the efforts of volunteers in affected areas. Potential contacts for those collecting cold-weather clothing are One Warm Coat, Western Carolina Rescue Mission, Hearts with Hands, BeLoved Asheville and Caja Solidaria in Hendersonville. Churches are invited to participate. For details, call Mason at 828-516-1633. Cold-weather clothing items needed are warm socks, gloves, blankets, jackets and hats. Items that can aid with heating efforts include hand and foot warmers, generators, solarpowered heating devices, firewood (many green limbs available aren't suitable for indoor use), small and large propane tanks, and indoor propane heaters. The lack of electricity also affects the ability to cook, so items like charcoal, grills, cookstoves, and kerosene stoves are also needed. Lambert urged those looking for a way to donate to "check with a contact person where you a planning to donate to ensure those items are truly needed in that area." Relief efforts are entering the long-term relief period, and needs will be different for each area and change rapidly. Efficient and specific aid is vital during recovery.

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Aiden McCoy Williams, Staff Correspondent, 'Cold temps pose new threat to hurricane victims', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 7A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549E864ED58">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549E864ED58</a>



### **Sports Shorts**

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC)

Section: News | 565 Words

Page: 2B OpenURL Link

HAYESVILLE Girls golf tournament The girls golf Smoky Mountain Conference tournament got underway at Chatuge Shores Golf Club with the first round Oct. 8. Murphy's Ellie McClure shot 50 to put her in second in individual scoring. Tri-County's Madison Dern shot 61, while Ruby Kuykendall shot 63. Cherokee leads the team scores with 152. Paytyn Barker of Cherokee shot 47 to lead individual scores after the first round. Round two was held after the Cherokee Scout's press time Tuesday at Sequoyah National in Cherokee. RALEIGH Schedules changing The N.C. High School Athletic Association announced schedule changes to allow teams to make up games canceled because of Hurricane Helene. For football, there must be a minimum of three days between games. Playoffseeding will be held on Nov. 10, with the first round set for Nov. 15. The state championships will be from Dec. 20-21. For volleyball, teams cannot exceed eight games in a week. Playoffseeding will be held on Oct. 22, with the first round on Oct. 24.

The state championship will be on Nov. 2. Boys soccer cannot exceed four games in a week. Playoffseeding will be Nov. 7, while the first round of playoffs will be Nov. 9. The number of nine-hole rounds to qualify for girls golf regionals was changed from five to three. No major schedule changes were made to cross country, as the regionals (Oct. 26) and state championship (Nov. 2) dates remain the same. CULLOWHEE Murphy alum to WCU HoF Murphy High School graduate Matt Cook will be inducted into the Western Carolina University Athletics Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2024. Cook helped change the trajectory of Catamount men's golf during his fouryear career. He was the first Catamount men's golfer to compete in an NCAA regional, doing so three times. He also had 27 top-10 finishes, with 19 top fives, in his career at WCU. He was Southern Conference Men's Golfer of the Month nine times, a league record. In 2006 and 2008, he won the SoCon Men's Golf Championship. Cook was only the second WCU men's golfer to claim the SoCon Player of the Year when he won in 2008. He also has the second-highest men's scoring average for golfers over 100 rounds, averaging 72.11 - second only to J.T. Poston, a two-time PGA Tour winner. He will become the third Catamount men's golfer to join the Hall of Fame when he is honored Saturday, Nov. 16. FLORIDA Milton makes teams move Before Hurricane Milton made landfall in Florida on Oct. 9, college and professional sports teams had to make some scheduling adjustments. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the NFL headed to New Orleans almost a week prior to their game against the Saints so they could practice and prepare for their game on Oct. 13. The NHL's Tampa Bay Lighting headed to Raleigh days prior to their season opener against the Carolina Hurricanes. They practiced in the Raleigh area in the days leading up to the game on Oct. 11, but the Lightning were still forced to cancel their home opener on Oct. 12. Two NBA preseason games were also canceled due to Milton's arrival. In addition, a NCAA football matchup between South Florida and Memphis at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa was pushed back from Oct. 11 to Oct. 12. Compiled by Sports Editor Cannon Crompton. Email items to him at sports@cherokeescout.com.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

'Sports Shorts', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 2B <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549F665E358>



# Rides and fun mark third annual event - Cherokee County Fair

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC)

Author: Nicole Wright; Staff Correspondent | Section: News | 183 Words

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Andrews For the third consecutive year, the Cherokee County Fair returned to Andrews Recreation Park under bright azure skies and with crisp fall, bringing games and rides for all Friday through Sunday. R&D Amusements provided various rides, including a Ferris wheel and The Paratrooper. Craftand food vendors supplied fair-goers with treats and goods prepared by local artisans. Live music over the weekend included the Danny Dawson Band and Georgette Jones, daughter of country music royalty George Jones and Tammy Wynette, with fireworks following Saturday night's festivities. The annual church service took place Sunday with performances by The Southern Appalachian Cloggers and Your Andrews' own Steve Jordan Band. Crowds were consistent, if perhaps smaller than usual, each day. Many people noted how damages from Hurricane Helene have impacted travel to western North Carolina. Fair officials are already looking forward to next year, and another chance for the town to show offto both locals and visitors alike. Details: Visit cherokeecountyfair. org or email hello@cherokeecountyfair.org.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Nicole Wright, Staff Correspondent, 'Rides and fun mark third annual event - Cherokee County Fair', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 1A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549CAF30638">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D549CAF30638</a>>



#### 2024 Harvest Festival will be this weekend in Stecoah

October 16, 2024 | Cherokee Scout (NC)

Section: News | 329 Words

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Stecoah - Reflecting on the struggles our neighbors to the east are experiencing, Stecoah Valley Center considered whether to continue with plans for a day full of family fun including music, dancing, food, heritage demonstrations, arts and craftvendors, a quilt show, pie contest, live animals and more.

The Harvest Festival celebrates community and gratitude, important values for the community organizations, artisans and families who will be participating in the festival.

Community organizations Through civic groups, people invest in their communities. At the Harvest Festival, they share their stories of hope for the hurting. Since many of them are already involved in Helene relief efforts, festival attendees can see what is being done to help and what they can do to be part of ongoing restoration efforts.

Artisans Though they've worked hard all year producing inventory for fall festivals, many of their venues for selling their wares have been closed. With livelihoods at stake, the Harvest Festival provides opportunities to share their creations with the community.

Families Following disruptions, connections help build resilience. A familiar setting with close friends and family provides a sense of safety. For many, the Harvest Festival is an annual tradition. Rather than another setback from the storm, families and friends can come together for mutual support to move ahead.

Therefore, the plan remains to hold the 2024 Stecoah Harvest Festival on Friday and Saturday. The Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center is at 121 Schoolhouse Road in the Stecoah community offof N.C. 28 between Bryson City and Fontana Dam. Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center is a nonprofit corporation that serves the people of Stecoah and Graham County through programs and services that benefit all members of the community, by preserving and promoting the Southern Appalachian mountain culture and through the restoration of the historic old Stecoah School to its original role as the center of the community.

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'2024 Harvest Festival will be this weekend in Stecoah', *Cherokee Scout* (online), 16 Oct 2024 8B <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D54A1B1257F8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3D54A1B1257F8</a>



# Vance rallies in Wilmington, Greensboro while Harris stops in Greenville

October 16, 2024 | Chronicle, The (Duke University) (Durham, NC) Author: Ava Littman | Section: News | 754 Words OpenURL Link

With Election Day less than a month away, Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris held a rally in Greenville, N.C., Sunday, while Ohio Sen. JD Vance — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's running mate — held two events in the state, including a town hall in Greensboro Thursday and a rally in Wilmington Wednesday.

The Harris-Walz and Trump-Vance campaigns continue to make appearances in North Carolina in the hopes of securing the state's 16 electoral votes. As of Oct. 16, the 538 polling average has the race essentially even in North Carolina, with Trump leading Harris by just 0.5 points.

### Vance in Wilmington

Vance's rally in Wilmington was held the day before early voting started in North Carolina and follows an appearance from Trump in the city a few weeks ago. Wilmington residents have historically voted Republican in every presidential election since at least 2004 except for the last one.

Vance praised Trump's record as president while criticizing Harris' campaign platform and actions as vice president.

"You don't have to agree with everything that Donald Trump says, but who can dispute that when he was the president of the United States, we had rising take home pay, we had low inflation and we had a secure southern border?" he asked.

Vance's criticism of Harris was largely aimed at her stances on immigration and her work coordinating diplomatic efforts for the Biden administration. He also scrutinized Harris' recent media appearances, calling her interviews "softballs."

"I think the most important thing about Kamala Harris is that she's incompetent," Vance said.

He linked this "incompetence" to the federal government's response to Hurricane Helene, which ravaged much of western North Carolina several weeks ago.

"The bureaucratic incompetence that delayed resources to get to people — that was an act of Kamala Harris and failed leadership," Vance said.

He then touched on some of Trump's promised policies — including lowering the cost of living and securing the southern border. He said that a Trump administration would cut taxes, cut "terrible" regulations on business and lower the cost of fuel and electricity.

Notably, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson did not attend the rally, and Vance again attempted to distance the campaign from the controversial Republican gubernatorial nominee.

"Who the North Carolina voters make their next governor is up to the people of North Carolina," Vance said when asked if the Trump-Vance campaign still endorses Mark Robinson for governor. "What I'm here to do is to persuade them that they need to make Donald Trump their next president."

Vance ended his speech by encouraging Republicans to get out and vote.

"My friends, get out there, make your voice heard and that is how we're going to make Donald J. Trump the next president of the United States," he said.

Vance also held a town hall in Greensboro last week where he energized hundreds of supporters. He was joined by NASCAR driver Danica Patrick to discuss the economy, illegal immigration and the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

He touted Trump's policy of drilling to lower prices and noted the ease of "competent administration[s]" to deport undocumented immigrants.

Harris in Greenville

Harris held a rally at East Carolina University Sunday, where about 7,000 supporters gathered to hear her speak, and U.S. Rep. Don Davis and N.C. Sens. Kandie Smith and Rachel Hunt — the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor — endorsed the presidential candidate.

The 25-minute speech began with a recognition of the damage caused by Hurricane Helene.

"I have spoken to both state and local officials, both Republican and Democrat, to let them know we will be with you every step of the way as you recover," Harris said.

She questioned Trump's refusal to release his medical records and his unwillingness to participate in a second debate or a 60 Minutes interview.

"Are [Trump's staff] afraid that people will see he is too weak and unstable to lead America?" Harris asked.

Pivoting to her own campaign, Harris promoted her plan to provide \$25,000 in down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers, expand Medicare to cover home health care for seniors and cut taxes for the middle class.

Earlier in the day, Harris attended a service at Koinonia Christian Center. The stop was part of her "Souls to the Polls" campaign, which aims to turn out "Black churchgoers" on Election Day.

Walz is set to hold a rally in Durham Thursday with former President Bill Clinton.

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Ava Littman | Associate News Editor

Ava Littman is a Trinity sophomore and an associate news editor for the news department.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Ava Littman, 'Vance rallies in Wilmington, Greensboro while Harris stops in Greenville', *Chronicle, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B0EF970D968">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B0EF970D968</a>