

Hurricane Heroes: Mar-Mac firefighters aid in Helene recovery

October 16, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Sam Dietrich| Section: Local | 684 Words OpenURL Link

Firefighters from the Mar-Mac Volunteer Fire Department recently traveled to Buncombe County to assist in recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

For 12 days, from Sept. 28 through Oct. 9, Mar-Mac Volunteer Fire Department Chief Tommy Baker, Capt. Jeff Piccirillo and Safety Officer Tim Cawein were deployed in one fire engine to provide mutual aid to Buncombe County.

Baker said the Wayne County Fire Marshall's Office assigned them to the West Buncombe Fire Department, located near Asheville, and their objective was to assist local firefighters with fire suppression and water supply in the area because the department had no water in its fire hydrants.

Helene roared ashore on Sept. 26 in Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane, with winds clocked at 140 mph.

A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded waterways. The storm brought catastrophic and deadly flooding and mudslides to western North Carolina.

Baker said that when he and Cawein arrived in Buncombe County on Sept. 28, the area was completely dark because there was no power anywhere, and there were "more power lines down than up."

"Basically, where we were stationed at, they didn't necessarily get the flooding as bad, but they had a lot of trees down, power lines down," Baker said. "We had to drive through trees, around trees....It was a matter of getting water to the fires."

Caewin, a Mar-Mac volunteer firefighter since 2013, said it was his first time dealing with that kind of operation and found the experience to be "more than he expected."

"Between me and him, we were dealing with tankers, getting the water supplied to trucks that needed it," Cawein said. "When you get there, it's completely different than what the media can even remotely convey."

Baker said that because Buncombe County's water system was not working, they used water from a stream or drafted water from palm plants to refill their tankers and use it for fire suppression.

The Mar-Mac team dealt with about seven structure and two vehicle fires in Buncombe County. One person, an unidentified woman, was reported dead in their assigned area, Baker said.

"It was an elderly lady inside (the house) that had passed," he said. "We were told she probably had been in there for a few hours...I think she was just overcome with smoke."

The Leicester Fire Department, from Buncombe County, assisted Mar-Mac and West Buncombe firefighters by providing extra water and working showers after work.

Georgetown Baptist Ministries, from Leicester, also provided showers and water from a working well and helped with relief efforts by getting supplies out to people in need.

"It was a pretty impressive operation for a small church," Baker said.

Cawein said he returned to Mar-Mac on Oct. 4, and Piccirillo took his place providing more water to West Buncombe, driving the truck around the area, and helping with supply drops, which included food, water, and clothes.

Baker said they also got more assistance from fire departments and emergency medical services personnel in several states, including California, Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Baker said he and his team remained in Buncombe County until coming home on Wednesday, Oct. 9.

"We were originally told five days, but the deployment paperwork said 'up to 12 days,' so we were able to switch out people by (Oct. 4)," he said.

"That's the thing about fire service, it doesn't matter whether you are here or there. Once you get there and get briefed up on how (these fire departments) operate, it's like a well-oiled machine. We all do the same things."

Baker said it may take years for areas like Buncombe County to recover from the damage caused by Hurricane Helene.

"There's some people that don't even have any land left. It's gone." Baker said.

He said if they do more operations, they must wait for orders from the Wayne County Fire Marshall, and if more Mar-Mac firefighters and trucks are deployed into western North Carolina, they may help with more search and rescue operations or supply drops.

"People all around the country are coming to help," Baker said. "There are so many areas that are affected.

"It's going to be a long-term recovery."

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Helene brought out the best in Carolinians

October 16, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: JOHN HOOD Columnist, Lee Newspapers | Section: Main | 677 Words Page: 3A OpenURL Link

RALEIGH - As we mourn the deaths and grapple with the destruction inflicted on our state by Hurricane Helene, I submit that the storm has brought out much that is good about North Carolina - and much that is vile about social media.

I'll start with the positive. Residents of the mountain counties most affected by Helene have fought heroically for their lives, their families, and their neighbors, often against long odds and terrifying threats. They haven't fought alone. Others from across North Carolina and beyond flocked in to help.

We've only just begun to collect their stories of prudent planning, daring rescues, and dogged determination. These tales feature the likes of Hendersonville's James White, who led more than a dozen neighbors sheltering in his home to safety with ropes and lifejackets, as well as Eddie Hunnell, recently moved to North Carolina from Colorado, who leapt into the swollen New River to save a stranger, Lesley Worth, separated from her husband by the raging stream.

At larger scale, hundreds of churches, charities, companies, and volunteer networks sprang to the assistance of their fellow Carolinians. So did law enforcement, fire and rescue teams, and emergency-response personnel from counties, municipalities, state agencies, and other public authorities.

On the ground, we've seen a great deal of cooperation across jurisdictional and political boundaries. Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, for example, sent North Carolina Forest Service staffers familiar with the rugged terrain to guide National Guard units into position. On October 7, Democratic and Republican appointees on the State Board of Elections voted unanimously to empower local boards in 13 hard-hit counties to modify the locations and hours of early-voting sites and other election procedures - but only by bipartisan votes of those boards, a prudent constraint to reassure a jittery public.

Democratic mayors have worked closely with Republican county commissioners to coordinate relief. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, lawmakers from both parties - all have pitched in to comfort victims, survey damage, coordinate responses, and convey timely, accurate information to the public.

That's not to say there haven't been miscues and disagreements. Tillis and Budd questioned the pace at which military personnel from Fort Liberty and other bases were deployed into the devastated counties after the storm. Others have criticized the adequacy of response by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

While it will take some time to sort out all the claims and counterclaims, it's not too early to label these issues as legitimate topics for debate.

Unfortunately, much of the "debate" unfolding on social media over the past week has been anything but legitimate. Whether spreading wacky conspiracy theories about lithium mines and weather control or uttering grotesque slanders about Kamala Harris and Joe Biden intentionally "letting" Republican voters "drown," a host of very-online, supposedly conservative provocateurs and hacks have made a bad situation immeasurably worse.

Here's what a real conservative leader, state Sen. Kevin Corbin, had to say. "PLEASE help stop this junk," wrote Corbin, who represents North Carolina's eight westernmost counties. "It is just a distraction to people trying to do their job."

"Folks, this is a catastrophic event of which this country has never known. It is the largest crisis event in the history of N.C. The state is working non-stop. DOT has deployed workers from all over the state. Duke [Energy] has 10,000 workers on this. FEMA is here. The National Guard is here in large numbers."

Some incendiary memes are likely the product of misunderstandings, such as emergency officials redirecting volunteers away from dangerous roadways or relief agencies refusing certain donated items they aren't equipped to store or distribute. Others may well be the result of bad calls made in good faith, in stressful conditions, by officials with incomplete information or inadequate training.

Can policymakers properly second-guess such decisions after the fact? Of course! That time will come. Right now, our immediate challenges remain rescue and relief - challenges our fellow North Carolinians have met with magnificent resilience.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member. His latest books, Mountain Folk and Forest Folk, combine epic fantasy with early American history (FolkloreCycle.com).

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Hurricane Milton offers a catastrophic reminder

October 16, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Section: Main | 783 Words

Page: 8A OpenURL Link

Less than two weeks ago, Hurricane Helene ravaged southern Appalachia with unprecedented floods and claimed hundreds of lives. Now Hurricane Milton has targeted the west coast of Florida, which is still cleaning up from Helene's glancing blow. And less than a month from now, voters will choose between Democrats who accept the reality of climate change and Republicans who do not.

These are not the "normal" hurricanes of the past. Hurricanes are not supposed to retain catastrophic power as they race far inland from the Gulf of Mexico, dumping a Noah's flood of rainfall all the way to Tennessee, the way Helene did. Hurricanes are not supposed to grow from newly formed tropical storm to Category 5 monster in less than two days, the way Milton did - intensification so lightning-fast that it stunned experts.

"I can't even find the right adjective," University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann said Monday about Milton. And Mann - author of the famous "hockey stick" graph showing the human-induced rise in global temperatures - pointed me to a Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory rapid-attribution study reporting that rainfall from Helene was boosted 50% by climate change.

Understanding why hurricanes now behave differently is a matter of "basic physics," Mann said. Warmer temperatures provide more energy and moisture to serve as fuel for hurricanes, making them bigger and wetter. It's not that there are more hurricanes. Rather, the ones that do form tend to be stronger and release much more rain. Counting Helene, the United States has seen eight Category 4 or Category 5 landfalls since 2017 - the same number as during the previous 57 years.

Milton could make it nine, though forecasters expected the storm to diminish slightly in wind speed before it lands. Another impact of climate change - roughly half a foot of sea level rise in the Gulf since 2010 - makes storm surge and coastal flooding much worse. Residents of low-lying areas in the Tampa Bay area have been told to leave their homes, and Tampa Mayor Jane Castor announced bluntly: "If you choose to stay in one of those evacuation areas, you're going to die."

Many Republicans are reluctant even to acknowledge climate change, much less do anything about it, because of politics, not physics.

Four of the states that suffered fatalities and major damage from Helene - Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee - have Republican governors and legislative majorities. Given all the death and destruction, you might think those officials would be clamoring for urgent action.

But the GOP's unchallenged leader, Donald Trump, has famously called climate change a "hoax" and frequently rails against clean-energy power sources such as solar and wind. He says he would dismantle the tax credits and incentives that encourage moving away from fossil fuels, vowing that his energy policy would be "drill, baby, drill."

His running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio refused to give a straight answer when asked on the debate stage if he agrees climate change is a hoax. Nonsensically, he reasons -- or pretends to reason -- that even if carbon emissions are causing the planet to warm and making weather events more extreme, this somehow means the United States should extract more oil and natural gas, not less.

Not all MAGA-cult Republicans are as clueless as Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, who offered a hallucinatory conspiracy theory to explain the storm, posting on X: "Yes they can control the weather. It's ridiculous

for anyone to lie and say it can't be done." Yeesh.

A Pew Research Center poll in March found that only 12% of Republicans and Republican-leaning respondents believed climate change should be a "top priority" for the president and Congress, as opposed to 59% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents who felt that way.

But In a July 2023 poll, The Washington Post found that 55% of Republicans and GOP-leaning independents believed that human activity is "causing changes to the world's climate, including an increase in average temperature." That is far less than the 93% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents who believe in climate change, but it's still a majority.

Those numbers suggest that Republican voters might be prepared to support policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change if the party's leaders proposed them. But GOP elected officials must take their cues from Trump, lest he turn on them. Reality is no match for MAGA dogma.

Meanwhile, Helene and Milton and the supercharged hurricanes that will follow do not care whether the states they plow through are red or blue. Nor do the droughts, the wildfires or the punishing heat waves.

Whether we like it or not, climate change is an area of common ground: We're all in this together.

Eugene Robinson writes for The Washington Post: eugenerobinson@washpost.com.

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Top issue for agriculture candidates is simple: Helene help

October 16, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: CAMDYN BRUCE Staff Reporter | Section: Main | 1101 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

Age: 63

Job: Retired

Education: studied English at Tufts University, did not finish

Political experience: Ran for U.S. Senate in 2014, and 2016; Ran for N.C. House District 31 in 2020 and 2022

Top priority: Legalizing marijuana in North Carolina

Age: 41

Job: Agricultural Consultant

Education: B.S in soil science from Brigham Young University; Doctorate in plant medicine from University of Florida

Political Experience: None

Top priority: Disaster relief for farmers affected by Hurricane Helene

Age: 72

Job: Farmer

Education: B.S. in conservation from N.C. State University

Political Experience: N.C. Agriculture Commissioner from 2004-present

Top priority: Disaster relief for farmers affected by Hurricane Helene

After hurricane Helene left much of western North Carolina devasted aiding farmers impacted by the storm has become the key issue in the race for North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner.

"Agriculture there is totally devasted," Steve Troxler(R) who is the incumbent said. "In most current cases the crops are washed away, ... we've got fences gone, hay gone, animals that are going to have to be gotten back into pastures. We've got infrastructure gone. So, right now if we are not successful in having a very good federal and state disaster program there are a lot of people that won't be able to farm next year."

Similarly, Troxler's Democratic challenger Sarah Taber cited disaster response as her top priority.

"Storm recovery takes years. We need leadership with the attention span to finish the job," Taber said. "For Agriculture, immediate needs also include safe livestock disposal, food safety inspections for affected produce, and other industry-specific cleanup. But there's still lots to do after the TV cameras leave. I learned this the hard way, by being hit by 3 hurricanes in the last 8 years."

Troxler who is a farmer and Taber who is an agriculture consultant that works with farmers, both know firsthand how hard it is to recover in the aftermath of a natural disaster. They both said this this isn't the first time disaster relief has been the hot button issue within farm communities in North Carolina.

In 2018 when Hurricane Florence hit North Carolina according to a report from the state auditor's office as of June 30, 2023, a total of \$773,599,672 in aid had been disbursed by state agencies to address the disaster, with \$261,044,511 being disbursed by the Department of Agriculture to aid farmers.

Then in 2021 when tropical storm Fred hit western North Carolina the state budget allocated 50 million to the Department of Agriculture as part of the Crop Loss Program.

Troxler said similar efforts would need to be initiated to make sure farmers in western North Carolina could recover from Helene.

"Some of the same areas that we just got back on their feet are washed away again," Troxler said.

Aside from disaster recovery minimizing the loss of farmland across the state is also a key issue for both candidates.

Even before Hurricane Helene studies show North Carolina has consistently been losing farmlands over the last decade.

Troxler said farm preservation is an issue he's been working on improving his entire career as Agriculture Commissioner helping to develop the agriculture development and farmland preservation trust fund in 2005 after being elected.

"Since that time, we have spent about 108 million protecting farmland through permanent easements," Troxler said.

He said more work was needed however to protect farms and cited a program recently started in Wake County he could see expanding.

"Wake County has come up with an innovative program that if you have your land in present use value, which is a farm, you get a break on property taxes," Troxler said.

Under the program if farmers in Wake County sell their farms to developers, they would have to pay the difference between higher tax rate on businesses and the reduced rate for farms. That money is then in turn put towards a fund to protect farmland in the county.

From Taber's point of view the best way to preserve farmland is to make farming a more profitable industry throughout the state.

"Our farmers make as little as half as much per acre as growers in Georgia or Virginia," Taber said. "Farmers sell their land to developers because they can't afford to stay in business anymore - and developers are the only ones who can afford the high cost of farmland."

Taber said the best way to grow agribusiness revenue was to push more farmers to produce more crops with higher profitability like strawberries and tomatoes instead of sweet potatoes and tobacco which historically North Carolina has been one of the top producers of.

"When it comes to keeping farms in business, the best defense is a good offense," Taber said. "Let's get farms making more money."

Troxler said North Carolina had one of the most diverse agribusiness economies in the country and pushed back on

the idea that growing farmers profits was simply a matter of persuading them to produce different crops.

He said many of the crops that have the highest profit potential are also the riskiest to grow, and at the state level there currently isn't a risk management program for farmers looking to try something new.

He also said the Department of Agriculture does extensive research on crops to assess their profit potential, cost of production, and risk, so farmers can make informed decisions on what they want to grow.

"We try to make the mistakes before a farmer has to do it himself," Troxler said. "We're always looking for the next magic bullet, and you know, we find them sometimes, but sometimes we say this aint gonna work."

Taber said many of key cash crops for North Carolina already present similar risk to crops with higher profit potentials that aren't grown as commonly.

"I'll tell people, hey, you know strawberries and tomatoes will make \$40,000 an acre, and they'll say, 'what about labor,' and I'll say what about labor," Taber said. "Tobacco takes hand labor too, and it hasn't stopped anybody from growing it, but you make less money growing tobacco."

Finally running third party in the N.C. Agriculture Commissioner race is Sean Haugh who is running as a Libertarian.

"I'm running on a single issue of legalizing marijuana now," Haugh said.

Haugh has formerly run for U.S. Senate as a Libertarian in 2014 losing to Thom Tillis (R-NC) and then again in 2016 losing to Richard Burr(R-NC). He has also unsuccessfully run for N.C. House District 31 in 2020 and 2022.

He said Bob Drach who is the Libertarian candidate running for N.C. state auditor inspired him to run for Agriculture Commissioner.

"Bob was somewhat influential on me, saying that I would have more impact running for a statewide office than for my state house seat," Haugh said.

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AID FOR THE AILING

October 16, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: RICHARD CRAVER Staff Reporter | Section: Main | 607 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Novant Health Inc. has commenced its Hurricane Helene relief efforts in western North Carolina with in-person urgent care and telehealth services.

"Western North Carolina is facing immense challenges in the wake of this disaster, and our teams are working together to support these communities - both in-person and across the Carolinas," said Carl Armato, Novant's president and chief executive.

The system began operating Friday a mobile clinic and pharmacy at A.C. Reynolds High School in Asheville, joining a Federal Emergency Management Agency comfort care station initiative. Services will be available daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1 Rocket Drive.

The clinic will feature a community care cruiser to offer urgent care services, including connections to obstetric and pediatric care. These medical resources will be available to all patients at no cost.

The deployment includes physicians, advanced practice providers, pharmacists, and other clinical and nonclinical team member volunteers.

Novant said it has deployed "dozens of team members" that include from its New Hanover Regional Medical Center and an ambulance, as well as utilizing its Critical Care Transport team to support patient transfers as needed.

"Our teams have been on the ground in these communities and have seen the challenges people are facing to gain access to care," said Dr. Pam Oliver, Novant's chief medical officer.

"We are committed to offering as much support and as many resources as possible, and we will continue to partner with communities across Western North Carolina to identify ways Novant Health can assist."

The telehealth services also will be provided at no cost at NovantHealth.org/VirtualCare.

Virtual care offers treatment around the clock for conditions, such as fever, COVID, cold and flu, ear infections, shortness of breath, rash and common skin conditions, back pain and urinary tract infections.

However, Novant cautioned that virtual care should not be used for emergency care. Those experiencing a medical emergency should call 911.

Novant is working with the Buncombe County American Red Cross chapter to operate a shelter at 1815 Hendersonville Road in Asheville. For shelter details, go to RedCross.org/Shelters.

For western N.C. residents who have been displaced by flooding and other Helene impacts, they can make an appointment at NovantHealth.org/doctor or by calling 855-875-8310.

Novant in western NC

Novant has been expanding its presence in the Asheville market in recent years, such as expanding urgent-care services with three GoHealth urgent-care centers in Asheville and Black Mountain.

In November, it opened Novant Health Surgical Partners - Biltmore.

In May, Novant disclosed plans for a projected \$249.7 million capital investment in establishing an operational hubforemost a 26-bed Asheville Medical Center focused on cancer care - through filing a certificate-of-need application with the N.C. Division of Health Service Regulation.

The proposed Novant hospital would be built on a 24-acre site located at 455 Long Shoals Road. The capital investment amount is significantly higher than what similarly sized hospitals typically cost, which is in the \$50 million to \$150 million range.

There are competing applications from AdventHealth Asheville and Mission Hospital Inc. that also would add 26 acute-care beds.

The applications come 17 months after state health regulators denied Novant's bid to open a 67-bed community hospital in Asheville and chose instead to approve the CON application for 67 beds from AdventHealth over Novant and Mission Hospital Inc.

Novant had planned to spend \$328.7 million on the 67-bed hospital.

Novant said another step would be committing \$20 million over the next five years "to further develop rural primary care."

As part of that effort, Novant said it has acquired space at 1815 Hendersonville Road in Asheville to open a multispecialty medical office building.

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Moose Cafe closed for renovations in Colfax

October 16, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: MICHAEL HASTINGS Staff Reporter | Section: Life | 149 Words Page: 9B OpenURL Link

Moose Café, at 2914 Sandy Ridge Road on the grounds of the Piedmont Triad Farmers Market in Colfax, closed Sept. 27 for renovations.

The cafe's website doesn't give many specifics on the work being done, but says it is expected to take 13 to 15 months.

The website does say that the renovations will result in a "completely reimagined dining experience" of the outdoor and indoor dining areas as well as expanded food and beverage offerings.

A second Moose Café is in Asheville on the grounds of the Western Carolina Farmers Market. That café also is closed for the foreseeable future as a result of the damage the city recently sustained from Hurricane Helene.

For more information, visit eatatthemoosecafe.com.

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Armed NC man charged with threatening FEMA officials working in aftermath of Helene

October 16, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Josh Shaffer and Lexi Solomon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 528 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Sheriff's deputies near Lake Lure and Chimney Rock have arrested a 44-year-old man for threatening FEMA officials working in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

In a Monday news release, officials in Rutherford County said initial reports described truckloads of militia in the area, as was reported in several national media outlets.

They now believe William Jacob Parsons of Bostic, N.C., acted alone.

Speaking in Caldwell County Monday, FEMA Administrator Deanna Criswell confirmed there had been a "credible threat" to workers in Western North Carolina since Helene.

That team was pulled out of the area because of the threat, but Criswell said it only affected "one part of our mission" and would resume soon.

"There's been a lot of misinformation, and it's just not OK, right?" Criswell said. "The misinformation is just not OK, and any threats to anybody, and especially when we're faced with a situation where people have such great need, is really hurtful, and it just detracts from the ability to make sure we are meeting people where we are.

"It's heartbreaking to see people want to spread lies and hatred that impacts their ability to recover," she continued. "We are here to support the people of North Carolina. We are going to continue to be here to support the people of North Carolina. But we will take anything we deem a credible threat seriously, and I just appreciate the ongoing partnership with Gov. Cooper and local law enforcement to make sure that we understand all the facts as well."

A man with a rifle talking about harming FEMA agents

On Saturday, deputies said, an emergency call came into Rutherford County saying a man with an assault rifle was talking about harming FEMA agents.

Deputies and police tracked the threat to nearby Polk County, where they got a description of the suspect's car and later his license tag number.

Parsons, carrying a rifle and handgun, was charged with going armed to the terror of the public, a misdemeanor. He was released after posting a \$10,000 bond.

FEMA's response in NC after Helene

Chimney Rock suffered some of the worst damage from Helene after a wall of water took out most of Main Street. Debris filled Lake Lure, much of it destroyed buildings.

Since then, the town has also fought false rumors that government officials had seized it to obtain lithium - one of many bits of misinformation surrounding the storm.

"What we are doing here in North Carolina is working," Criswell said. "We are getting people the assistance that they need to help with their recovery process, and as of today, FEMA has provided more than \$96 million to

individuals across Western North Carolina.

"Just because you don't see somebody in a FEMA shirt does not mean FEMA has not been on the ground supporting," she continued. "We are just one part of the team, and we bring in the full federal team to help support."

This is a developing story. Check back for updates.

Josh Shaffer: 919-829-4818, @joshshaffer08

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Raleigh's Crabtree mall will hold fundraising events to support Western NC. How to help

October 16, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Renee Umsted; Staff Writer | Section: Business | 295 Words Page: 9A OpenURL Link

Crabtree Valley Mall in Raleigh has several events planned this year to support communities in Western North Carolina that were affected by Helene.

The initiatives are part of the "M-All Hands on Deck" campaign, which was started by Pacific Retail Capital Partners, the group that manages Crabtree and other retail properties across the country.

Through the campaign, Pacific Retail Capital Partners hopes to raise funds throughout the holiday season for communities affected by hurricanes Helene and Milton. The company will also make a corporate-level donation to support recovery efforts.

"The devastation left by Hurricane Helene, and now Milton, is indescribable," Debora Overholt, general manager for Crabtree, said in a news release. "Our hearts are broken as we think about the lives lost and the catastrophic damage to our beautiful state and elsewhere. We are doing everything in our power to help those affected."

This campaign is one of many fundraising events benefiting Western North Carolina. The News & Observer is maintaining a list of ways to support communities impacted by Helene.

What is Crabtree doing to support Western NC?

Events and programming at Crabtree are targeted at raising money and awareness for the communities affected by the storm.

A portion of proceeds from a concert and silent auction will go to relief efforts following Helene. Details on the time and date of these events have not yet been announced.

An "M-All Hands" art walk fundraiser, where local artists paint a piece that will be auctioned

A giving wall that shows information about how to get involved

Donation-based character meet-and-greets and guest appearances

A portion of proceeds from holiday photos with Santa will go to relief efforts. Photos with Santa are available Friday, Nov. 8, through Tuesday, Dec. 24.

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What's it really like when the Army arrives to help Western NC post-Helene? We tagged along

October 16, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Catherine Muccigrosso; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1382 Words

Page: 13A OpenURL Link

The welcoming mountains of Western North Carolina was where Robert Arndt grew up. And after the deadly Hurricane Helene pummeled the area, he knew he had to do something, anything, to help.

"Nanny's house is completely destroyed," Arndt said last week. His great-grandmother's house was in Clyde, halfway between his hometown of Sylva and Asheville. She's safe and staying with family in Sylva nearly an hour west of Asheville. "A house is replaceable. A life isn't," Arndt said.

He's among 1,300 soldiers with the 20th Engineer Brigade mobilized to the mountains for recovery relief. The brigade includes soldiers from Fort Liberty (formerly Bragg), where Ardnt is based, as well as Fort Meade in Maryland and Fort Campbell in Kentucky.

The job is personal to the 22-year-old, whose family also lives in towns like Canton and Waynesville, all hammered by the storm and within the 27 counties designated as major disaster areas.

"They need more hands, more workers, more engineers to help clear the roads or build them, or help get supplies to people who can't get out of their houses," Arndt said.

Helene's deadly path of destruction tore through 300 miles inland from the coast. "It hurts me," Arndt said. "It's something you can't really prepare for up in the mountains."

To get a first-hand look at what the soldiers were doing to assist hurricane victims in the mountains, a Charlotte Observer reporter and visuals journalist spent a 12-hour day embedded with the Army last Wednesday. Here's what we saw and heard.

'Thank you for coming!'

It's just after 8 a.m. Dozens of small camouflage-colored tents line the front of a large pavilion turned logistics center at Camping World RV Sales in Marion, about 100 miles northwest of Charlotte.

It's muddy and it's loud, with an army of vehicles revved to go.

After being handed three-pound Kevlar helmets, we climbed up a four-step metal ladder into the open-air 5-ton Light Medium Tactical Vehicle alongside seven soldiers on metal benches. We were followed by a medic truck.

Our destination: school distribution centers in Spruce Pine.

Along the route, many businesses are closed. Parking lots like Wendy's and Dollar General are caked in mud, while shopping centers are now staging areas for utility crews. A gem mining sign says "rain or shine," but it's closed.

A passing pickup driver gives a thumbs up. A woman rolls down her truck window, shouting, "Thank you for coming!" It's a sentiment shared throughout the day.

Turning onto NC 226 E., a manned barricade allows only relief crews and local traffic through.

Too many uprooted trees to count mar the landscape. About halfway up the mountain, a portion of the road is

gone, as washed-away trees give way to a cliff drop with a view of the majestic mountains.

Army Sgt. Jared Marshall warned us it was coming. Road crews work to rebuild the outside lane as our military vehicle rumbles over the rock and gravel path.

During the hour-long ride, Marshall shared how Hurricane Helene affected his own family.

His in-laws fled their Fairview home, about 11 miles southeast of Asheville, and are staying at his house in Fayetteville.

"We're here trying to do everything we can to help out," Marshall said. "To see them happy that we're here, it brings happiness to me and all of the soldiers."

'The worst I've seen'

Arriving at Harris Middle School in Spruce Pine, mountains of bottled water sit stacked on pallets out front. Inside the closed school's gym are boxes, bags and bins filled with donations.

The soldiers answer a call for help from a line crew over an excavator stuck in mud. Dylan Myers of Oklahoma, working alongside about 200 lineworkers from Ohio, New York and Connecticut, has been on several storm damage recoveries before in Florida and Louisiana.

"This is probably the worst I've seen," the general foreman said. "I've never seen so many in distress."

'When they lose everything it's a disaster'

At 10:44 a.m., at Deyton Elementary School, about a tenth of a mile away from the middle school, pallets of livestock and animal feed, along with firewood, sit outside near more bottled water mounds. Inside, classrooms are filled with donations. Paper signs by the doors read pet food, baby supplies, cleaning supplies, hygiene and home goods.

In the library, soldiers unpack and stock bookshelves with food.

By the next week, people will be able to come in and choose what they need, said Melissa Martin, a special education teacher at Mitchell High who was sorting boxes of canned food in a classroom.

"My students have hardly anything to begin with," Martin said, her voice cracking. "and when they lose everything it's a disaster."

Residents still struggle without power, water service and cell service.

"Some still can't get out," Martin said. She and Sarah Margaret Smith of Watauga Opportunities logged 55 miles checking on students the day before. Most of the students have been accounted for, but they're still looking for some, she said. "We know they're safe but where did they go?"

Wearing a purple T-shirt with block white letters reading "We are still one," Lori Jones is coordinator at the Deyton site. The soldiers help by unloading trailers, breaking down boxes, sweeping rooms, whatever they're asked to do, the seventh-grade social studies teacher said.

Seeing the soldiers brings her a feeling of safety and security.

"It gets better every day," she said. It's a statement echoed throughout the day by other volunteers and residents.

'We couldn't make it without all the help'

At 1:23 p.m., we headed about five miles away to the new Mitchell Elementary/Middle School in Bakersville.

The stream of cars coming through the drive-thru distribution site is sometimes 10 or more deep. Wanda Duncan came for electrolytes. Soldiers and volunteers race to cars with arms full of water cases, Band-aids and wipes. Some people arrive not knowing what they need, while others have lists.

"It's a blessing to all of us here because the simple things we take for granted have been taken away," teary-eyed Duncan said. "We couldn't make it without all the help."

A sweet, familiar scent wafts through the area. Auntie Ruth's family-owned doughnut and pretzel business from East Tennessee gives out freshly made glazed doughnuts and coffee from a borrowed food truck. "We're happy to do something," said Jolene Kauffman, the owner's daughter. "It's something to brighten their days."

Lyle Hendrix of Hendersonville arrives in a pickup truck with donations collected by DSSOLVR brewery in downtown Asheville. His right wrist is covered in poison ivy blisters from cutting downed trees in his neighborhood to get himself and others out. But he's fine.

"This has showed me that people really are good," he said. "Everyone is a hero."

Dale Blevins, 66, has been overseeing supplies and donations since the distribution center opened Oct. 1. "You could see the distress on their faces," he said.

But people are beginning to smile and joke more.

Small groups of volunteers have popped in from the Charlotte area too. Then the Army showed up. "It was a breath of fresh air. Hands is what we need," Blevins said.

'Help and hope'

By 2:26 p.m., the last of a thousand doughnuts were handed out, including to Rachael Hollifield and her 15-year-old daughter, Taylar.

Once power was restored Tuesday, they learned of the distribution site. They came to get bottled water, food and paper towels. Like others, they don't have running water. Like so many others, their basement is flooded, too.

With prompting from a volunteer, Hollifield agrees to take a large can of potatoes and three jugs of water. "I don't want to take too much from other people who may need it," she said.

The Hollifields moved into their Spruce Pine home just two days before the storm hit. "We were totally unprepared," Hollifield said. "We didn't have power. We didn't have water. We didn't have cell service. We were stuck."

Wearing a shirt that says "God has perfect timing," Hollifield looks around and says, "Help and hope is what I see here."

Day's end

At 4:53 p.m., we head back to Harris Middle School where soldiers offloaded stacks of bottled water they moved from the distribution site.

By 6 p.m. our convoy made its way back down the mountain, as passersby wave to the soldiers and they wave back in unison.

The destruction hasn't deterred Sqt. Marshall's plans to move to the mountains near his wife's family after he's

discharged next year.

"We want to move up here regardless of the storm," the 26-year-old said. "It's such a pretty area."

Catherine Muccigrosso: 7043585198, @CatMuccigrosso

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Here's the answer to every question you have about the 2024 NC State Fair

October 16, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: N&O Service Journalism Team; Staff Writer | Section: News | 2567 Words

Page: 11A OpenURL Link

Welcome to North Carolina State Fair season. Learn the basics and get familiar with the new stuff before heading to the fairgrounds this year.

You can get additional info about the fair at ncagr.gov/divisions/ncstatefair/2024.

When is the NC State Fair? What are the hours?

The fair begins Thursday, Oct. 17 and ends Sunday, Oct. 27.

Hours:

Thursday, Oct. 17: noon-11 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 18 - Saturday, Oct. 19: 9 a.m.-midnight

Sunday, Oct. 20 - Thursday, Oct. 24: 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 25 - Saturday, Oct. 26: 9 a.m.-midnight

Sunday, Oct. 27: 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

How much do NC State Fair tickets cost?

Tickets can be purchased online at a discount until Thursday, Oct. 17, and there are walk-up locations available from until Oct. 17 to purchase tickets at this rate. Gate prices are a bit higher, beginning Friday, Oct. 18.

Adult (ages 13 to 64): \$10 through Oct. 18, or \$13 at the gate beginning Oct. 18.

Military adult (ages 13 to 64): \$8, but they can only be bought at the gate after Oct. 18.

Youth (ages 6 to 12): \$5 through Oct. 18, \$7 at the gate after that.

Child (ages 0 to 5): Free.

Senior adult (ages 65+): \$5 anytime.

Groups can buy discounted tickets. Group adult tickets are \$8 each when bought in groups of 40 or more, while group youth tickets are \$4 each when bought in groups of 40 or more.

Are there any NC State Fair ticket discounts?

Adult or youth groups of 40 or more can get ticket discounts (see above).

These passes must be purchased online by Thursday, Oct. 17:

Dizzy Pass: \$38 includes a FastTrack gate admission ticket and an unlimited ride wristband, only valid for one day during the 2024 State Fair.

Kegs & Corks Pass: \$17 includes a gate admissions ticket and an NC Public House Beer + Wine ticket, which provides your choice of a 16 oz. craft beer or a 6 oz. wine.

State Fair Flyer Package: \$17 includes one gate admission ticket and one round-trip State Fair flyer ticket, which is not valid for carnival rides.

State Fair SkyGazer: \$14 includes one FastTrack gate admission ticket and a SkyGazer (Ferris wheel) ticket, which is not valid for carnival rides.

And there are a couple of days when some folks can get into the fair for free:

Senior Citizens' Day (Tuesday, Oct. 22): Seniors aged 65+ get free admission. Bojangles biscuits and coffee will be served at 9 a.m. on the Dorton Arena Patio near the Waterfall.

Smithfield Foods Hunger Relief Day (Thursday, Oct. 24): Bring six cans of food and get in free. Since Hunger Relief Day began at the State Fair in 1993, fairgoers have donated more than 6 million pounds of food to the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina.

Are rides or games included with my NC State Fair ticket?

Rides and games require separate purchases.

Games are cash-only, and you purchase tickets for the rides.

You can also purchase wristbands for rides (except for the SkyGazer Ferris wheel and Flyer). Wristbands can be bought online for \$30 in advance or for \$40 during the fair (online or in person).

* For ride tickets: Visit the ticket plazas (neon green tents with stars on top) near Gates 7, 8 and 9 or in front of Dorton Arena.

Ticket plazas are open daily 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. (minus Thursday Oct 17, when hours of operation differ slightly). Carnival ticket plazas, located in each Midway, will be open during Carnival operating hours.

How can I buy ride tickets for the NC State Fair?

You can purchase these tickets online (and at a discount) before the fair, or you can buy them in-person when you arrive for the fun.

* Ride ticket cards, which rolled out last year, take the place of the ride ticket sheets the fair has used for years.

Tickets will be placed on a chipped card, which needs to be presented at each ride and automatically debited the ticket count for that ride. These cards will now carry over from year to year, letting you use last year's unused tickets and even save some for next year.

Ride ticket cards are \$10 for 18 ride tickets bought online through Thursday, Oct. 17, then they're \$1 per ticket at Ride Ticket Plazas (or \$18 for 18 bought online) during the fair.

When the fair begins, ride ticket cards will be available online and in person at Ride Ticket Plazas. (More on those below.)

* Ride wristbands are \$30 per wristband when bought online by Oct. 17, then they're \$40 per wristband Oct. 18 and

beyond, whether purchasing online or at carnival booths in person. Wristbands are valid only for one day during the Fair.

What's the NC State Fair lunch pass?

Here's how the Weekday Lunch Pass Program will work in 2024:

Enter through Gate 9 off Trinity Road or Gate 1 off Hillsborough Street between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on a weekday.

Purchase a lunch card at the gate for \$20. Lunch cards are cash only (and previously \$10).

Visit the food vendors for lunch (there are dozens of new offerings).

Return the lunch card by 1:30 p.m. to the same gate used for entry on the same day it was purchased.

Get a full \$20 refund for the lunch card.

Important reminders:

If you leave after 1:30 p.m., you forfeit your \$20.

No food is included in the program. The cost only covers admission to the fair.

Which new foods are coming to the NC State Fair this year?

This year's list is studded with collisions from two great eating forces - fair food tradition and TikTok. You can thank those forces as you stroll through the fair sipping on pickle-flavored Dr. Pepper.

Other trends seem to include breaded bologna fries, pickles in just about every kind of situation and new plates of nachos. Somehow, this year's roster of fair foods even includes deep fried spaghetti.

For our run-down of new fair foods for 2024, visit newsobserver.com/living/food-drink.

Can you pay for food at the NC State Fair with a card, or is it cash only?

Many vendors take credit cards, but some only take cash. There are ATMs on the fairgrounds.

If you only brought a card, or if you only brought cash, there would be plenty of food options.

A tip: Having some cash on hand is always smart, because when the fair gets busy, the wireless network tends to slow down. ATM lines can get long too.

Can I park for free at the NC State Fair?

Yes. There are a number of parking lots that let you park for free, and some have a shuttle that will take you to the fairgrounds, so you won't have to walk.

Here are the free parking lots:

Dogwood Lot

Cardinal Lot

Carter-Finley Stadium

Lenovo Center

Note: There may be exceptions if events are scheduled at Carter-Finley (no NC State home football games are on the schedule) or Lenovo Center (there are concerts scheduled for Oct. 18, 19, 25 and 26).

Can I take free shuttles to the NC State Fair?

Yes. The fair will offer several park-and-ride shuttle options from off-site parking lots to entry gates at the fair.

Shuttles will be offered to and from these lots, which will also have accessible shuttles available.

Dogwood Lot: The shuttle drops visitors off at Gate 8 of the fair. The address is 4501 Reedy Creek Rd. in Raleigh.

Cardinal Lot: The shuttle drops visitors off at Gate 7 of the fair. The address is 5766 Chapel Hill Road Rd. in Raleigh.

Both lot hours are from 9 a.m. until one hour after gates close each day. (Hours slightly differ on Thursday, Oct. 17.)

Shuttles will not be offered at Carter-Finley Stadium or the Lenovo Center. Remember, there may be exceptions to daily free parking at these lots if there are events scheduled at these two sporting arenas.

Can I pay for parking to be closer to the fairgrounds?

Yes. There are some privately operated options near the fairgrounds that charge for parking.

During the fair, residents near the fairgrounds often convert parts of their private property into small parking lots. These lots provide additional parking options, but you will have to pay.

Can I take a GoRaleigh bus to the State Fair?

Yes. GoRaleigh shuttles will carry passengers to the state fairgrounds from the Triangle Town Center Shopping Mall, 5959 Triangle Town Blvd. in Raleigh, near the Dillard's parking lot. The shuttles will run every 30 minutes daily from 8:30 a.m until the fair closes.

Here are the prices for the shuttle:

Round trip: \$5

One way: \$4

Seniors 65 and older and passengers with disabilities: \$2.50 round trip or \$2 one way

Children under 40 inches tall: Free

You can pay with cash or by using the UMO app. The GoPass is not valid on State Fair routes.

Advanced sale passes are available through the UMO App or in-person and can be purchased at the GoRaleigh operations facility, 4104 Poole Rd. in Raleigh, or at GoRaleigh Station in downtown Raleigh.

When are the fireworks at the NC State Fair?

Nightly. Attendees can enjoy a firework show every evening at 9:45 p.m. over the Heritage Circle Pond.

What kinds of rides are at the NC State Fair?

The fair will have nearly 100 rides ranging from thrill rides for adults to slow, small rides for children.

There will be two new rides this year:

State Fair Slide: A 210-foot slide

Candyland Adventure: A 130-foot long funhouse

What is the Village of Yesteryear?

The Village of Yesteryear is an area set aside for artisans who preserve skills and crafts from past generations. Their slogan: "Preserving art of the past for generations of the future."

Crafters include glass blowers, jewelers, painters, basket weavers, potters and sculptors, wood carvers and much more.

More than 75 artists and crafters are featured. This year, seven crafters will be celebrated who have been in the Village for 35 years or more.

The majority of the crafters in the Village of Yesteryear are from North Carolina, and many are from the mountains. (See below on how you can support them after Hurricane Helene's devastation.)

The Village of Yesteryear is located near the Heritage Church and Folk Festival, close to the Midway. It's most easily accessible by Gates 6, 7 or 8.

(Note: On the other side of the fairgrounds - on the Hillsborough Street side behind Dorton Arena - the North Carolina Pottery Tent features pottery for sale made only by potters from the state.)

How can I support Western NC after Helene at the fair?

Donations can be contributed online for those buying tickets on the State Fair's website with the option to give to the fundraiser link before you check out with the option to give \$5-\$25.

The donation drive isn't the only way to support those affected by the storm at the state fair this year.

Of the more than 75 artisans coming out for fairgoers to see them in action, many are from Western North Carolina, and the State Fair has confirmed that they will still be able to attend.

Here's a list of some of the member crafters you can support as the cleanup continues in their communities:

The Village of Yesteryear will be open at the N.C. State Fair from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. On opening day, Thursday Oct. 17, it'll be open at noon. You can find more information online at nostatefair.org.

Are dogs/pets allowed at the NC State Fair?

Pets are not allowed at the fair, but service dogs are welcome.

Can I buy alcohol at the NC State Fair?

Yes. North Carolina craft beer and wine are sold at the NC Public House, located on the south side of Dorton Arena.

There's a limit of one Beer+Wine ticket per person per visit to the Public House. One Beer+Wine ticket, which costs

\$10, provides you with a choice of two servings of wine (3 oz. each), beer or cider (both 8 oz. each).

A Kegs & Corks Pass, which can be bought for \$17 online ahead of the fair, provides one Beer+Wine ticket and one gate admission ticket.

Note: You may bring your own food into the State Fair, but alcohol is prohibited.

Can I rent wheelchairs and strollers at the NC State Fair?

Yes. You can rent scooters, wheelchairs and strollers at the fair, but they cannot be reserved in advance.

Prices and details from Raleigh's Mobility Concepts LLC:

Electric scooters are \$60.

Wheelchairs are \$20 and available in medium and large sizes.

Children's transport devices are \$20. Strollers are available in single and double capacity. CuddleCars are only available in single capacity.

Reservations will not be accepted in advance. Instead, patrons can visit tents located around the fairground to pick up and/or drop off equipment. Devices will be issued in a first come, first served capacity.

These will be located inside ticket booths at Gates 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

(Note: The accessible parking lot is located near Gate 10.)

Patrons must give another item as collateral - such as car keys, a photo ID or a cash security deposit - when reserving an item. The collateral will be returned to the customer upon rental drop-off.

Attendees may also bring their own wheelchair, scooter, stroller or child's wagon. Golf carts are prohibited.

How accessible is the NC State Fair?

Buildings: All modern buildings at the Fairgrounds have been modified to standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are some historical buildings in Heritage Circle that are not up to ADA standards.

Bathrooms: There are changing tables in all bathrooms.

Universal changing tables are in the Scott Building and the Agri Supply Exposition Center.

Family restrooms are in the Martin Building and Agri Supply Exposition Center.

Mothers' rooms are in the Scott and Martin buildings and the Agri Supply Exposition Center.

Parking: Accessible parking is available near Gate 10.

Visitors with handicap permits should park in the paved parking lot at the corner of Blue Ridge Road and Trinity Road, near Gate 10 of the Fairgrounds. There are more than 100 parking spaces designated for use by visitors with disabilities in this lot, but a valid handicap permit is required. Visitors can access the Fair through Gates 9 and 10.

AccessABILITY Day will be held on Sunday, Oct. 20.

From 9 .m. to 1 p.m. this special event will include:

Rides and games will operate with no lights or music playing.
Vendors will operate with no lights or music at their booths.
Music stages will only play acoustic sets with light amplification.
The public address system will only be used for lost visitor announcements.
Throughout the whole day:
An indoor "Chill Out Zone" in the Graham Building will have tables and chairs, low lighting and soft music.
Noise canceling headphones will be available for checkout in the "Chill Out Zone."
Inclusive and/or adaptive "on the spot" competitions will be held.
What is the NC State Fair's bag policy?
Clear bags are strongly encouraged. Here's what the fair's website says:
A modified clear bag policy will be in place in 2024. This policy is only in effect for the N.C. State Fair in October and does not extend to additional events held at the N.C. State Fairgrounds.
The N.C. State Fair will operate two security checkpoints at each gate. Those fairgoers who bring a clear bag will go through a much quicker inspection, while those with an opaque bag will go through our bag search line. In an effort to get you into the fun as quickly as possible, please bring your items in a clear bag. There is no size limit to the clear bag being accepted.
What are you allowed/not allowed to bring to the NC State Fair?
Allowed:
Food and drink
Water bottles
Diaper bags with baby/toddler supplies
Your own wheelchair, scooter, stroller or child's wagon
Medications
Not allowed:
Alcoholic beverages
Drugs
Firearms knives, brass knuckles, batons and/or weapons of any type
Golf carts
Pets (minus service dogs)

Can I bring my own food to the NC State Fair?

Yes, outside food and drink are allowed, with the exception of alcohol. All bags are subject to a search policy, the fair says.

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Don't tell me we can't - build better in western NC

October 16, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Jonathan Phillips | Section: Editorial/Opinion | 740 Words Page: 8A OpenURL Link

As soon as roads allowed last week, I arrived at my property in Bat Cave, North Carolina with a car full of water, food and supplies for neighbors. There was only one thing I had that was of interest to people - gasoline and diesel fuel. For days, military helicopters and good Samaritans had been airdropping supplies up and down Highway 9 near my house. Pallets of pre-made military meals, water and other supplies were already piling up in garages. What people wanted was energy to drive the machinery needed to dig out, power the wells that pump water and generate electrons that keep the lights and communications devices operating.

This is also what I find every day in my work in Africa and South Asia on energy poverty. People are willing to spend enormous shares of their income on energy. It is the essential backbone to modern life. Billions of dollars are siphoned off annually to pay for expensive fuel. Badly needed investment flows elsewhere because businesses don't set-up operations where power supplies are unreliable. People remain stuck in poverty.

Western North Carolina already had a major power reliability problem. People who can, including my family, own generators to compensate for an extremely weak grid in the region. But everyone should be able to access reliable power. Building back smarter right now means building to new specifications. Bury power lines where necessary. Build redundancies into the grid. Update flood maps to reflect a world that is changing because of climate change. These are exactly the types of policies that recent legislation - the bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act in particular - are helping enable.

These measures represent hard work that will take time, but people in the region are hurting now. Unfortunately, the Trump campaign is driving an exploitative misinformation campaign that pins suffering on immigration policy, preying on people's vulnerability and anger while providing no relief.

These lies are spreading across North Carolina mountain country like wildfire right now. They are part of a new climate change denial messaging playbook that we do not have time for.

Leaders should be focusing on how the southeast must prepare for storm devastation it's never seen before and what that means - building more resilient power grids, avoiding building in vulnerable locations, providing better risk information to people so they can buy insurance. Virtually nobody in western North Carolina owns flood insurance so they will not get benefits from the policies they've paid into for decades. Instead, the misinformation specialists blame, dodge, and stoke anger. All of this is to avoid talking about the fact that the Gulf of Mexico was an abnormally warm 85 degrees as Helene gathered strength, and those waters are fueling bigger and more devastating storms, according to scientists.

Where is the call (eh-hum, North Carolina Senate delegation) for Congress to pass emergency response funding, which will certainly be needed once members return to Washington in November?

My property is buried two feet deep in toxic sludge, and I have a new creek running through my yard. I'll have no grid power or water for months. Don't tell me that I live in an area that doesn't flood. Don't tell me we can't build homes to higher resilience standards. Don't tell me we can't climate-proof power systems. Don't tell me cowardly lies like recovery money is going to illegal immigrants. We live in a new, harsher environment here in the Southeast. Tell me how we as Americans are going to rise to the challenge of surviving and thriving in it.

It is disappointing that someone running for the highest office in the land has chosen to exploit this natural disaster for political purposes. Efforts such as the bipartisan infrastructure act and new regulations that will help FEMA

develop better flood maps backed by the current White House are only the beginning of the real work needed to harden our infrastructure and ready our communities for what is to come.

Jonathan Phillips, writing in a personal capacity, is Director of Energy Access at Duke University's Nicholas energy institute. He was an advisor to Congress and Obama's administration on climate and foreign policy.

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BRIEFLY

October 16, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Briefly | 257 Words OpenURL Link

US MILITARY: The Pentagon announced Tuesday more than 800 military personnel have seen their service records upgraded to honorable discharges after previously being kicked out of the military under its former "don't ask, don't tell" sexual orientation policy.

LISTERIA OUTBREAK: U.S. Agriculture Department officials have launched an internal investigation into how the agency handled reports of serious problems at a Boar's Head deli meat plant tied to a listeria outbreak that has killed at least 10 people and hospitalized nearly 50 in 19 states since May, U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal said Tuesday.

OHIO VOTING: The Justice Department will send election monitors to Ohio's Portage County, where Republican Sheriff Bruce Zuchowski has been accused of intimidating voters. Last month, he said people with Kamala Harris yard signs should have their addresses written down so immigrants can be sent to live with them if the Democrat wins the presidency.

UNIONS: The number of petitions by workers to have union representation has doubled during President Joe Biden's administration, according to figures released Tuesday by the National Labor Relations Board.

FEMA THREATS: Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell said Tuesday that FEMA personnel have resumed door-todoor visits as part of Hurricane Helene-recovery work in North Carolina, an effort suspended amid reports they could be targeted by militia.

HAITI: The second-in-command of the Kraze Baryè gang — one of Haiti's most powerful gangs — was injured in a shootout with Haitian and Kenyan police in their first major incursion into gang-controlled territory since a U.N.-backed mission began earlier this year, police said Tuesday.

Associated Press

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Nearly 100 in NC may be missing after Helene

October 16, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: ALAN WOOTEN THE CENTER SQUARE | Section: Archives | 360 Words OpenURL Link

In the third week since Hurricane Helene struck the North Carolina mountains, as many as 92 people may still be missing.

Gov. Roy Cooper said Tuesday the number "is not a definitive count because the task for is continuing its work."

"The number will continue to fluctuate as more reports come in and others are resolved," he said.

U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., said last week in an interview with Fox News Radio that in her district in the northwest mountains, "I think there are still many people that we haven't been able to get to because of the washout of the roads."

Recovery efforts have been challenged by arguably the state's worst natural disaster. Tuesday morning, the state reported 579 road that were still closed — three interstate highways, 38 federal highways, 58 state roads, and 480 secondary roads. Early estimates are that about 100 mountain bridges need replacement. Add in layers of both failed infrastructure like 12,000 without power on a Tuesday morning with temperatures in the 30s, water systems still to be rebuilt, and circulating misinformation, and the task is enormous.

"I have directed the Department of Public Safety to coordinate law enforcement assistance for FEMA and other responders who need it to help ensure their safety and security so people can keep getting the help that they desperately need," Cooper said.

Deanne Criswell, administrator of FEMA and a leader among more than 2,000 from the federal government who are in North Carolina, said operational changes have been made. "It's heartbreaking to see words or active acts of hatred toward anyone, let alone federal responders who are here to help people in this critical time," she said.

Helene came ashore in the Big Bend of Florida on Sept. 26 as a Category 4 hurricane. It moved swiftly through Georgia and dissipated over the Appalachian Mountains and Tennessee, dumping more than 30 inches of rain in some places.

An exact number of deaths across multiple states is unclear, though it is believed to be between 206 and 251, about half of them in North Carolina.

Only Hurricanes Katrina in 2005 (1,392 deaths), Audrey in 1957 (416) and Camille in 1969 (256) killed more people since 1950.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

ALAN WOOTEN THE CENTER SQUARE, 'Nearly 100 in NC may be missing after Helene', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C44C6276C6CFD8



HPU helps tennis teams displaced by Helene

October 16, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER | Section: News | 290 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH POINT — The University of North Carolina at Asheville's tennis teams are holding court in High Point through the generosity of High Point University after their campus was devastated by Tropical Storm Helene.

HPU is allowing the men's and women's teams to stay in dormitories, eat meals and use its practice and training resources while the UNC Asheville campus is restored. The UNC Asheville students also are welcome to use other amenities, including the gym and student center.

The 10 women's tennis layers are staying in the HPU Women's Complex while the nine men's players are staying in Greek Village. The teams are expected to remain on campus for at least two weeks, with coaches staying at local hotels, said Lyndsey Ayers, assistant vice president for university relations

"High Point University is grateful to be in a position where we can help UNC Asheville, our neighbors in western North Carolina as well as a fellow school in the Big South Conference," Ayers said. "They're our guests, and we want to make sure they're as comfortable as possible while they're on campus. Housing UNC Asheville's tennis teams has been just one of the many ways that the HPU family has come together to help people in the aftermath of this tragic storm."

UNC Asheville women's coach Lise Gregory said their campus was flooded and the city remains without municipal water service. HPU's gesture will give the teams an opportunity to practice this fall going into the spring season.

"They have done incredible things for us," Gregory said.

Men's coach Matt Frost said HPU has provided the teams with stability amid unexpected and unimaginable destruction in the mountains of western North Carolina.

Gregory said that other colleges and universities are helping other UNC Asheville teams this fall.

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Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER, 'HPU helps tennis teams displaced by Helene', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C454D34F64C3F0



Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 16, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP| Section: News | 400 Words OpenURL Link

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Six blood drives are scheduled in High Point alone before the end of the month, and many more are scheduled throughout Guilford County and in neighboring Davidson and Randolph counties. For a full list, visit redcross.org.

Jtomlin@hpenews.com | 336-888-3579

Want to help?

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

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JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP, 'Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C454D339767EB8



Early voting starts today

October 16, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER | Section: News | 538 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH POINT — Early voting begins this morning for the fall general election, giving people a chance to cast ballots on races ranging from president to county offices about three weeks before Election Day on Nov. 5.

Launched 24 years ago as an experiment with casting ballots, in-person early voting has steadily grown as an option.

"In-person early voting has been the most popular form of voting in recent general elections, and we expect that will continue in 2024," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director for the N.C. State Board of Elections. "In 2020, for example, 65% of North Carolina voters chose in-person early voting as their voting method. And back in the presidential election of 2016, 62% of NC voters chose to vote early."

Here's the early voting schedule for area counties:

The Guilford County Board of Elections will maintain five polling places for the greater High Point area. They are:

Washington Terrace Park, 101 Gordon St.

Deep River Recreation Center, 1529 Skeet Club Road.

The Culler Senior Center at the former Oak Hollow Mall, 921 Eastchester Dr.

Jamestown Town Hall, 301 E. Main St.

Allen Jay Recreation Center, 1073 E. Springfield Road.

Weekday hours for Guilford County early voting sites will be 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. There will be four weekend days for early voting — Saturday, Oct. 19, and Saturday, Oct. 26, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sunday, Oct. 27, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Randolph County will have five sites for early voting. The polling place for the northern part of the county will switch back to the Randolph Community Services Building at 213 Balfour Dr. in Archdale from the Braxton Craven gymnasium in Trinity.

Weekday hours for Randolph County early voting locations will be 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. There will be four weekend days for early voting — Saturday, Oct. 19, Saturday, Oct. 26, and Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday, Oct. 27, from 1 to 5 p.m.

The Davidson County Board of Elections will have six early voting locations. The site for the northern part of the county remains the Thomasville Public Library at 14 Randolph St.

Weekday hours for Davidson County early voting sites will be from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. There will be five weekend days for early voting — Saturday, Oct. 19, Saturday, Oct. 26, and Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday, Oct. 20, and Sunday, Oct. 27, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Voters have to cast a ballot during early voting in the county where they reside.

People who aren't registered to vote can register on the same day and vote during early voting.

Statewide, 419 early voting sites will be used across North Carolina. The N.C. State Elections Board recently implemented changes for voting procedures in about two dozen western North Carolina counties to cope with the disruption of Tropical Storm Helene.

Election offices For more information about voter registration or questions about voting, call your local board of elections office: Guilford County Board of Elections offices in Greensboro at 336-641-3836 or High Point at 336-641-7895. Randolph County, 336-318-6900. Davidson County, 336-242-2190. {related_content_uuid}b50e743b-1dc9-4867-9444-530c76273093{/related_content_uuid}

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Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER, 'Early voting starts today', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C454D357783D60



Animal rescue having 'Alice in Wonderland'-themed party

October 16, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Amanda Astillero Staff Reporter | Section: Archives | 242 Words OpenURL Link

On Oct. 19, Fairytale Farm Animal Rescue and Sanctuary and its Fairytale Farm Adoption Shop will be hosting an "Alice in Wonderland"-themed event from noon to 4 p.m. at Vevi Designs Coffee & Flowers.

Guests can shop the boutique, take pictures with Alice and play with the rabbits. The Queen of Hearts, Mad Hatter, and Alice will be making guest appearances for photo opportunities. Refreshments will be available for purchase.

Sarah Vogan, the program and events manager of Fairytale Farm Adoption Shop, said guests can also get more information on the adoptable rabbits or get details on how to get involved with the non-profit.

"We will have a few of our adoptable, rescued rabbits to meet. It is a perfect time to ask questions about fostering, adopting, and volunteering. It's also a great opportunity to explore what downtown Kernersville has to offer while supporting a local nonprofit," Vogan said.

As part of its educational outreach, Fairytale Farm also hosts events. The local nonprofit hosted the Mad Hare Party in August to provide give people an immersive experience to interact with rescued animals. The rescue group looks forward to hosting more fundraising events for the animals.

In addition to their collaborations with local businesses, Fairytale Farm has been working to bring supplies to Western North Carolina to help animal sanctuaries in areas impacted by Hurricane Helene.

For more information on Fairytale Farm Animal Rescue and Sanctuary, or information about donations to animal sanctuaries in western NC, please visit:

https://www.fairytalefarm.org/

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Amanda Astillero Staff Reporter, 'Animal rescue having 'Alice in Wonderland'-themed party', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C44C628D262660



We've shifted gears to help with recovery efforts

October 16, 2024 | Laurinburg Exchange, The (NC) Author: Mike Causey Guest Commentary | Section: news | 415 Words OpenURL Link

I continue to be shocked and heartbroken by the destruction I've seen from Hurricane Helene in the western part of our state. I hope we will all do what we can to help our fellow North Carolinians who have lost their homes, their possessions and, in some cases, their loved ones to this tragedy.

We at the Department of Insurance are doing what we can to assist those in need. Two of the more visible things we're doing are setting up victim assistance centers and insurance camps. Both are aimed at helping residents who've been impacted by Hurricane Helene. But the two have distinct missions.

Victim assistance centers provide in-person and on-the-ground recovery assistance and insurance-related support to those directly impacted by Hurricane Helene. If a victim does not have insurance, we will provide information about other organizations that may be able to assist residents.

We are setting up victim assistance centers in various communities in western North Carolina. So far, we've established them in North Wilkesboro, Gastonia and Boone. We have others scheduled in Spindale and Arden. We're working on setting up other victim assistance centers.

At insurance camps, the Department of Insurance staff coordinates with insurance companies to set up camps where victims of Hurricane Helene can come in and speak with their insurance company representatives. The insurance company representatives can even help their clients file their claims.

So far, we've established an insurance camp in Banner Elk. Insurance camps are planned for Oct. 23-24 in Arden in Buncombe County. We'll continue to work with insurance companies to set up more insurance camps and find ways of helping victims file their claims.

You can go to our special Hurricane Helene web page, www.ncdoi.gov/helene, to check the schedule for future victim assistance centers and insurance camps. You can find other useful resources on the web page, such as bulletins, press releases and ways you can donate and help those in need.

This special web page includes a link to insurance company phone numbers, information on how to be on the lookout for scammers and fraudsters who may want to rip you off and information on a Special Enrollment Period for Medicare beneficiaries who've been affected by Helene.

We also have consumer specialists ready to assist you. You may reach them by calling 855-408-1212 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

My heart and prayers continue to go out to everyone in western North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helene. We will continue to work with hurricane victims during this recovery period.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Causey Guest Commentary, 'We've shifted gears to help with recovery efforts', *Laurinburg Exchange, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3F458ACBBF720



In-person early voting set to begin Thursday

October 16, 2024 | Laurinburg Exchange, The (NC) Author: Exchange report | Section: news news-main top-stories | 788 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — In-person early voting for the 2024 general election begins Thursday and ends at 3 p.m. Nov. 2 in all 100 counties.

The Laurinburg Exchange in partnership with the League of Women Voters of North Carolina will be providing a Voters Guide in the Sept. 19 print edition. The guide will include information on local and state candidates who completed a questionnaire.

Statewide, 419 early voting sites will open on Thursday across North Carolina.

"In-person early voting has been the most popular method of voting in recent general elections, and we expect that will continue in 2024," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the State Board of Elections.

In 2020, 65% of North Carolina voters chose in-person early voting as their voting method. And in the presidential election of 2016, 62% of NC voters cast their ballot early.

The following are 10 tips for voters as early voting begins:

Early voting locations. Eligible voters may cast a ballot at any early voting site in their county. For sites and hours in all 100 counties, use the Early Voting Sites Search tool. Also see Early Voting Sites for the November 5, 2024 General Election (PDF). The busiest days for early voting are often the first day and the last couple of days.

Candidate info. Sample ballots are available through the Voter Search tool. For information on candidates for the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, see the State Board's Judicial Voter Guide: 2024 General Election. The Guide is also being mailed to all NC households. Election officials do not provide information about candidates for other contests, but some media outlets and advocacy groups do. Many candidates also have websites and social media accounts. Being familiar with your ballot choices will help your voting experience go more smoothly.

Bring Your Photo ID. Voters will be asked to show photo ID when they check in to vote. Most voters will show their driver's license, but many other forms of photo ID will be accepted. Voters who do not have photo ID can meet the photo ID requirement by either (1) filling out a form explaining why they are unable to show ID, or (2) showing their ID at the county board of elections office by 5 p.m. November 14. More information about the photo ID requirement is available at BringItNC.gov.

Free Photo IDs. Any registered voter who needs a photo ID can get one for free from their county board of elections office during the early voting period, which ends on November 2. For details, go to Get a Free Voter Photo ID.

Register to Vote. The regular voter registration deadline was October 11. But any North Carolinian who is eligible to vote may still register and vote during the early voting period. Registrants must provide proof of their residence address, which can be a driver's license or other government document, paycheck, utility bill, or bank statement. For more information, visit Register in Person During Early Voting.

Updating Registration. During early voting, registered voters may update their name or address within the same county, if necessary.

Absentee Ballot Drop-off. Voters who vote by absentee ballot can return it by mail or hand it to an election official at an early voting site in their county. They can also drop it off in person to their county board of elections office.

Voters registered in the 25 counties in the Helene disaster area in Western North Carolina may return their absentee ballot to any early voting site in the state during early voting hours. Ballots will be kept secure and delivered to the voter's county board of elections for processing. For more information on returning absentee-by-mail ballots, see Detailed Instructions to Vote By Mail.

Voting in Person Instead of Absentee. Voters who requested an absentee ballot but have not yet returned it may choose instead to vote in person during the early voting period or on Election Day, November 5. Voters may discard the absentee ballot and do not need to bring it to a voting site.

Peace at the Polls. All voters should respect the rights of others to participate in the election. Election officials are trained to quickly address incidents that might interfere with a voter's ability to cast their ballot. Intimidating any voter is a crime. Voters who feel harassed or intimidated should notify an election official immediately.

Voters in Need of Assistance. Voters in need of assistance may bring an eligible person to help them enter and exit the polling place or to help them complete their ballot according to the voter's instructions. Election officials are also available to help voters. Curbside voting is also available for voters unable to enter the voting site. For more information, visit Curbside Voting.

For more information about early voting, visit Vote Early in Person.

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Exchange report, 'In-person early voting set to begin Thursday', *Laurinburg Exchange, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4053D30C13768



Old Fort's EMS station damaged in Hurricane Helene; McDowell County plans to hire hauler for debris

October 16, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: From Staff Reports | Section: Government Politics | 702 Words OpenURL Link

The EMS station in Old Fort was damaged by flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Helene, according to an update from McDowell County Emergency Management.

During Helene's onslaught on Sept. 27, flash flooding from Curtis Creek affected EMS Station 2 in Old Fort and caused water damage inside the crew living area, emergency management said in a news release Wednesday.

Restoration efforts are ongoing. EMS officials hope to fully restore the station.

Since the storm, the Old Fort Fire Department has housed the EMS crews from the damaged station, emergency management said. A temporary trailer was brought in so McDowell County EMS could continue to work from East Main Street in Old Fort until the EMS station is back in operation.

"We wanted to pass this information on to you as the exterior of the station looks a little different right now," the news release said. "Thanks to everyone for your continued support as we all work together to recover from this disaster."

Debris removal update

Over the next several weeks, contractors hired by McDowell County will begin removing storm debris from public roads in Old Fort, Marion and along state secondary roads in the county, the county said in a release. The cost of debris removal will be covered by state and federal funds, the release said.

Residents can move debris to within 10 feet of the right of way for collection.

Debris should be separated into six categories:

Large appliances

Construction debris

Vegetative debris

Hazardous waste

Electronics

Household waste

A start date for collection has not been set.

Missing people, storm fatalities

As of Wednesday, there is only one active missing person case under investigation. There is one confirmed fatality with one additional death pending investigation, emergency management said.

FEMA help after Hurricane Helene

There are several ways people in McDowell County can get help applying for FEMA assistance.

Marion: The Disaster Recovery Center is open at the McDowell County Senior Center, 100 Spaulding Road, Marion. The center is open daily 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Old Fort: FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams are going door to door in Old Fort to help residents sign up for disaster assistance. FEMA representatives are also available at the Old Fort Post Office from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Pop Up Events: MATCH, West Marion Inc. and Foothills Food Hub are providing assistance with FEMA registrations and application, food stamp applications, Medicaid, emergency home repairs and other types of assistance. Food, water, and other supplies will be available. No appointment needed.

Locations and times of MATCH Events:

Marion Train Depot, 45 Depot St., Marion, on Oct. 16, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

New Horizon Baptist Church, 5878 U.S. 221 North, Marion, on Oct. 17 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.Help with power: Duke representatives are at the McDowell County Senior Center helping people make payment arrangements for bills, getting information regarding the process of getting services restored and answering questions. Representatives will be there Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP)

McDowell County residents impacted by Hurricane Helene can apply for help buying food through the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The program will begin on Friday, Oct. 18, and is available to residents of McDowell County, among other counties.

Online preregistration begins Oct. 15 at epass.nc.gov.

Register by phone by calling 1-844-453-1117.

Register in person Oct. 18-24 at the Corpening Memorial YMCA in Marion, 348 Grace Corpening Drive. Registration is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekends.

Food and water distribution centers

For food, water and supplies, visit a distribution center:

Restoration Church, 2344 Ashworth Road, Marion, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

New Manna Baptist Church, 245 E. Court St., Marion, 10 a.m. to noon and 4-6 p.m.

Centro Unido, 79 Academy St. Marion, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

First Baptist Church of Marion, 99 N. Main St., Marion, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Cherry Springs Baptist Church, 6 Bull Walker Road, Old Fort, Sundays 2-6 p.m. and Wednesdays 4-7 p.m.

First Baptist Church of Old Fort, 203 E. Main St., Old Fort, 4-7 p.m. Monday through Friday

Camp Grier, 985 Camp Grier Road, Old Fort, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.

Tom Johnson Campground, 348 Resistoflex Road, Marion, weekends 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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