

NCHSAA sets sites for fall championships

October 19, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: News | 478 Words OpenURL Link

CHAPEL HILL — The NCHSAA on Thursday announced championship sites for the state's high school sports fall season, which has had some rearranging done due to damage inflicted by Hurricane Helene in the western half of the state.

Football state championship games will be played from Dec. 20-21, with the 2A and 4A contests held at the University of North Carolina's Kenan Stadium and the 1A and 3A state championship games contested at North Carolina State University's Carter-Finley Stadium. Both venues are playing host for the fourth consecutive year, the NCHSAA said. The association also noted that decisions regarding game times will be made once the participating teams are determined.

In boys soccer, state championship games will be played from Nov. 22-23, with all classifications playing at the Mecklenburg County Sportsplex in Matthews. According to the NCHSAA, this marks the first time the venue will host the boys soccer championships after making its debut as a championship site for girls soccer this past spring. The boys title games had been held at MacPherson Stadium at the Bryan Park Soccer Complex in Greensboro following a three-year stay at Cary's Koka Booth Stadium.

For volleyball, all classifications will play on Nov. 2 at North Carolina State University's Reynolds Coliseum. The NCHSAA says the venue is serving in this role for the fourth straight year.

Girls tennis individual tournaments will be held from Oct. 25-26 with 1A at Cary Tennis Center, 2A at Ting Park in Holly Springs, 3A at the Burlington Tennis Center and 4A at the Millbrook Exchange in Raleigh. Dual-team state championships will be played on Nov. 9, with all classifications at Burlington Tennis Center.

For girls golf, state championships will be held from Oct. 28-29 with the 1A/2A match at Sapona Golf Club in Lexington, 3A at Longleaf Golf and Family Club in Southern Pines and 4A at Pinehurst Resort No. 6 in Pinehurst. According to the NCHSAA, Sapona is a new venue for state championships. The 3A match returns to Longleaf after being played at Foxfire Golf Club a season ago.

And the 4A match will be played at its most-frequented venue this millennium, with Pinehurst No. 6 hosting for the ninth time since the event left Finley Golf Course in Chapel Hill in 2000.

All cross country classifications will compete for state championships on Nov. 2 at the Ivey Redmon Complex in Kernersville. The NCHSAA says this is the 12th time in a row the complex has played host and the 15th consecutive time the events have been held in Kernersville.

The NCHSAA's cheerleading invitational will be held on Dec. 7 at the Raleigh Convention Center. The association notes the event has been held there for most of its history, with this season marking the fourth consecutive time after it was held at Southern Alamance High School in Graham for the 2020-21 campaign.

Justin Epley can be reached at jepley@morganton.com or sports@ morganton.com.

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• Citation (aglc Style)



Star relit at Wake Forest as symbol of hope

October 19, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JOHN HINTON WinstonSalem Journal | Section: News | 427 Words OpenURL Link

The Moravian Star at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center was relit early Tuesday night as a symbol of hope for the survivors of the recent flooding in western North Carolina.

Dr. Keith Stirewalt, a chaplain and physician assistant at the medical center, called for a moment of silence.

"This evening, we light our magnificent Moravian Star as a symbol — as a reminder of the healing so desperately needed in our state and in our world," Stirewalt said afterward.

The star with its shining light "reinforces the knowledge through us that light can overcome even the darkest of times," Stirewalt said. "Let this light of hope shine, warming all in its radiance."

Steady rain fell on the handful of people who attended the star-lighting event. The rain forced organizers to cancel a candlelight vigil for the fl ood survivors.

Since 1992, Wake Forest Baptist has celebrated the lighting of the 31-foot Moravian Star atop the medical center to encourage the holiday spirit within Winston-Salem, the organization said.

The star will be lit again in early December to observe Advent, which marks the beginning of the Christmas season.

The star weighs more than 3,000 pounds and has 27 points that range 7 feet to 11 feet in length and weighs from 30 pounds to 60 pounds each, the medical center said in a statement.

Each of the 27 points is illuminated by a 100-watt bulb.

This is the second time in recent years that the medical center officials lit the star in the months before December.

The star was lit in March 2020 to uplift local residents amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Tuesday's night ceremony, Cathleen Wheatley, the president of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, said that lighting the star in mid-October is a special moment.

"We are lighting the Moravian star early — to share a sign of hope, strength and solidarity with our western neighbors, and to show our ongoing support for all impacted by Hurricane Helene," Wheatley said.

Stars hold diff erent meanings for many people, Wheatley said.

"But at the core, they are symbols that give us hope and lead us forward with light," Wheatley said. "They unite us together. Now more than ever, this spirt of unity is needed."

The medical center has accepted more than 135 patients from western North Carolina at its local hospital and clinics, and its AirCare and ambulance teams have transported more than 640 patients to hospitals across the region, Wheatley said.

Earlier Tuesday, Baptist employees donated household items and clothes to the United Way, which will deliver the items to people in western North Carolina, Wheatley said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

JOHN HINTON WinstonSalem Journal, 'Star relit at Wake Forest as symbol of hope', *News Herald, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C502D8AC1CF030



Meat recall expands after listeria found

October 19, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 220 Words OpenURL Link

A nationwide recall of meat and poultry products potentially contaminated with listeria expanded this past week to nearly 12 million pounds and now includes ready-to-eat meals sent to U.S. schools, restaurants and major retailers, federal officials said.

The updated recall includes prepared salads, burritos and other foods sold at stores including Costco, Trader Joe's, Target, Walmart and Kroger. The meat used in those products was processed at a Durant, Oklahoma, manufacturing plant operated by BrucePac, which sells precooked meat and poultry to industrial, foodservice and retail companies.

Routine testing found listeria bacteria in samples of BrucePac chicken, officials with the U.S. Agriculture Department said.

US ECONOMY: Retail sales rose 0.4% from August to September, the Commerce Department said Thursday, up from 0.1% the previous month and the third straight increase. Also on Thursday, the Labor Department reported that applications for jobless claims fell 19,000 to 241,000 for the week of Oct. 12, below the 262,000 analysts were expecting.

HURRICANE AID: The federal government approved nearly \$2 billion in assistance across six states to help people hit hard by hurricanes Helene and Milton, the White House said Wednesday.

DRUGSTORE CLOSURES: Walgreens announced Tuesday that it will close about 1,200 locations over the next three years as the drugstore chain seeks to turn around a struggling U.S. business that contributed to a \$3 billion quarterly loss.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Meat recall expands after listeria found', *News Herald, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C502D8D2D5BB48



FEMA opens centers in McDowell, Caldwell

October 19, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News| 178 Words OpenURL Link

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has opened disaster recovery centers in Caldwell and McDowell counties.

The recovery centers can assist those affected by Hurricane Helene with applying for assistance and finding out what kind of assistance is available.

Residents from disaster areas can meet face to face with FEMA representatives at the sites. Residents can learn about financial assistance that may include money for basic home repairs, personal property losses, childcare, transportation and other needs.

In addition to the 28 areas in the state already eligible for disaster assistance, FEMA announced Wednesday that residents of Iredell County and 11 other North Carolina counties were eligible for assistance with uninsured damages.

The center in Caldwell County is located at 2345 Morganton Blvd., Lenoir, at the Caldwell County Health and Human Services Center.

The center in McDowell County is located at the McDowell County Senior Center, 100 Spaulding Road in Marion.

Both disaster centers are open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For more information about FEMA disaster assistance, visit disasterassistance.gov.

Billy Chapman is a reporter with the Hickory Daily Record. wchapman@hickoryrecord.com

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• Citation (aglc Style)

BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com, 'FEMA opens centers in McDowell, Caldwell', *News Herald, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C502D8C5086FD8



CHAMPIONSHIP 'CATS

October 19, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: Championship Cats | 1120 Words OpenURL Link

H.S. VOLLEYBALL

VALDESE — For the Draughn volleyball team, an 8-0 start to Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference play was enough to secure the league's crown.

What would have been a 14-game conference slate was trimmed to nine after Hurricane Helene ravaged many of the WHC's mountain communities in late September. In fact, the Lady Wildcats played just one more league contest after the storm, and that didn't come until late Thursday at Rosman, 22 days after DHS won in four sets at Owen.

But by the time DHS (14-7, 8-1 WHC) played the Lady Tigers, they already had been awarded the conference championship in former player Triniti Lambert's first season as head coach.

"I told the girls from the start that I'm really big about having a positive attitude," Lambert said. "A positive attitude toward yourself, a positive attitude toward your teammates and a positive outlook on how the game's going to go. So, I told them that no matter who we face, we have to go in there and know that as long as we give it our all, it's going to be what we want it to be.

"So, we played some pretty tough teams this season in conference and nonconference. We took some losses, but the important thing that we talked about after every loss was learning from a loss. If you lose and don't learn from it, then it's an even bigger loss. So, we definitely got some good information from all of our losses."

Another key ingredient in Lambert's recipe for success has simply been to have a good time playing on the court.

"We also talked about having fun," Lambert said. "I think sometimes, you have some really good teams that don't go as far as they should because they stop playing the sport for the love of the game. They play for the sport for glory or for something else. When our girls go out there and have fun together, they're unstoppable."

Draughn's run through the WHC included five wins via sweep, and they all came consecutively at Avery County on Sept. 3, at Mitchell on Sept. 5, versus Madison on Sept. 10, versus Rosman on Sept. 12 and at NCSSM-Morganton on Sept. 17. That streak was bookended by four-set victories versus Owen on Aug. 29 and at Mountain Heritage on Sept. 19, and later followed by another four-set win over the Warlassies in Black Mountain on Sept. 25.

"It was really good," Lambert said. "When we finished that first round (through the WHC) undefeated, we had a little celebration. Then, Owen was our biggest competition and we did get to play them before the hurricane hit. When we played them the second time, we lost the first set and we talked about playing our game, having fun, playing as a team and came out there and they were a completely different team the last three sets.

"Owen was our biggest competition, so to be able to take that and win it in four after a tough first-set loss, I was really impressed with the girls."

Even though Lambert is in her first season coaching the Lady Wildcats, she inherited a team that has been a mainstay in the NCHSAA 1A state playoffs the past few seasons and has some veterans to lean on, namely scoring leaders Lyrical Edwards, a senior, and Bailey Mozeley, a junior. But sophomores Kylie Corpening and Bella Whitson are next up in that category, giving Draughn some youth to tap into, as well.

Senior Allyson Auton; juniors Ava Aldridge, Ella Anthony, Kristyn Cozort, Peyton Brewer and Rebecca Feimster;

sophomores Macy Auton, Shelby Proffitt, Braylen Clontz and Lillian Collins; and freshman Ashlyn Heavner all have been regular contributors throughout the fall, also.

"I'm extremely lucky," Lambert said. "I wasn't just blessed with girls who have talent, because we do have an extreme amount of talent on our varsity and our JV teams, but what I have, more importantly, is girls who want it. Whenever I tell them we're going to have a longer practice or whenever I ask them to work harder, they do. They step up every time I ask them for something.

"You can have skill all day long, but if you're not blessed with a team that wants it, there's not much you can do as a coach."

Waiting next for the Lady Wildcats is a trip to the NCHSAA 1A state playoffs. Seeding will take place on Sunday, followed by the first round on Tuesday, the second round on Thursday, the third round on Oct. 26, the 1A West Regional semifinals on Oct. 29, the 1A West Regional finals on Oct. 31 and the 1A state championship on Nov. 2.

It's just a matter of how far Draughn can go.

"We've kind of looked at the playoffs from the beginning of the year," Lambert said. "Every game is important, but every game, you learn a lesson from. When you get to the playoffs, there is no next time. So, we've been prepping for this for quite a while.

"One of our biggest messages that we just started looking at the end of the season is focusing on our side of the net. Sometimes, our girls get really excited when they're playing a bigger team, especially if they know somebody, and they focus too much on the other side of the net, and it can mess with their heads. So, the biggest thing that we're focusing on for the playoffs, when we're probably going to face some really big teams, is focusing on our side of the net and everyone doing their job on our side of the net and playing as a team on our side of the net and taking care of business."

Lambert, who played volleyball and basketball during her time as a Lady Wildcat, learned plenty from her time as a student-athlete on Lovelady Road to apply to her coaching strategy at her alma mater.

"Something I have learned from the coaching side of things that I didn't realize I was learning as a player is how to lose, how to lose together and how to be in a tough spot and tough it out," Lambert said. "Sports teaches you so many life lessons that you don't realize that you're learning until you're on the other side of things watching somebody learn those lessons.

"I just want to say that overall, I'm extremely proud of these girls. I've had some girls who have really stepped up this season. Girls who have worked very hard to get more playing time, earn a starting spot or just worked hard to be a good teammate, overall. I have an extremely hard-working team, and I have a lot of girls who have stepped up to the plate."

Justin Epley can be reached at jepley@morganton.com or sports@ morganton.com.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor, 'CHAMPIONSHIP 'CATS', *News Herald, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C502D88165C1F0



Column: Planters arriving to beautify downtown

October 19, 2024 | News Reporter, The (Whiteville, NC) Author: Dianne Nobles Ward, Tabor City Promotions Director | Section: Opinion | 585 Words OpenURL Link

Chief Jeff Fowler of the Tabor City Fire Department and volunteers have been stepping up to help those who lost everything due to Hurricane Helene. He has organized getting items that are needed by those hit hard in the western part of North Carolina. The N.C. Yam Festival also donated \$500 worth of supplies, which were taken to Spruce Pine, along with Chief Fowler's donated items. Several loads of supplies have been donated and taken by Chief Fowler since the storm. A big shoutout to Jeff and his staff for their benevolent gestures.

The Town Council was updated last week about a very generous donation of planters to the Town of Tabor City by the Columbus County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. This is part of a tourism and beautification project throughout Columbus County. They will be placed in our downtown and in front of the Tabor City Visitor Center. We thank the chamber and Joan McPherson, president, for this gift. They are being delivered just in time for the N.C. Yam Festival. We look forward to the beauty they will bring to Tabor City. Also, a big thank you to Lex Johnson, Atlantic Corporation, for providing a forklift and driver to help us unload and then place the planters in their permanent spots.

The "Taste of Tabor" is Thursday, Oct. 24. It will be held at Sunnyfield Equestrian Farm, with doors opening at 6 p.m. This year's entertainment will be Tim Elliott and his band. Tim received the Carolina Country Music Male Vocalist of the Year award. Taste of Tabor tickets can be purchased at the Yam Fest Headquarters, located at the Tabor City Library 910-653-3774, or at the Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce office by calling the N.C. Yam Fest number, 910-377-3248. Adults and children 11 years old and up are \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door. Children 7-10 tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. Children 6 and under are free.

The N.C. Yam Festival's big day is always the fourth Saturday in October. The parade and all events for the festival will be held on Saturday, Oct. 26. Applications and lots more information are available on our website at ncyamfestival.com. A schedule of events can be picked up at the Tabor City Library, Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce, and the Tabor City Visitor Center. If you have any questions about the festival, call the Yam Fest Office at 910-377-3248. We are looking forward to a great festival this year and hope you will make plans to attend. As always, our chamber stands ready to serve you. Contact them at 910-377-3012 or tccofc@yahoo.com. Office days and hours are Tuesday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce has rescheduled the Heroes Cruise-In and Parade for Saturday, Nov. 9. The cruise-in will begin at 4 p.m., and the Heroes Parade will start at 7 p.m. The Chamber will have hot dogs and soft drinks available for purchase. For information about this event and to get signed up please contact Cynthia Nelson at the Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce at 910-377-3012.

Tabor City Fire Department's plate fundraiser is Saturday, Nov. 2. BBQ plates come with baked beans, slaw, and bread for \$10 each. Plates will be sold from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Operating hours of the Tabor City Visitor Center are Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. The main number for the Visitor Center is 910-653-9712. That's what's happening in Tabor City this week. Until next week...

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Dianne Nobles Ward, Tabor City Promotions Director, 'Column: Planters arriving to beautify downtown', *News Reporter, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?

p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4E9E39AF759D0>



This is what it will look like on the other side

October 19, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: PAT JOBE Columnist| Section: Archives | 402 Words OpenURL Link

This list will leave somebody out, but we're gonna get as close as we can. Adaville, Bethany, Bostic, Corinth, First Baptist Forest City, Florence, Green River Baptist Association, Harvest House, Jury Dobbins, Mount Lebanon, Mountain View, all these and more are Baptist churches who have stepped forward during the crisis of Helene. Missionary Wesleyan needs credit, too.

The list comes from Town and Country Inn manager Lisa Wilson, who oversees the comings and goings of the Spindale motel with the grace that only spirit can give.

Many of the churches on the list were involved in an effort to feed as many as 1,000 first responders after the storm.

While Chimney Rock and Lake Lure got so much of the damage, the rest of the county has been hit hard and responded nobly.

There has been nothing like it.

Rev. Travis McEntyre, who serves at both Harvest House Baptist and the United Way, was among a cadre of leaders who made the big feed happen. Several of the churches on the list provide Bible study and worship experiences for the approximately 62 children who live currently at Town and Country.

If you think living at Town and Country and surviving a hurricane have nothing to do with each other, please consider that surviving poverty is like surviving a constant hurricane.

And all of it, all of it was and is church folks doing what the Bible says they are supposed to do. When Jesus said "I was hungry and you fed me," he wasn't kidding around.

It is what things will look like on the other side. Everybody will be doing all we can to help and celebrate each other. It's a great way to live.

Wilson referred to them as "classmates from East Rutherford High School, Class of 1982." That list included McEntyre and Jon Appling, who made a generous donation to cover a truckload of supplies that went to the mountains and Kevin Heath who fed many.

Wilson emphasized that none of the work was done to see their names in the paper, but she thought it would be nice.

It is nice. But it is also extraordinary.

Beyond the churches and teacher groups who have already been recognized, there have been hundreds of people who cleared roads as private citizens, checked on neighbors, helped with rescues, shared generators, delivered hot meals, and more.

Wilson said, "Several of our classmates showed up and helped, true caring people, always rising to the occasion." Copyright 2024, The News-Topic, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

PAT JOBE Columnist, 'This is what it will look like on the other side', *News-Topic, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4ED8766154868



HUDSON: Neighbors helping neighbors

October 19, 2024 | North State Journal (NC) Author: Rep. Richard Hudson | Section: Article | 565 Words OpenURL Link

It breaks my heart to see the devastation brought to our beautiful state and all those impacted by Hurricane Helene. The damage is unbelievably catastrophic and communities across western North Carolina face a long road to recovery, but we will be with them every step of the way.

Our North Carolina congressional delegation is working together to ensure these communities have the federal support they need as they recover and rebuild, and my staff and I are in close communication with federal, state and local partners.

Recently, I led Republican members of our delegation in urging the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to utilize the unoccupied Greensboro Influx Care Facility (ICF) to assist in western North Carolina's recovery efforts. After my repeated requests, FEMA told us it will have the facility available, but more needs to be done. Countless North Carolinians are now tragically displaced or without basic supplies because of Hurricane Helene, and they must be taken care of and offered every resource available.

My team and I are continuing to receive briefings from FEMA, HHS, North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) and other agencies on their ongoing efforts to help western North Carolina. While I am extremely frustrated by how slow the federal response has been, I am grateful for the service of the first responders, troops, charitable organizations, and individuals across the state and nation who are stepping up and saving lives. I will keep pushing to get more resources and support on the ground quickly because these communities need help.

In support of these efforts, I joined several of my House Republican colleagues in demanding the Biden-Harris administration remove as many federal barriers as possible to make it easier for communities to rebuild homes and businesses. Western North Carolina and all regions affected by Helene do not have the time to deal with burdensome, unnecessary regulations as they work to rebuild from the ground up. The clock is ticking, and if bureaucratic red tape gets in the way, it will be a serious failure by the federal government.

Additionally, I've been in contact with our hospitals and health care providers to ensure they have all they need to take care of patients. I've been working with HHS to make sure hospitals are open and they have sufficient resources, including medicines and surgical tools, to treat patients throughout the impacted region.

Now is the time for agencies like FEMA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work efficiently and support — not hinder — the recovery effort in North Carolina and across the Southeast. Countless lives have been uprooted, and the last thing they need is government interference.

While this tragedy is a once-in-a-lifetime event, we are reminded that we are Carolina Strong. Back home in our region, I saw firsthand all the people that have stepped up to help collect supplies and send them to our neighbors in western North Carolina. It was truly inspiring to see neighbors helping neighbors, and I'm thankful for all those who are lending a hand.

We continue to pray for everyone affected by this storm. Should you or a family member need assistance, please visit my website for Hurricane Helene resources and information: hudson.house.gov/hurricane-helene-resources.

The road ahead will be incredibly tough, but North Carolinians are resilient.

Richard Hudson represents North Carolina's 9th Congressional District.

The post HUDSON: Neighbors helping neighbors first appeared on The North State Journal.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Rep. Richard Hudson, 'HUDSON: Neighbors helping neighbors', *North State Journal* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5165453B0E4C0



Those taken. NC nears final tally of Helene deaths, county by county - Buncombe County acknowledges substantial overcount in earlier numbers as NC chief medical examiner's office completes official death count

October 19, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Author: Lucas Thomae Casrolina Public Press | Section: news | 860 Words OpenURL Link

North Carolina appears to be nearing a final death count for Tropical Storm Helene, which is welcome news after concerns that the state's official numbers were undercounting or lagging in counting fatalities.

An earlier high death count from Buncombe County had implied that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner was dealing with a backlog of bodies after the storm, but Carolina Public Press has learned that is not the case. The earlier numbers from Buncombe appear to have been a significant overcount.

Representatives from the state Department of Health and Human Services told CPP that each decedent is being tracked and cared for at a morgue in one of two locations — Asheville and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Raleigh.

As of Friday, three decedents tied to the storm are undergoing continued examination in Raleigh. No additional decedents in Asheville were awaiting examination or identification at that time.

As of 10 a.m. on Friday, DHHS has confirmed 95 deaths related to Helene across 21 counties. The three bodies being examined in Raleigh have already been included in the total death count.

Buncombe revises death count

Buncombe County Sheriff Quentin Miller said in a press conference Oct. 3 that the county had 72 deaths and more than 200 people missing after the storm. However, the most recent DHHS data reported only 42 deaths in Buncombe. The sheriff is not disputing that finding.

Although the search for bodies is still ongoing in some parts of Western North Carolina, DHHS media relations director Patsy O'Donnell told CPP that the department does not expect a substantial rise in the official death toll for Buncombe or surrounding areas.

Buncombe officials later walked back their initial reports of 72 deaths and have since referred to the state's numbers.

"We absolutely are saying DHHS is the source on that," Public Information Director Matt Marshall told CPP on Thursday.

Public information officer Christina Esmay later provided further clarification about the discrepancy in an email statement to CPP.

"In the early aftermath of Hurricane Helene all deaths were being classified as storm-related and from Buncombe County. However, as the days progressed BCSO was able to identify who had passed away due to the hurricane, who was in fact from Buncombe County, and who passed away from other causes," Esmay's email read.

"Compounded with the lack of consistent communication, due to widespread outages, the Buncombe County fatality number that was initially provided to Sheriff Miller has decreased."

How NC confirms storm-related deaths

Before being included in the death count, fatalities from Helene are verified by the Office of the Chief Medical examiner, which reports them daily. The OCME investigates all deaths in North Carolina due to injury or violence, as well as natural deaths that are suspicious, unusual or unattended by a medical professional.

In the case of Helene, OCME uses guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to certify that reported deaths were a result of the storm.

The department, which has faced scrutiny in recent years because of long wait times for autopsy reports, has longstanding budget and staffing requests with the N.C. General Assembly. However, DHHS insisted that staffing was not an issue when it came to completing the death count from Helene.

"OCME is sufficiently staffed for this response, and staff are incredibly busy working and focusing their efforts to care for the decedents and to support the families left behind" media relations manager Kelly Haight told CPP in an email.

The department received an assist from a 44-person Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, which is a federal asset comprised of coroners, mortuary officers, medical examiners and other specialists that supports local mortuary services in the event of a disaster.

OCME pulled additional resources from Wake County, the FBI, the State Bureau of Investigation, the N.C. National Guard and agencies in other states to help with fatality search and recovery efforts.

Data provides snapshot of lives lost

North Carolina has confirmed 95 deaths related to Helene across 21 counties.

Buncombe has the most reported deaths with 42, followed by Yancey with 11. A complete list appears at the end of this article.

The exact causes of those deaths include drowning, motor vehicle crashes, wind or tree trauma, landslides, blunt force injuries, lack of basic necessities, missing medical appointments and hypothermia due to environmental exposure. A plurality, 32 of the reported deaths, were due to drowning, followed by landslides with 20 deaths.

The oldest victim was a 91-year-old woman in Yancey County who was recovered from an area affected by flooding and a mudslide. Four of the confirmed victims were children under 10-years-old.

Several of the recovered victims included in the death count do not yet have confirmed ages or causes of deaths, and that information is likely to be updated in the coming days.

Helene death count in NC by county

The following list is alphabetical by county and is based on the Tropical Storm Helene-related death count numbers that DHHS released as of 9 a.m. Friday. Counties with no deaths are not included.

Ashe County, 1

Avery County, 4

Buncombe County, 42

Burke County, 1

Catawba County, 1

Cleveland County, 2
Gaston County, 1
Haywood County, 5
Henderson County, 7
Macon County, 2
Madison County, 4
McDowell County, 1
Mecklenburg County, 2
Mitchell County, 2
Polk County, 1
Rowan County, 1
Rutherford County, 3
Wake County, 1
Watauga County, 2
Yadkin County, 1
Yancey County, 11 © 2024 Champion Media Carolinas.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Lucas Thomae Casrolina Public Press, 'Those taken. NC nears final tally of Helene deaths, county by county - Buncombe County acknowledges substantial overcount in earlier numbers as NC chief medical examiner's office completes official death count', *Robesonian, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C520D971559F98>



Storm Response continues as local, state and federal partners help those affected

October 19, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC)

Section: news | 985 Words

OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — Recovery and relief efforts continue in Western North Carolina as local, state and federal partners work together to help those affected by Hurricane Helene.

"In the aftermath of this storm, we are using every local, state and federal resource available to help western North Carolina," said Governor Roy Cooper. "As we look forward, this support from all levels of government is crucial to rebuilding in a more effective, efficient and resilient way."

This week, Governor Cooper issued an emergency Executive Order authorizing the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security, to increase the amount of weekly unemployment payments available to North Carolinians in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. As a result of this Order, weekly unemployment benefits will increase from a maximum of \$350 a week to a maximum of \$600 a week. To ensure that these workers receive necessary benefits in the wake of Helene, the order will also increase benefits by \$250 a week (up to the \$600 cap) for all eligible workers. This order is tied to the State of Emergency for Hurricane Helene, and will remain in effect until the end of the Emergency or until it is rescinded.

North Carolina National Guard and Military Response

Over 3,600 Soldiers and Airmen are working in Western North Carolina. Joint Task Force- North Carolina, the task force led by the North Carolina National Guard is made up of Soldiers and Airmen from 12 different states, two different XVIII Airborne Corps units from Ft. Liberty, a unit from Ft. Campbell's 101st Airborne Division, and numerous civilian entities are working side-by-side to get the much-needed help to people in Western North Carolina.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is helping to assess water and wastewater plants and dams. Residents can track the status of the public water supply in their area through this website.

FEMA Assistance

Over \$114 million in FEMA Individual Assistance funds have been paid so far to Western North Carolina disaster survivors and approximately 193,000 people have registered for Individual Assistance. Over 5,300 people have been helped through FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance.

Approximately 1,400 FEMA staff are in the state to help with the Western North Carolina relief effort. In addition to search and rescue and providing commodities, they are meeting with disaster survivors in shelters and neighborhoods to provide rapid access to relief resources. They can be identified by their FEMA logo apparel and federal government identification.

North Carolinians can apply for Individual Assistance by calling 1-800-621-3362 from 7am to 11pm daily or by visiting www.disasterassistance.gov, or by downloading the FEMA app. FEMA may be able to help with serious needs, displacement, temporary lodging, basic home repair costs, personal property loss or other disaster-caused needs.

Help from Other States

More than 1,600 responders from 39 state and local agencies have performed 146 missions supporting the response and recovery efforts through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). This includes

public health nurses, emergency management teams supporting local governments, veterinarians, teams with search dogs and more.

Beware of Misinformation

North Carolina Emergency Management and local officials are cautioning the public about false Helene reports and misinformation being shared on social media. NCEM has launched a fact versus rumor response webpage to provide factual information in the wake of this storm. FEMA also has a rumor response webpage.

Efforts continue to provide food, water and basic necessities to residents in affected communities, using both ground resources and air drops from the NC National Guard. Food, water and commodity points of distribution are open throughout Western North Carolina. For information on these sites in your community, visit your local emergency management and local government social media and websites or visit ncdps.gov/Helene.

Storm Damage Cleanup

If your home has damages and you need assistance with clean up, please call Crisis Cleanup for access to volunteer organizations that can assist you at 844-965-1386.

Power Outages

Across Western North Carolina, approximately 7,500 customers remain without power, down from a peak of more than 1 million. Overall power outage numbers will fluctuate up and down as power crews temporarily take circuits or substations offline to make repairs and restore additional customers.

Road Closures

Some roads are closed because they are too damaged and dangerous to travel. Other roads still need to be reserved for essential traffic like utility vehicles, construction equipment and supply trucks. However, some parts of the area are open and ready to welcome visitors which is critical for the revival of Western North Carolina's economy. If you are considering a visit to the area, consult DriveNC.gov for open roads and reach out to the community and businesses you want to visit to see if they are welcoming visitors back yet.

NCDOT currently has approximately 2,000 employees and 900 pieces of equipment working on over 7,200 damaged road sites.

Fatalities

Ninety-five storm-related deaths have been confirmed in North Carolina by the Office of Chief Medical Examiner. This number is expected to rise over the coming days. The North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will continue to confirm numbers twice daily. If you have an emergency or believe that someone is in danger, please call 911.

Volunteers and Donations

If you would like to donate to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund, visit nc.gov/donate. Donations will help to support local nonprofits working on the ground.

For information on volunteer opportunities, please visit nc.gov/volunteernc.

Additional Assistance

There is no right or wrong way to feel in response to the trauma of a hurricane. If you have been impacted by the storm and need someone to talk to, call or text the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990. Help is also

available to anyone, anytime in English or Spanish through a call, text or chat to 988. Learn more at 988Lifeline.org.

If you are seeking a representative from the North Carolina Joint Information Center, please email ncempio@ncdps.gov or call 919-825-2599.

For general information, access to resources, or answers to frequently asked questions, please visit ncdps.gov/helene.

If you are seeking information on resources for recovery help for a resident impacted from the storm, please email IArecovery@ncdps.gov.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

'Storm Response continues as local, state and federal partners help those affected', *Robesonian, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C51E6804BF4948



Gene Lyons: Forecast: Extreme conspiracy theories with heavy lies

October 19, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 781 Words OpenURL Link

Chances are quite good that yet another major hurricane will come ashore in the United States sometime before the 2024 presidential election is decided, and that it will afflict mainly Republican areas of the country. And if that should happen, large parts of the country will go even crazier than they already are.

And that is seriously crazy. Barking mad.

No particular expertise is required to see how these things could happen. We're still in the midst of hurricane season, after all, and 2024 has been a particularly active one so far. Also, if you glance at a map, Southern coastal regions are where Republicans live. Damn few Democratic strongholds in the gulf states. Houston, New Orleans — that's about it. You'd think even a dunce like Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene could figure that out.

But no, the Georgia Republican thinks it's all a big conspiracy. She professes to believe that "they" control the weather. "They" presumably being the same mysterious cabal responsible for "Jewish space lasers" that caused massive wildfires in California a while back.

What's more, she has lots of company. Writing in The Atlantic, Charlie Warzel documented how crackpot conspiracy theories swept the internet. Infowars' Alex Jones alleged that hurricanes Helene and Milton were "weather weapons" deployed against American patriots by the U.S. government, i.e. the Biden administration.

"Scrolling through these platforms," Warzel wrote, "watching them fill with false information, harebrained theories, and doctored images — all while panicked residents boarded up their houses, struggled to evacuate, and prayed that their worldly possessions wouldn't be obliterated overnight — offered a portrait of American discourse almost too bleak to reckon with head-on."

Remember when Vice President Al Gore used to carry on about "the information superhighway" that was going to usher in a new age of enlightenment? Well, that's not what happened.

Instead of roadside shacks at the edge of town housing palm readers, tarot card mavens, horoscope experts and other solitary purveyors of mystical mumbo jumbo and superstition, we now have websites peddling delusional nonsense to thousands. Sheer folly has gotten organized.

And the politicians are not far behind. Donald Trump, JD Vance and Fox News have all peddled the lie that FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) is offering only one-time payments of \$750 to homeowners who have lost their property due to the hurricanes, and that the money must be repaid.

None of that is true. Republican governors in the affected states have been unanimous in praising the federal response.

Elon Musk, owner of X, claimed — utterly without evidence, because it's absolutely false — that FEMA was "actively blocking shipments and seizing goods and services locally and locking them away ... It's very real and scary how much they have taken control to stop people helping."

Musk's post has been read a reported 40 million times.

If the United States is going to deport immigrants, maybe we should ship him back to South Africa.

Anyway, as a consequence of Musk's and Trump's lies, crazy people have been harassing and threatening to shoot FEMA workers trying to deliver lifesaving supplies to hurricane victims. Other idiots are threatening to kill TV meteorologists for debunking "weaponized weather" fables.

It's enough to make a newspaper columnist feel superfluous. I used to get death threats all the time. Haven't had one for months now. Perhaps I should become an "influencer."

Anyway, hurricane or no hurricane, when and by whom will the 2024 election be decided? It's not necessary to use your Marjorie Taylor Greene Magic Decoder Ring(TM) to understand that the signs and portents aren't good. Is there any chance that candidate Trump would concede defeat? I would say that there is no chance at all.

The man has been visibly "decompensating," as psychologists say, for months now. During his increasingly chaotic "rallies," Trump can scarcely keep a coherent thought in his head. It's all sharks, Hannibal Lecter and name-calling Kamala Harris now. At an appearance near Philadelphia the other night, he quit talking and stood listening to recorded music for fully 40 minutes. Just stood there.

That's a long damn time. Members of the Trump Cult pretended it was a genius stroke, because that's what cults do. There is pretty much no behavior so bizarre that it can't be rationalized as an expression of sheer genius. Adepts surrender to reality quietly, and one at a time. Meanwhile, Trump is much further gone than Joe Biden has been at his most confused.

That doesn't mean Trump can't try to incite an insurrection if he loses come Nov. 5. But it surely means the effort would fail.

But what do I know? I'm one of those "radical left lunatics" the great man blames for betraying America. An elitist. A guy who believes what the National Weather Service tells him.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Gene Lyons: Forecast: Extreme conspiracy theories with heavy lies', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EA51504D4760>



Ashlie Miller: Unanswered questions

like a weaned child is my soul within me.

October 19, 2024 Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Post Lifestyles Section: Lifestyle 522 Words OpenURL Link
Ashlie Miller: Unanswered questions
Published 12:00 am Saturday, October 19, 2024
By Post Lifestyles
By Ashlie Miller
How do you make sense of the last 4+ years? Or let's narrow it down to just 2024? Do you have more recent events in mind? Maybe you have been on edge with the political climate. Most of us are still very sensitive after friends and family have been devastated by Hurricane Helene. You may not even need to look further than your own address to find yourself asking God: "What are You up to? Why are you allowing? Why are you not intervening in?"
The psalmist King David had many opportunities to ask such questions. We read lengthy psalms of his ponderings, but nestled within the book of Psalms is a concise psalm that beautifully reveals a man who is calm in extreme realities for which he does not have answers.
Psalm 131, verse 1:
O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
As we look at things happening in our lives, it is tempting to expect answers to our questions about complicated things. It can be all-consuming. We can become anxious or hardened when we cannot comprehend or find access to answers. After all, at least we seem to get a story or explanation — even if it is misinformation — for almost everything. Google or social media seem to have at least molded our minds in that way. But David can live with the unreconciled mysteries. He knows fully well that wrestling with some questions could still leave him wanting or unable to grasp peace and understanding.
Verse 2:
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;

David is poised with a presence of peace. How? He has learned to fully trust God, even when no answers are available or accessible for an undisclosed reason. He chooses to trust God — that reveals strength. It is not a lethargic, uneducated, unrefined blind trust. It is a response built on experience and relationship. Like a weaned

child who has matured to the point of self-soothing and patience in the presence of his mother, David rests in what he knows is true about God's love, care, and nature through his relationship with Him. That is all he needs.

O Israel, hope in the Lord

from this time forth and forevermore.

This may seem like a haphazard add-on to a psalm to the modern reader, but it is more than that. The king set the tone for the kingdom. Israel often lived in a holding pattern — a place of waiting and little explanation. Here, as in other psalms, David encourages the people of Israel to wait patiently and expectantly in the Lord because He has repeatedly proved Himself. While we wrestle with life's hard questions and the mysteries of God, can we apply the psalmist's lessons on His sovereignty?

Ashlie Miller and her husband, Chad, raise their family in Concord.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Post Lifestyles, 'Ashlie Miller: Unanswered questions', *Salisbury Post* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4D81B66D4A898



Helene shows value of fiscal restraint

October 19, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: JOHN HOOD | Section: Archives | 649 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH

The devastation wreaked on North Carolina by Hurricane Helene will take weeks to assess, months to clear out, and years to repair or rebuild. Second only to the value of the lives lost will be the exorbitant fiscal and economic costs of our recovery.

Our state government is reasonably well-prepared to shoulder its share. Our federal government is not.

Last week, the General Assembly authorized an initial \$273 million withdrawal from North Carolina's rainy-day fund to cover initial recovery expenses and changes in elections administration. Gov. Roy Cooper signed the bill.

That's only the first tranche of state expenditure. Lawmakers will return to the capital more than once before year's end, then commence regular session in early 2025. They'll appropriate much more money for various reconstruction efforts, from academic campuses and government offices to highways, bridges, water systems, and other infrastructure.

North Carolina has lots of money set aside. The rainy-day fund itself still contains about \$4.5 billion. Other accounts and our unreserved credit balance contain billions more. I don't mean to minimize the storm's staggering costs. I'm just pointing out that the General Assembly won't have to cut other programs, raise taxes, or borrow money to fulfill its responsibilities.

Congress is another story. Over the past couple of decades, presidents and lawmakers of both parties have run massive federal deficits and made exorbitant spending promises that far exceed any reasonable expectation of revenues at economically sustainable tax rates.

In a recent Reason magazine piece, Veronique de Rugy of the Mercatus Center pointed out that the federal debt now exceeds \$28 trillion — \$2 trillion more than last year and \$6 trillion more than when the Biden-Harris team entered the White House.

"This debt stands at 100% of America's gross domestic product, which, other than a one-year exception at the end of World War II, is the highest ratio we've ever had," she wrote. "Unlike in 1946, today's debt is only going to grow. Indeed, debt-to-GDP took a nearly 30-year dive to reach 23% in 1974. Today, federal debt is projected — under the rosiest scenarios — to rise to 166% in 30 years."

In other words, every dollar Congress authorizes and the executive branch distributes for hurricane relief in North Carolina is, in effect, a borrowed dollar. It represents a debt to be paid in the future, not a gift.

Of course, North Carolinians aren't the only ones who must pay each dollar back (with interest). Decades ago, our politicians essentially nationalized the provision of relief and reconstruction after natural disasters. I don't think that was wise. States and localities ought to make their own preparations and save their own money to handle future emergencies.

But at this point, I'm not sure how to extricate ourselves from this process. If Congress passed a law next year to slash federal disaster relief and then Kansas gets clobbered by tornados, their taxpayers could reasonably complain that they helped clean up after North Carolina's disaster and then didn't get their "turn" at withdrawing funds for their own.

The next best thing, then, is for future Congresses and presidents to take their budgeting responsibilities more seriously. As I've pointed out many times, the opportunity to bring federal revenues and expenditures closer to alignment without painful adjustment has long since passed. The gap is too large.

It can't be substantially closed by eliminating "waste, fraud, and abuse." Nor can it be substantially closed by "tax hikes on the wealthy." Contrary to popular misconception, the United States already has one of the most steeply progressive tax codes in the developed world. According to the left-wing Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the bottom quintile of American taxpayers pay an average of 17% of their income in federal, state, and local taxes. The middle quintile pays 26%. The wealthiest 1% pay 35%.

Washington's fiscal recklessness should be one of the top voting issues this year. Alas, it isn't. But ignoring the problem won't make it go away.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

JOHN HOOD, 'Helene shows value of fiscal restraint', *Sanford Herald, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EA602BA7EF10



Meteorologists face death threats after recent storms

October 19, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Mary Boyte; USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA Section: News | 440 Words Page: A10 OpenURL Link

In the wake of recent destruction from Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton, conspiracy theories regarding human-made weather have floated around social media leading to many meteorologists receiving backlash and even death threats.

Among other conspiracy theories, including widely-spread falsehoods regarding Federal Emergency Management Agency relief efforts, many have taken to social media to spread theories that the recent hurricanes were manmade and that the U.S. government played a part in their creation or manipulation.

Many meteorologists throughout the nation have reported receiving hate comments and death threats from citizens who believe the weather forecasters are intentionally spreading lies or aiding the government in a mass cover-up.

Katie Nickolaou, meteorologist for WLNS news in Lansing, Michigan, has received several threatening comments after posting social media videos debunking the conspiracy theories.

On Oct. 8, Nickolaou posted a screenshot of one of these social media interactions on X. The caption accompanying the screenshot says. "Murdering meteorologists won't stop hurricanes. I can't believe I just had to type that." The screen shot shows a comment on one of Nickolaou's posts in which she says hurricanes are not man-made. The comment says, "Stop the breathing of those that made (the hurricanes) and their affiliates."

Greenville-based meteorologist Chris Justus posted on social media Thursday responding to messages about human-controlled weather. Justus, chief meteorologist with WYFF News, was one of several meteorologists reporting on the front lines during Helene.

"I've been asked if the government or mankind in general is controlling the weather," the post says. "Let me clarify; I firmly believe God Almighty is the ONLY one in control. ... Personally, I believe we are an imperfect world and unfortunately we also have an imperfect atmosphere that causes radical changes in our environment that results in severe weather."

Justus goes on to say although his job as a meteorologist is rooted in scientific explanation, his Christian faith leads him to believe something larger is also at play.

Most meteorologists agree weather events are natural and do not involve any kind of human manipulation.

Politicians have added to the growing mistrust of meteorologists. In an X post, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene said, "Yes they can control the weather. It's ridiculous for anyone to lie and say it can't be done."

President Joe Biden called the theories a "reckless and irresponsible and relentless promotion of disinformation."

Republican North Carolina Rep. Chuck Edwards released a statement responding to what he called "outrageous rumors that have circulated online."

"Nobody can control the weather ... Current geoengineering technology ... cannot be used to create or manipulate hurricanes," Edwards said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Boyte, USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA, 'Meteorologists face death threats after recent storms', *Star, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 A10 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4DFE114E292A8



Newton writer: In aftermath of Helene, Hickory was hub of hope

October 19, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Tammy Wilson | Section: Column | 810 Words OpenURL Link

I never lost power during Hurricane Helene.

When friends and family called me about the hurricane, I had to tell them I was extremely lucky.

The storm was bad. A lot of North Carolinians lost family and friends, their home, their cherished belongings, their pets. Some saw their real estate literally washed away.

But I can't claim any of those stories.

I've tried to imagine the terror of seeing a wall of water crashing toward me, sweeping away my home and neighbors, pets, virtually everything I own.

Being a near miss — or even a far miss — leaves its mark. Last week a Facebooker from Louisiana said she understood. She lived through Katrina, and could relate to the relief of being spared, but, at the same time, the overwhelming feeling of anxiety, numbness and profound sadness.

That's how it is with trauma. It takes different forms, and in one way or another, we've all been traumatized by being so close to destruction. In the end, I don't know why we were spared and why the folks west of here were not.

Perhaps TV's Mister Rogers responded best when he explained disasters in a way kids could understand. When there are scary things in the news, he said, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

In the wake of Helene, ordinary people dropped everything to come to North Carolina's rescue. Men and women, young and old, helped turn Hickory into a hub of hope. Private pilots, many of them ex-military, arrived with their helicopters to make air drops to hard-hit areas. Community members rallied to organize places to bring necessary supplies and cash to support the effort.

On my way to the collection point in the parking lot of Appalachian State University in Hickory, I found myself behind a horse trailer and a flatbed. On the flatbed was a generator and power tools. In the trailer were cases of bottled water, packages of diapers, toilet paper and more. Obviously, he was on a relief mission. Had I not been caught by a traffic light I would have given the driver a thumbs up.

Surely Helene will be one of those calamities by which we mark time.

Two days after Helene's wretched visit, I opened my T-shirt drawer to see, neatly folded, my shirt from Lake Lure. I remember the day I bought it. Cousin Renee was visiting from Illinois and wanted to see where "The Last of the Mohicans" was filmed. She's a Daniel Day-Lewis fan and wanted to tour the famous waterfall.

We enjoyed a sandwich lunch, poked around the Lake Lure Inn, and browsed the gift shop.

Later, we took the boat ride of the lake with its narration of how the lake was formed in Hickory Nut Gorge into a place where "summer" is a verb. The Morse family, who founded Carolina Mountain Power Company, paid to build a dam on the Broad River to create the lake back in 1927.

Our boat captain indulged us in movie lore, too, including spots used to shoot "Dirty Dancing," the film that made stars of Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey. We drifted past Firefly Cove and the stone steps where Jennifer Grey

practiced her dance steps in cutoff shorts.

It's not that I have spent that much time at Lake Lure, but I've made enough visits to envy those who have. It had cottagey surroundings, stunning views, and laid-back ambiance. It was a place lost in time, a poignant reminder of a time and place that's been erased.

Lake Lure sprouted up as a tourist attraction with a striped awning vibe. The affluent built lakeside cottages with screened porches and walls of windows. They pondered the looking glass water and lore about the outline of the mountain ridge that looks like a sleeping lady.

My first visit to Lake Lure was about 30 years ago, when I attended a conference at the Inn. I remember imagining how the hotel would have appeared during the Gatsby era. In fact, Gatsby's creator, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and wife Zelda stayed there back in the day.

A recent attraction was the Flowering Bridge. When it became known that the state would decommission the 1925 bridge, a group of citizens with green thumbs urged the structure to be saved and used as a garden space. They called it the Flowering Bridge. They say it attracted as many as 18,000 visitors a year.

Two years ago, the garden was expanded for pet owners and their furry friends to snatch a chewable from the Doggie Stick Library and enjoy a drink of water. Pet owners, wracked in grief, would visit the Rainbow Bridge, and pay tribute to departed pets, placing collars on the bannisters. People came from far and wide to memorialize pets that had passed on.

No one could imagine that a monster storm could churn its way northward and demolish the Flower Bridge, much less Lake Lure itself.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Tammy Wilson, 'Newton writer: In aftermath of Helene, Hickory was hub of hope', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EE7DEA58E1A0



Josh Stein makes stop in Hickory

October 19, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC)

Author: BILLY CHAPMAN AND XAVIER MARTIN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com xmartin@hickoryrecord.com | Section: Mapping | 509 Words OpenURL Link

Democratic candidate for governor and current North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein made a campaign stop at Morning Star First Baptist Church in Hickory on Tuesday afternoon.

"I'm running for governor because I love our home state and I believe in its promise," Stein said to a room of about 80 people. "If we work hard, where you come from should never limit how far you can go."

Stein said he was on his way to Boone and surrounding counties to help with recovery efforts from damage caused by Hurricane Helene.

Stein laid out his platform at the event, saying teacher pay, protecting reproductive rights, public safety and protection of personal freedoms were among his top priorities.

"Governing is not that complicated, it's just not," Stein said. "It's about putting people first and then fighting for them."

Stein cited his record as attorney general as among the reasons he is qualified to serve as governor.

Stein said he reduced the backlog of untested rape test kits and helped secure \$50 billion from opioid companies by leading a bipartisan coalition of state attorney generals.

North Carolina is expected to receive over \$1 billion as part of settlements against pharmaceutical companies associated with manufacturing and distributing opioids.

Stein also addressed some of the controversies surrounding his Republican opponent, current Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson.

"The vision of our opponent in this race, the lieutenant governor, is one of division, violence and hate," Stein said.

Stein cited a CNN story that reported Robinson made controversial and offensive comments in an online forum in the early 2010s.

Robinson has denied the allegations in the CNN story. Earlier Tuesday, Robinson announced he was suing CNN for defamation.

"There's not a person in this room who needed that CNN story to know that that man was wholly unfit to be governor," Stein said to applause and cheering.

Supporters who showed up for the event echoed Stein's statements about top priorities.

Marcella McCombs, a military veteran, said protection of women's reproductive rights was a top issue for her.

"Personally, I don't think you should ever be able to tell somebody what to do with their body," McCombs said.

"Keep your guns, we'll keep our uterus and we'll be all right. ... I fought for people's rights and let's keep them. When people start taking people's rights, it's awful."

Doug Auer was direct with his answer on why he was voting for Stein.

"The other guy is just a disgusting human being," Auer said. "He's (Stein) a man of high integrity, understands government, believes in government. He's right on the issues."

Aubrey Gregory had another reason for voting for Stein.

"I'm voting so my two daughters know I did everything I could to preserve their rights," Gregory said.

Stein concluded the campaign event with a message of fighting for the future of North Carolina.

"The stakes could not be higher. The choice could not be clearer," Stein said. "Two competing visions: ours (is) positive, forward-looking, welcoming. It's about fighting for every person, creating opportunity for every person, and tapping the potential of every person so that together we can build a brighter, better future for every one of us."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

BILLY CHAPMAN AND XAVIER MARTIN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com xmartin@hickoryrecord.com, 'Josh Stein makes stop in Hickory', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EE7E72028D20>



Meat recall expands after listeria found

October 19, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Mapping | 220 Words OpenURL Link

A nationwide recall of meat and poultry products potentially contaminated with listeria expanded this past week to nearly 12 million pounds and now includes ready-to-eat meals sent to U.S. schools, restaurants and major retailers, federal officials said.

The updated recall includes prepared salads, burritos and other foods sold at stores including Costco, Trader Joe's, Target, Walmart and Kroger. The meat used in those products was processed at a Durant, Oklahoma, manufacturing plant operated by BrucePac, which sells precooked meat and poultry to industrial, foodservice and retail companies.

Routine testing found listeria bacteria in samples of BrucePac chicken, officials with the U.S. Agriculture Department said.

US ECONOMY: Retail sales rose 0.4% from August to September, the Commerce Department said Thursday, up from 0.1% the previous month and the third straight increase. Also on Thursday, the Labor Department reported that applications for jobless claims fell 19,000 to 241,000 for the week of Oct. 12, below the 262,000 analysts were expecting.

HURRICANE AID: The federal government approved nearly \$2 billion in assistance across six states to help people hit hard by hurricanes Helene and Milton, the White House said Wednesday.

DRUGSTORE CLOSURES: Walgreens announced Tuesday that it will close about 1,200 locations over the next three years as the drugstore chain seeks to turn around a struggling U.S. business that contributed to a \$3 billion quarterly loss.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Meat recall expands after listeria found', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EE7E16FC1FF0



What's next for Old Fort?

October 19, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: ERIC MILLSAPS emillsaps@hickoryrecord.com| Section: Mapping | 356 Words OpenURL Link

When will Old Fort's sewer system be repaired?

Old Fort Mayor Pam Snypes said Wednesday the answer lies in three more questions:

How will the system be repaired?

When can it be repaired?

What will it cost to repair the system?

Snypes said the sewer system was badly damaged by the floodwaters brought on by the rains of Hurricane Helene.

Snypes was in her Old Fort office on Wednesday working with officials from across the state, including Matt Zapp, the town manager of Emerald Isle, a North Carolina coastal town that has recovered from several hurricanes.

Zapp said the storm flooded the Old Fort sewer plant, with as much as 15 feet of water inside the plant. The plant is currently operating on a standby generator, and many sewer lines were damaged in the storm, Zapp said.

He added that Old Fort does not yet have a count on the number of water and sewer lines damaged by flooding.

Snypes noted 95% of water customers have service restored and the boil advisory for the town should end soon.

What will it cost to repair water and sewer issues in Old Fort? Zapp said the town's total annual budget is less than \$2 million. He said repairs could end up being \$10 million or more.

What about the debris?

Jeff Parker owns a number of buildings in Old Fort. His frustration was showing Wednesday as workers repaired the building that houses the Purrfectly Pampered Pet Spa.

"It makes no sense that so much debris is still sitting around," he said when asked about what needs to happen next in Old Fort. He said crews had hauled off 60 loads of debris but there was still much to be done.

He called the current situation a nightmare.

Mayor Snypes said Old Fort is working with McDowell County and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials on the cleanup. Zapp said help is here and the next step is to decide where the material will go.

He said that having the Corps of Engineers on hand to help is "unprecedented."

Snypes said no timeline has been finalized for the removal of debris. Zapp said the town lost a trash truck and other vehicles in the flooding.

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ERIC MILLSAPS emillsaps@hickoryrecord.com, 'What's next for Old Fort?', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 19 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EE7E9A766230



Grocery money, well testing available for those impacted by Helene

October 19, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Deirdra Funcheon; Hendersonville Times-News | Section: News | 600 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

People living in 25 Western North Carolina counties — including Henderson, Polk and Transylvania — that were affected by Tropical Storm Helene can apply to receive a one-time benefit to help buy food through the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP).

Up to \$120 million is available though the program, which the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services estimates will help approximately 150,000 families. NCDHHS received federal approval to begin phase one of the program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

People must apply by Oct. 24. Applicants will be notified of their award within three days of completing the application, and receive funds on an EBT card to help buy food. The cards will be sent via overnight mail or made available for pickup at a D-SNAP location. The benefits will be good for up to nine months. The exact amount an applicant will receive is based on factors including household size, income and disaster losses.

To be eligible, residents must have suffered losses related to the storm, including damage to property and loss of income. Applicants must also have proof of identity and proof of residency, and not be already receiving benefits through Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). People receiving FNS can get extra help to buy food but do not need to fill out a D-SNAP application.

Administrations warn that income limits may apply and giving fraudulent information to receive benefits is punishable by law.

To apply, pre-register online today at https://epass.nc.gov/. Once that step is completed, applicants will be issued a confirmation number and will need to call 1-844-453-1117 between Oct. 18 and Oct. 24 to complete the interview part of the application.

Alternately, beginning Oct. 18 - 24, eligible households can apply by phone or in person. The D-SNAP Virtual Call Center can be reached at 1-844-453-1117 on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. or weekends between 9 a.m. and noon. Because of expected high call volumes, it is suggested that people applying via phone call on an assigned day based on their last name:

10/18: A-G

10/19: H-M

10/20: N-S

10/21: T-Z

10/22: Open to all

10/23: Open to all

10/24: Open to all

Applications can also be filed in person at the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center, 2111 Asheville Hwy., Hendersonville,

on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on the weekend from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Well water sampling available for Henderson County residents

The Henderson County Department of Public Health will provide well water sampling for free to residents whose wells were flooded or damaged from Tropical Storm Helene. Environmental Health staff will test solely to determine the presence of coliform bacteria and E. coli in existing private drinking water wells that have been disinfected.

Testing is only needed on wells that flooded, or if there is structural damage. Such wells should be disinfected and tested before use. Before requesting the sampling, please make sure power has been restored, the well has been disinfected and the property and wellhead are accessible.

To request well water collection, visit www.hendersoncountync.gov/health or call the Environmental Health office at 828-694-6060.

More information on Henderson County's storm response is available at www.hendersoncountync.gov/helene.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Deirdra Funcheon, Hendersonville Times-News, 'Grocery money, well testing available for those impacted by Helene', *Times-News, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 A3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4E030B35C50C0>



Early voting begins in Henderson County

October 19, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)
Author: Deirdra Funcheon; Hendersonville Times-News | Section: News | 545 Words
Page: A1
OpenURL Link

Early voting has begun at the Henderson County Board of Elections office at 75 E. Central St. in Hendersonville. It is the only early voting site in the county.

At a county commission meeting this week, Clay Eddleman, chairman of Henderson County's Board of Elections, gave an update on preparations for the general election. He said the early voting site will be set up with 16 voter check-in stations, 58 ExpressVote voting machines and ample parking.

Curbside voting is available for people who want to drive up and let volunteers shuttle their votes inside.

"And I will tell you, we have a bunch of 65-year-old retirees who want to drive these golf carts," Eddleman quipped.
"They are vying for the position."

Early voting will be available weekdays until Friday, Nov. 1 and Saturdays through Nov. 2.

Alternately, Eddleman said, "Anyone can pick up an absentee ballot, and if they had to leave town [due to Tropical Storm Helene], can deliver it by 7:30 on election day to any election official in the state of North Carolina—that is, any precinct in the state of North Carolina, any board of elections in North Carolina, and the state board itself in Raleigh," he said. "Those ballots will be delivered back to us securely by a runner."

"Multipartisan assistance teams" of one Democrat and one Republican have been authorized to help people in nursing homes and shelters vote by absentee ballot, Eddleman said. Such voters must request an absentee ballot, then election staff will check files to make sure the applicant is entitled to vote and return the next day with an absentee ballot for them. Elections personnel will be at libraries in Edneyville, Fletcher and Etowah and the Gerton Fire Department later this month to assist with that process.

People may also vote in person on Election Day, Nov. 5. Voting locations remain unchanged for 31 of 35 Henderson County precincts, but four will move to alternate locations due to damage from Tropical Storm Helene. Voters can look up their precinct locations and sample ballots on the state's Board of Elections website. The Board of Elections office will not serve as a precinct location on Election Day.

Eddleman said there are about 500 voters in the Gerton/Bat Cave area who may have trouble accessing polls due to a washed-out bridge and severely damaged roads. To accommodate them, "The Gerton Fire Department has bent over backwards to allow us to use that as a precinct site," for about 400 voters, he said, while the other 100 were zoned to vote at a different precinct.

Commissioner William Lapsley expressed concern that residents would not be able to travel to those precincts at all because the road damage was so bad. He suggested that a fire truck or emergency vehicle be enlisted to help.

"It's an impossible situation down there.... You're not going to be able to get them on the phone. They're going to have no power."

Eddleman indicated he would welcome help enabling those residents to vote.

Commission chair Rebecca McCall said, "We can have signs put up that there will be voting available at the fire department the day of election... and I'm sure we can get some people down there to help go door to door and

collect these people and bring them to the precincts to vote."

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Deirdra Funcheon, Hendersonville Times-News, 'Early voting begins in Henderson County', *Times-News, The* (online), 19 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4E030D34D48C0