

#### 2 FAMILIES DISPLACED

October 9, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC)

Author: SARAH JOHNSON AND BILLY CHAPMAN sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com wchapman@hickoryrecord.com | Section: Mapping | 886 Words OpenURL Link

#### HURRICANE HELENE UPDATE

One death attributed to Hurricane Helene was reported in Catawba County and one was reported in Burke County.

Alexander, Caldwell and Iredell counties have reported no deaths attributed to the storm.

Ten days after the storm, thousands remain without power. Hundreds of thousands of customers were without power in the immediate aftermath of the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

#### Iredell County

Two families were displaced in Iredell County due to Hurricane Helene, Iredell County Manager Beth Milton said.

A total of seven homes were damaged due to the storm. None of the homes were a total loss, Milton said.

Milton said the Central Fire region was the most impacted in the county due to flooded roads and bridges. The Central Fire region is southeast of Love Valley.

No deaths or injuries were reported. The Iredell County Emergency Communications Center received a total of 2,511 calls. That number includes non-emergency calls and routine transfers, Milton said.

Approximately 3,500 homes in Iredell County were left without power, Milton said. As of Monday, there were only six Iredell County customers without power, according to PowerOutage.us.

## Catawba County

Approximately 100 homes in the Lookout Shoals Lake area were flooded during Hurricane Helene.

The Lookout Shoals Lake area was the most heavily impacted area in Catawba County, Catawba County Communications and Marketing Director Amy McCauley said.

Approximately 50 other homes across Catawba County have major structural damage due to the storm.

McCauley said the county received 2,152 emergency calls Sept. 26 and 27 as Helene came through the area.

One death in Catawba County was attributed to the storm. A 4-year-old was killed in a car crash on Sept. 26 during heavy rains prior to Hurricane Helene officially reaching Catawba County, McCauley said.

One road in Catawba County remains closed.

According to DriveNC.gov, a bridge along Finger Bridge Road sustained significant damage during the storm and will have to either be replaced or repaired before the road is reopened.

The rest area on Interstate 40 in Claremont was closed Monday due to lack of power and water, according to DriveNC.gov.

More than 27,000 were left without power in Catawba County during the storm, McCauley said. As of Monday, there were 15 customers without power in Catawba County, according to PowerOutage.us.

#### **Burke County**

One fatality in Burke County was reported after a driver hit a tree on Summers Road, according to Burke County Emergency Communications Assistant Director Chris White.

Burke County emergency crews also conducted 31 water rescues, responded to 37 structure collapses and conducted 322 welfare checks.

"None of those turned up to be missing people or anything like that," White said. "So to our knowledge, we don't have anybody missing."

White said areas along the Catawba River, Johns River, Linville River, Lake James and Lake Rhodhiss were most heavily impacted by Helene.

White said the Catawba River spread 100 to 150 yards in some places from its banks.

The county received 4,722 emergency calls for service Thursday and Friday. An additional 315 calls were routed to Catawba County while emergency service lines were down in Burke County.

Thirty swift water rescues have been conducted in Burke County.

Last week, Burke County water systems reported power outages and boil water advisories. This week, White said no public water systems are under a boil water advisory. White said test kits for private wells have been ordered but not received yet.

Over 1,800 customers were without power Monday afternoon in Burke County, the majority of which receive service from Rutherford EMC.

Seven roads were closed on Monday in Burke County due to Helene damage, according to DriveNC.gov.

#### **Alexander County**

Alexander County reported 13 homes with structural damage following Hurricane Helene, Alexander County Public Information Officer Gary Herman said on Monday.

One of the homes was a total loss. The most heavily impacted areas of Alexander County were in the western and northern sections, Herman said.

As of Monday, two roads remain closed in Alexander County. Black Oak Ridge Road is closed due to a damaged culvert. Friendly Church Road is closed due to downed trees and powerlines, Herman said.

Roughly 60% of Alexander County residents were without power at one point. Herman said 11,300 people was the peak number of residents without power due to the storm. As of 11:30 a.m. on Monday, only one person remained without power in the county, according to PowerOutage.us.

No deaths or injuries were reported relating to the storm. Alexander County 911 Communications dispatched 580 calls for assistance. The county received 190 emergency calls and 1,559 other calls throughout Sept. 2627, Herman said.

#### Caldwell County

Caldwell County is still assessing damage to homes, according to Caldwell County Public Information Officer Paige Counts.

As of Monday morning, county inspectors had not visited some of the hardest-hit areas in Wilson Creek, Mortimer, Edgemont, Globe and Collettsville.

Counts said the county received 3,539 calls for service from the time a state of emergency was declared on Wednesday at noon through Friday. More than 1,800 of those were 911 calls.

Counts said the county communications center typically answers 90 to 100 calls per day.

The donations center at 2145 Norwood St. in Lenoir is no longer accepting donations as of Monday afternoon, Counts said, because the center is full.

No fatalities have been reported in Caldwell County.

Over 600 customers were still without power in the county Monday afternoon, according to PowerOutage.us.

Six roads in Caldwell County are closed due to Hurricane Helene, according to DriveNC.gov.

Brown Mountain Beach Road and Waterfalls Road are not expected to reopen until January 2025, according to DriveNC.gov.

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# NCHSAA Board of Directors approves fall sport season modifications in wake of Helene

October 9, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Brian Meadows | Section: High School | 451 Words OpenURL Link

On Wednesday, the N.C. High School Athletic Association announced changes to the fall sports calendar, extending the regular seasons.

The move comes in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Fall sports teams in western North Carolina haven't been able to compete for the better part of two weeks due to damage from the storm.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," said NCHSAA President Dr. Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes, and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The Board approved changes and modifications to the schedule. Sunday practices and competitions are still prohibited.

The football regular season will be extended by one week. The regular season will end on Nov. 9 and playoff brackets will be released on Nov. 10.

The football playoffs will begin with the first round on Nov. 15, with the following rounds being played each Friday night. State championships will be played on Friday, Dec. 20, and Saturday, Dec. 21.

The updated calendar is as follows:

Football

Effective immediately, a minimum of three calendar days (72 hours) must occur in between contests.

Reporting deadline: Nov. 9, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Nov. 1)

Seeding: Nov. 10 (Sunday, after 1 p.m.)

First round: Nov. 15

Second round: Nov. 22

Third round: Nov. 29

Fourth round: Dec. 6

Regionals: Dec. 13

State Championships: Dec. 20-21

Women's Tennis

Individual

Reporting deadline: Oct. 14, 11:59 p.m. (revised from 3 p.m. to allow for an extra day of competition)

Regionals: Oct. 18-19

State Championships: Oct. 25-26

**Dual Team** 

Reporting deadline: Oct. 17, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 10)

Seeding: Oct. 18

First Round: Oct. 21

Second Round: Oct. 23

Third Round: Oct. 28

Fourth Round: Oct. 30

Regionals: Nov. 5

State Championships: Nov. 9

Volleyball

Effective immediately, the weekly limitation is modified to allow affected schools to make up multiple postponed matches, not to exceed eight in a week. No change was made to the daily limitation.

Reporting deadline: Oct. 19, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 16)

Seeding: Oct. 20 (Sunday, after 1 p.m.)

First Round: Oct. 22

Second Round: Oct. 24

Third Round: Oct. 26

Fourth Round: Oct. 29

Regionals: Oct. 31

State Championships: Nov. 2

**Cross Country** 

Reporting deadline: Oct. 22, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 19)

Regionals: Oct. 26

State Championships: Nov. 2

#### Men's Soccer

Effective immediately, the weekly limitation is modified to allow affected schools to make up multiple postponed matches, not to exceed four in a week. No change was made to the daily limitation.

Reporting deadline: Nov. 6, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 31)

Seeding: Nov. 7

First round: Nov. 9

Second Round: Nov. 12

Third Round: Nov. 14

Fourth Round: Nov. 16

Regionals: Nov. 19

State Championships: Nov. 22-23

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# Helene hit, and the mountain spirit hit right back in WNC

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Top Stories| 835 Words OpenURL Link

Let's have a word about stubbornness.

There's a lot of cliches about mountain folk; resilience, determination, resourcefulness and, yes, stubbornness.

These were all on display when Helene visited horror and devastation on our beloved slice of the world, and they were all welcome. People here tend toward self-dependence, and as such a lot of folks had the tools needed to ride through the storm – foodstocks, fuel supplies, chainsaws, generators etc. – and had excess to heavier equipment to help clear impassable roads.

There's no overstating how terrifying and devastating Helene was in terms of death and sheer destruction. Some WNC towns have literally been wiped off the map, and all of us were knocked back to the Stone Age to some degree, with communications offline.

A lot of us had to sit in the dark, conjuring up the worst fears of the fate or our neighbors.

But a lot of us also took it upon themselves to venture out to see what we could do to help. A lot of those efforts helped save lives or provide whatever aid could be given to those in need. In fact, so many people were out checking on neighbors, trying to round up water and supplies, attempting to clear roads, etc. that it presented a bit of a problem in that people were stepping all over each other.

That was alleviated in large by a competent response on the ground from volunteer organizations, first responders and local and state government. That the response was as quick and effective as it was nothing short of astounding, especially given the fact that everyone was pretty much was in a communications blackout thanks to the loss of internet and phone services.

Sadly, part of the effectiveness of the response is that a great many local officials, from here to Canton to Asheville, have been through versions of this before. In a very real sense, Hurricane Alley runs now runs through Western North Carolina.

As to the communications collapse, therein lies two of the immediate pressing questions of this event: How did we get so blind and deaf so fast across such a wide area? And what needs to be done so it doesn't happen again? Previously effective 911 systems became useless when no one could get on either end of the line.

When communications did begin working in stops and starts, a sad chapter of this saga began when charlatans, clowns, pot-stirrers and, yes, foreign actors flooded the zone with stories meant to outrage and confuse. This secondary deluge got so bad local, state and federal officials had to devote resources to debunking misinformation.

Those folks pulled away to flush the junk, with their hands already full, certainly had better things they could have done with their time.

But the happy problem we faced in this region was something of an overload of people wanting to help. In the short run it appears to be a lot of folks stepped up, both in official and volunteer capacities, and a lot of good calls were made.

Some of those calls were tough. Western Carolina University was forced to cancel Mountain Heritage Day due to Helene, and in an unprecedented move a week later held a home football game with no fans. We feel both were the

right call, the first due to the obvious dangers to life and limb and the second due to the fact that road traffic to ravaged areas remained the top priority (and also due to the fact a large part of the WCU community itself was in the middle of relief efforts). Considering the fact a home football game generates a million bucks in economic activity... well, it was the right call.

We won, by the way.

Also on the economic front, leaf season is gone. And that means the season when local businesses build up enough fodder to last through the winter is gone with it. Keep your dollars local to help keep them keeping on.

Beyond the loss of life and income, we all need to be cognizant of Helene's damage to the spirit. This storm came as some areas were still rebuilding from Tropical Storm Fred and other localized disasters, laid atop the economic, physical and mental trauma of a pandemic that put the whole country on its back. With Milton bearing down on Florida, the hits from the Age of Chaos just keep 'a comin'.

With Milton and the upcoming election, the focus on WNC will soon be cast to other places and issues, and that's when we need to keep our focus. As so many have said, this recovery will not be a sprint but a marathon lasting months and years. Helene didn't just knock down trees; it has changed the geography of much of the area.

So it's important to keep checking back to see what folks need when the national focus has shifted. Mountain natives and the new mountain folk who have sewn their own roots here will still be at the rebuilding.

They, and we, will keep swinging.

There's a lot to be said for stubbornness.

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# State deals with Helene's impact on voting

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Government | 950 Words OpenURL Link

By Lucas Thomae

#### CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

The North Carolina State Board of Elections released the beginnings of a plan last week to address voting access in the western part of the state following devastation wrought by Tropical Storm Helene.

"As rescue and recovery efforts continue after (Tropical Storm) Helene, North Carolina election officials are working to ensure voters affected by the storm can still cast their ballot in the 2024 general election," the State Board said in a press release Monday evening.

North Carolina mailed out the last of its absentee ballots on Sept. 24. In-person early voting begins October 17 and ends November 2. Election Day is November 5.

The State Board exercised its emergency powers Monday to allow 25 counties in areas badly affected areas to reschedule their mandatory pre-Election Day absentee ballot meetings. The unanimous decision came Monday afternoon at a special meeting the State Board convened virtually.

The 25 counties to which the resolution applies – Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey – are the same that comprise the federally declared disaster area.

These weekly public meetings – which were scheduled to start Tuesday, Oct. 1 – are an important part of the electoral process in which county boards review and act upon issues related to absentee ballots before Election Day.

According to State Board Chair Alan Hirsch, the meetings are mostly used to review each application for an absentee ballot, which is mailed back with the ballot itself, to determine whether that ballot should be counted.

"Any rescheduled meetings should take place as soon as practicable," the resolution read. "These county boards may also schedule additional absentee ballot meetings, if required as a result of the disaster."

County boards of election will need provide at least 48 hours notice prior to any rescheduled or additional meetings.

The potential change in scheduling is not expected to affect compliance with any other state or federal deadlines. State Board members Kevin Lewis and Four Eggers, the only two Republicans on the five-person board, expressed support for the resolution and added that the first of these absentee ballot meetings are typically "light duty" and wouldn't impact the rest of the lead up to Election Day.

Of the 22 county governments that the State Board has been in touch with, 14 were closed Monday and many expect their offices to be closed for several more days, State Board Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell said during Monday's meeting. The county board of elections offices are "in good shape" structurally, she said, but many county governments are still reeling from internet and phone connectivity issues due to the storm.

As a result, local government operations in affected areas will be compromised for an indeterminate amount of

time. According to the press release, the State Board is not aware of any voting equipment or printed ballots being lost or damaged as a result of the storm. Assessments to confirm that are ongoing.

"Details on changes to early voting sites or Election Day polling places will be released as soon as information is available," the State Board's statement said.

"When voting sites are not available, options include moving or combining polling locations."

The State Board will provide special emergency kits to counties without internet service. These "election offices in a box," contain resources that will allow county elections workers to continue registering voters and processing absentee ballot requests.

Additionally, mail delivery and other operations of the U.S. Postal Service are suspended at dozens of post offices in the western part of the state, which may further hinder absentee voting.

The State Board said in its press release that it will consider ways "to make voting available in areas affected by Helene" and reminded voters who've requested an absentee ballot that they do not have to use that ballot. They can discard that ballot and instead vote in-person if they'd prefer.

Voters who have been displaced by the storm and are living at a temporary address can also request an absentee ballot sent to that address. The easiest way to request an absentee ballot is online through the absentee ballot portal.

Any voters who have already requested an absentee ballot but can no longer receive it at their original address should contact their county boards of elections to spoil the original ballot and have a new one sent to their temporary address.

Under state law, a voter who cannot provide a photo ID when they vote may fill out a Photo ID Exception Form to explain why. One of the permitted exceptions is for voters who can't provide ID because of a natural disaster that occurred within 100 days of an election and that resulted in a disaster declaration by the president of the United States or the governor of North Carolina.

This means that voters in the 25 counties under the federal disaster declaration are permitted to use this exception if necessary.

The State Board launched a webpage as a source of information for voters affected by the Helene. It includes information on county board office closures, tips for voters affected by the storm, and basic information about voting in this election. It will be updated routinely.

Election officials also will work to provide printed materials to voters in the affected areas who may not have cell phone service or internet access.

Carolina Public Press released an absentee voting FAQ last week that addresses common questions related to requesting, marking, mailing and counting absentee ballots.

Lucas Thomae is a reporting intern for Carolina Public Press, focusing on coverage of government accountability and transparency issues. Lucas, who is based in Raleigh, is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Email Lucas at Ithomae@carolinapublicpress.org to contact him.

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# Goodbye, from the bottom of my heart

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Farm News | 502 Words OpenURL Link

I write on Oct. 3, several days since Helene hit. I am left feeling ruthlessly broken open, my thoughts and emotions swirling together haphazardly, flooding my system. I have been uprooted.

Our community has been uprooted. I have been in touch with other WNC 4-H agents east of Jackson County who had to evacuate from the aftermath, who have been without basic needs for days, whose families lost their homes.

As someone who faced none of these things, I feel incredibly blessed and incredibly guilty. How is life ok for me here when so close by people are merely surviving?

Although my life appears to be unfazed on the surface, on the inside, I feel the ripples of this storm's wake. Ripples like knowing someone lost their home, their farm, their business, their friends or family, or their own life.

Ripples like: the shock of having to start over from the ground up. Ripples like: the pain and grief of what has happened here toppling over the mound of challenges our world is facing right now. It feels impossible to face these things.

Another ingredient in my post-Helene concoction of thoughts and emotions is the fact that I will soon be leaving my position with Jackson County 4-H.

I made this decision weeks ago, before I knew what was coming our way. Now, with only a few days left as the 4-H agent, I am feeling disorientedly guilty. I wanted to share this news with clarity, gratitude, and closure for this community which I hold dearly to my heart.

I wanted to share the excitement I feel for deciding to pursue my love of travel and nature (I am going to travel abroad for several months before reentering the environmental field, my biggest passion). But now, I'm feeling unhinged and unsure. I feel like it's the worst possible time to make an exit. Of course, I couldn't have predicted or planned around what has happened. But the timing of it all is just an unfortunate reality.

What I am clinging to now is the incredible resiliency of this community. This resiliency comes from a love for each other, a concern for our neighbor's wellbeing-a strength as one.

It is honestly remarkable to witness. Seeing how we have come together in this time of need, of suffering, brings me to tears and reminds me just how good people are. I am honored to be a part of this community and am actually grateful to have still been in my position here throughout the aftermath of Helene, so I could witness all the good being done around me after such devastation.

I am truly going to miss all the people here whom I have worked alongside and collaborated with. And most of all, I will miss the kids and families I have gotten to know. What I want to say to you most is just this: thank you.

Jackson County, your strength is your community. That is your legacy to me.

Kayla Thomas is the Jackson County N.C. Cooperative Extension agent for 4-H youth development.

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# Helene impacts Bardo Arts Center performance schedule

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 309 Words OpenURL Link

By Jada Smith

Hurricane Helene has significantly impacted the arts at Western Carolina University with the Bardo Arts Center facing disruptions and potential damages. The university updated to Condition Level 1 on Friday, Oct. 4, as per the Adverse Weather Policy, with all non-mandatory offices closed.

The Bardo parking lot was flooded during the storm but the damage is still not known. The staff aim to have the building properly assessed by the end of next week.

"We are still assessing Bardo Arts Center's, if any, damages," Bardo Arts Center Marketing Manager Rachel Hood said in an email. "Since we have limited access to our building, we will do an in-depth assessment once we return to campus."

The financial estimate of any potential damages remains pending.

The Bardo Arts Center has rescheduled the performance by New York City based dance company, Ballet Hispánico. The 24-person company was set to perform on Oct. 10. The performance is now set to be rescheduled for spring with the specific date still to be determined.

The Fine Art Museum Reception At the Table is also rescheduled with no official dates determined at this time.

Other events canceled include The WCU The School of Music Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble Concert, and The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) awards ceremony.

The Bardo Arts Center plans to continue their upcoming events for the 2024-2025 season.

"We do not have plans to cancel upcoming events for the 2024-2025 season, and we want to make it abundantly clear we do not take rescheduling and canceling events lightly. Over a year's worth of planning goes into each of our events," Hood said.

The Bardo Arts Center is keeping the public and event attendees updated through multiple channels. Information is shared via the center's e-newsletter, social media (Facebook and Instagram), and website (bardo.wcu.edu).

For more information on WCU's Adverse Weather Policy, visit WCU Campus Emergencies.

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# Helene sidelines fans, but Cats take win; Heroes Day will focus on relief efforts

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 748 Words OpenURL Link

Jalynn Willams rumbled for a pair of short rushing touchdowns including the game-winning score late in the third quarter and kicker Paxton Robertson split the sticks on a pair of first-quarter field goals as Western Carolina ground out a gritty 21-17 Southern Conference-opening victory over Wofford on Saturday afternoon at E.J. Whitmire Stadium/Bob Waters Field.

The Catamounts' fourth-consecutive head-to-head victory over Wofford evened the all-time series in games played in Cullowhee at 12-12. The win also came without spectators in the stadium as university leaders made the difficult decision that the game would be played as scheduled but would be contested without spectators as recovery efforts around the region continued.

Williams made the most of his first game action since 2022, toting the rock just three times but twice finding paydirt to match his career-best for rushing scores established in 2022 also against the Terriers. Williams finished with 10 yards on his three touches as the Catamounts rushed for a season-best 218 yards. Branson Adams set the tone with a team-best 84 yards on 13 carries with QB Cole Gonzales and Corey Reddick Jr. both finishing in the 60s with 65 and 60 yards, respectively.

Gonzales spread the ball around to 11 different receivers in the winning effort, finishing 29-of-39 (74 percent) for 257 yards. AJ Colombo led the way with seven receptions while Reddick Jr. tallied out of the backfield.

Starting in place of redshirt freshman Amari Odom, Wofford QB Pauly Seeley threw for 209 yards and a touchdown on 18-of-39 passing. He added 32 rushing yards on seven carries. Terrier tailback Ryan Ingram ran for 87 yards on 12 rushes with Dylan Djete (5-for-34 yds) and JT Smith (4-for-68) leading the Terrier receivers.

Western Carolina (2-3, 1-0 SoCon) twice drove into the red zone with double-digit play drives in the first quarter but was held to two Paxton Robertson field goals of 21 and 25 yards, respectively, and a 6-0 lead after a quarter of play.

The Terriers capped a 10-play, 84-yard drive with a JT Smith 10-yard scoring rush that put the guests ahead by a point just a little over three minutes into the second quarter despite WCU's statistical dominance over the opening 18 minutes of play. Roughly four minutes later, Williams made his season debut in the red zone, powering five yards into the purple endzone to make it 12-6 in favor of the Catamounts. On the ensuing two-point try, Colombo – who is a shifty escape artist with the ball in his hands – reversed field after Wofford sniffed out the unbalanced line formation, alluding tackle to push WCU in front by seven points.

Wofford (2-3, 1-3 SoCon) closed the opening half with another 10-play scoring drive that was aided by a roughing the passer penalty and culminated with a Sheeley TD toss that sent the teams to the locker room even at 14 apiece.

Second-half scoring was at a premium as the two defenses traded salvos while looking for the knock-out blow.

Wofford kicker Devery Cagle put the Terriers in front 17-14 early in the third quarter after capping the opening drive of the final two frames with a 31-yard field goal. The Catamounts landed the final offering at the 4:02 mark of the third quarter, though, as power-back Jalynn Williams rode over a Terrier defender to keep his body off the turf as he leaned and stretched to break the plane for what proved to be the winning score.

The two teams combined for just 139 yards in the final frame - 90 by the Catamounts and just 49 by the Terriers.

But the game remained in the balance until the final offensive series for the visiting squad.

Before the season, Saturday's game was chosen as WCU's annual "Heroes Day" game—a moniker that seems even more appropriate given the region's recent struggles. Presented by Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate – Heritage, all active duty and veteran military personnel, as well as civil servants such as police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel, receive free admission when presenting identification at the Whitmire Stadium ticket booths on game day vs. The Citadel at 2:30 p.m. WCU and Catamount Athletics would also extend the same invitation to all utility workers in the area assisting with the Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

On Saturday (Oct. 12), in partnership with The Community Table in Sylva and Mountain Projects locally in both Jackson and Haywood County, WCU will collect various need-based donations of non-perishable items to load into the box truck for delivery and use within our area.

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# 'We got lucky' an exhausted Dillard says

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Top Stories | 462 Words OpenURL Link

By Dave Russell

Jackson County Emergency Services Director Todd Dillard and his crew worked long, hard hours during Hurricane Helene weekend. He's feeling good, though.

"We got lucky," he said. "This was an apocalyptic flood for Western North Carolina. We were very fortunate. The eyewall moved a little bit to the east and avoided us. We have not had any fatalities. Western North Carolina will never be the same again. Not in our lifetime. Chimney Rock, Bat Cave, Lake Lure ... all gone."

Recovery efforts continue across the county.

"Post-Helene, we are doing much better," he said.

All primary and secondary roads in the county are open.

"There might be a gravel side road out there with some problems, but all the major roads are open," he said.

Help in Dillsboro

"We still have our Central Receiving and Distribution site at the old Western Builders," he said.

"We're just now getting FEMA into the county set up to assist folks. We will have a Disaster Recovery Center set up at Western Builders."

To find Western Builders, follow the signs to Best Western Plus. Western Builders is next door and will likely have military vehicles in the parking lot.

New records

Helene's deluge pushed the Tuckaseigee River higher than 2004's Hurricane Ivan did, Dillard said.

"I never expected there would ever be a bigger flood than that one," he said. "We've exceeded that and that was the record for 20 years."

Though the county suffered no fatalities, there were tense moments.

"We rescued/evacuated about 300-plus people and that was mainly in the Cullowhee area," he said. "We had to go in by boat and rescue some folks. We had really, really good swiftwater rescue teams here."

Teams came from Monroe, Winston-Salem and the N.C. Highway Patrol, he said.

The Winston-Salem team was a type II team, meaning they brought enough manpower to work 24 hours a day, Dillard said. Type III teams can work 12 hours.

"But they, every one of them, just jumped in there and really assisted Jackson County with our rescue efforts," he said.

Dillard expressed concern about the effects of the storm on local first responders.

"Every one of these fire department chiefs and members are worn out," Dillard said. "They can't believe what they've had to deal with. I worry it might cause an exodus from the departments, I really do."

Other relief stations:

The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau, 558 Frank Allen Road Cashiers. Water

and MREs are available, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Canada Fire Department, 149 Charlies Creek Road, Tuckasegee. Water, MREs

and other items available, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Other distribution resources:

United Christian Ministries of Jackson County, 191 Skyland Dr.

The Community Table, 23 Central Street, Sylva.

The number of churches, civic groups and private indivuals in this most generous of counties who have offered or still offer help is too large to list.

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# Bids to go out for park upgrades, construction

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Top Stories | 619 Words OpenURL Link

By Beth Lawrence

Efforts to upgrade one park and build a new one continue while Jackson County Parks and Recreation works to repair damage to others left by Helene.

"My thoughts and prayers are with everyone in the Western North Carolina area and all the surrounding areas that have had to weather the storm," Director Michael Hopkins said. "We are a strong community of people and will continue to do what is necessary to help one another out."

But as the region recovers, day-to-day work must also continue.

The bids are out on two park projects that will hopefully bring new outdoor entertainment possibilities to opposite ends of the county. Bidding on both parks opened on Sept. 16 and bids were supposed to be due Oct. 25 and opened the same day.

There is, however, a delay on the pre-bid meeting, Hopkins said.

That can easily be rescheduled and will not delay the projects.

The projects in question are an anxiously awaited new park in the Qualla/Whittier area and upgrades to the Cashiers-Glenville recreation area.

"We are very fortunate that we did not have any damages at either of the park locations and everything should still be able to move ahead as planned," he said.

The Qualla park has been greatly anticipated since being announced under the previous Board of Commissioners in 2022. At that board's Feb. 15, 2022 regular meeting, commissioners approved an offer to purchase three plots of land totaling 18.5 acres for \$400,000 to be used as a pocket park. The site is located near Smokey Mountain Elementary School at the intersection of Sunset Farm and Beck Branch roads.

Since then, plans have been moving along slowly to design and make ready the area for construction. One obstacle was how to design the area so that it did not interfere with the school's entry and exit, especially for school buses.

Construction components consist of building an entry driveway, sign, and gate, stormwater controls, boulder and modular retaining walls and guardrails, Hopkins said.

The 10.5-acre park will boast an ADA compliant path, parking, picnic areas, playground equipment including swings, a slide and natural play features such as climbing logs and stepping stumps, a pavilion, restrooms, a drinking fountain, benches and planted areas.

This venture is being financed through a \$500,000 North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund- PARTF, grant and county general fund dollars.

On the south end of the county, Cashiers-Glenville Park will receive a makeover to include a splash pad, playground, tennis court, outdoor basketball court, two pickleball courts, a pavilion, restroom facility and walking path. At 2.5 acres the footprint of the park will be similar to what is currently in place.

Parks and Rec has been working on the overhaul for just over two years.

Funding for this project comes from the county's general fund.

The expected timeline for completion on both parks is a year from December.

As soon as bids are awarded the winning bidder can begin mobilization, Hopkins said.

Once mobilization begins, the project is required to be completed by December 2025.

While work on those projects moves forward, the county will continue to address storm damage to current parks and the greenway.

East Laporte Park received extensive flooding and will be closed until repairs are made and the park is safe to use.

The Greenway is open except for two damaged areas – the outdoor exercise area and the kids bike track. Both will remain off limits until repairs are completed.

Cullowhee Recreation Center's park was damaged but is open for use. Fences were downed; some creek banks received erosion, and the fishing piers saw some damage.

Public river access points are closed as well.

"At this point, it has been recommended that we keep our river access points closed off due to excess debris being in the river," Hopkins said on Monday.

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# Airport handles massive aerial relief effort

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Photos 1-23 by Jackson County TDA Director Nick Breedlove. | Section: Top Stories | 605 Words OpenURL Link

By Dave Russell

The asphalt at the Jackson County Airport has stayed hot as planes take off and touch down with relief supplies made necessary by Hurricane Helene.

Evoking shades of The Berlin Airlift, planes land, a cadre of volunteers descend on it and unload, and another comes in and another and another.

Sylva resident and native Crystal Cochran has been the ringleader of the operation.

A Facebook notification led her to get involved.

"They said they needed somebody on the ground at the airport because they were getting ready to drop supplies for people in need," she said. "I ran with it."

Cochran took to Facebook to round up a crew.

"Ok I need some help. Who can meet me to get supplies at the Jackson Co Airport and a place where can we put them to distribute?" she wrote. "Big Trucks needed."

Planes with Operation Airdrop began landing the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 29 and continued through Thursday. Operation Airdrop is a Texas-based nonprofit that organizes aviation assets in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

Wave of private planes

When they cleared the runway for the last time, word about the successful ground operation reached private pilots who took it upon themselves to contribute.

"They started flying from all over the country after Operation Airdrop," Cochran said. "We've got insulin for people who need it, we've got baby supplies, food and water. Anything and everything you could think of that people need we have gotten in here."

Much of the aid stays local, some is traveling to the really hard-hit areas east of Jackson.

"We filled up a Smoky Mountain High School trailer and The Bridge Church took it to Black Mountain and they backpacked in and delivered that stuff to residents who could not get out," she said. "We've taken medical supplies to Avery County and it's getting cold so I put in a request for some solar blankets and blankets and gloves. We sent five or six loads to Caney Fork, we've sent stuff to Canada, Highlands."

Jackson County volunteers are doing the transporting and heavy lifting.

"Local residents are volunteering their time here loading trailers," she said.

Help has come from all over the country. One pilot from North Dakota flew in a load.

Volunteers form bucket brigades, passing items from one to another until they reach a staging area.

"The community just rallied around," Airport Manager Jim Rowell said Monday morning. "Yesterday, all day long I think we had at least 100 volunteers standing by ready to unload airplanes. We had a big long line of people passing until it got to the trailer. We've had about 325 planes land," he said.

Rowell has never seen the airport so busy, he said.

"We had it during the Eclipse, and we have fly-ins and might have 30 airplanes fly in, but I have never had every parking place on the ramp full of planes," he said. "We've had airplanes landing and holding at the end of the runway so other planes could land, and seven of them taxiing back down the runway at the same time while others were circling overhead, so I launched a few from the ramp so I could get parking places for the ones coming in. That was Friday afternoon. We had 95 different aircraft that day, including several helicopters."

The twin-rotor Chinook helicopters brought water and MREs.

"Each one carries about 10 pallets and I have to land them on the runway, because with those big rotors if they land anywhere near all these aircraft they will turn them over," he said.

The operation continues, as does Cochran.

"I was here when the first plane landed and I'll be here when the last one takes off," she said.

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Photos 1-23 by Jackson County TDA Director Nick Breedlove., 'Airport handles massive aerial relief effort', *Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
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## Letters to the Editor

October 9, 2024 | Sylva Herald & Ruralite, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Letters To Editor| 3176 Words OpenURL Link

Editor's note: The deadline for letters pertaining to the 2024 election is Monday, Oct. 21 at noon for the Herald's Oct. 24 edition. The Herald's final edition before the November election is Oct. 28, meaning candidates would not have time to respond to letters in that edition prior to Election Day.

Thanks to SkyFi, emergency responders

To the Editor:

Thanks to Travis Lewis and SkyFi for providing internet services to areas of Jackson County which are not served by the larger providers. With the exception of a few hours, our service was uninterrupted during the recent storm events thus allowing us to maintain communication with friends and families while internet service from the large corporate providers was dark.

Unfortunately, much of the governmental funding for internet expansion is written in such a way that only the large internet providers can qualify for the grants thereby requiring the smaller companies like SkyFi to self fund expansions and improvements. If you want to "shop local" then I encourage you to reach out to SkyFi and see if they serve the area you live in. Also, a big thank you to the first responders, emergency service personnel and utility companies for everything they do in serving our community.

Chuck Wooten, Sylva

Technology failed us

when we needed it most

To the Editor:

The recent floods that struck Western North Carolina made it quite plain that the modern high-tech devices such as cell phones and computers and all such marvels that depend on the internet were utterly useless in most cases when they were needed most. When the internet ceases to work we were forced to use old-fashioned U.S. dollars to purchase the necessities of life.

Those of us who found a so-called "hot spot" where our high-tech devices would operate were saddened to find that the party we were trying to contact were not at a "hot spot" to receive our call so all we received for our effort was more worry and heartache. Thankfully a great many of us had retained our old-fashioned so-called land lines that depended on wires and switches and such to operate and we were able to communicate with others who had retained such so-called outdated devices.

In conclusion, what we had been told was the way to go became a total failure when we needed it most.

James A. Nation, Sylva

Have we changed so much in 50 years?

To the Editor:

In the era of Watergate, Richard Nixon was renounced by the Republican Party, the Supreme Court and the American people. When the number of Americans favoring Nixon's removal from office reached nearly six in ten, and Republican members of Congress told him he would likely be impeached, Nixon resigned.

For 50 years no president has sought to interfere in a criminal investigation - until now. Former president Trump has managed to rewrite fundamental, well-established standards of law and order while simultaneously sustaining solid support within the GOP; through two impeachments, the deadly January 6 attack on our Capitol, and scores of criminal and civil indictments. Incomprehensibly, criminal charges and felony convictions seem favorable to Trump politically. What has so changed America in a short half-century?

Timothy Naftali (founding director of the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum and now a senior research scholar at the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs) nails the answer: Trump has survived because he is different from Richard Nixon in one way - "Richard Nixon had not only a sense of history, but a sense of shame. Donald Trump has never been a student of history and (as Trump has proven over and over and over again) "he has no shame. He has no interest in protecting the honor of the presidency and clearly does not fear dishonor. It's honor and shame that has kept our system on the rails."

We are reminded of the founders' final words in the Declaration of Independence: "We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

Martin Luther King always believed "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Half a century later, our institutions have failed us, a president has willfully trampled the rules of law, rejected the Constitution, and breached his oath of office discarding values and principles nearly all Americans once held inviolate. Would MLK be so convinced today? I think not.

American tolerance of dishonesty, lying, and unethical behavior is exceeded only by our willingness to plunge ever deeper into the abyss of stomach-churning abhorrent corruption and the deception of our citizens and allies around the globe.

It's no longer deniable that the United States squandered its long-held reputation as the world's foremost constitutional government and has metamorphosed into an unmistakable Anocracy. An Anocracy is a form of government neither entirely democratic or entirely autocratic, it's something in between. Referred to sometimes as "partial democracies" or "illiberal democracies," it's in such nations that most civil wars occur.

The reason the United States is in danger of becoming a full-blown dictatorship is because our people have repudiated the will to abide by our own Constitution, abandoned fundamental rules of law and forsaken the essential tenets that define democracies; commitment to the people's welfare, to govern by representative consensus, and to advance and maintain high regard for solidarity among our citizens.

"The price good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Plato

David L. Snell, Franklin

Be wary of the 'election deniers'

To the Editor:

A vote for an election denier is a vote to undermine democracy.

No election deniers currently hold state office in North Carolina. Unfortunately, two election deniers are seeking state office this year.

Dan Bishop (candidate for Secretary of State) is an election denier and author of the "bathroom bill" that made North Carolina a laughingstock. His ads are filled with misinformation and untruths.

Mark Robinson (candidate for governor) presents himself, not only as an election denier, but as a dangerous extremist.

No matter your party preference or a prior affiliations, make your vote support democracy.

Sue Bartlett, Sylva

We need to buck up and do our duty

To the Editor:

In my 76 years on earth, I have participated in many presidential elections, and this upcoming one seems to be the most consequential and contentious of any one previously. Even more troubling is the fact that many Americans seem to be numb to that fact, or maybe have just become tired of it all, and just want to check out - leave it to everyone else. Problem is, there is no one else! It's our job, as in "by the people". I feel certain that the readers of this newspaper are consistent participants in our political process, and why shouldn't they be? After all, it's not complicated, only takes a small amount of our time, and it's exactly what we signed on for many years ago. The government is us! Who else is going to run it if we don't?

Hypothetically, suppose 10 people are hired by a public entity that provides a service used by all of us, various job duties serving the entire population (us). During the week, most of the crew goes out and works diligently out of personal pride and responsibility, as well as for the common good. However, 4 or 5 go out every day, work a little, but mostly hide from the supervisor. At the end of the week, everyone returns to the office with their hand out for their paycheck. After everyone gets paid the same amount, those same 4 or 5 go about their business, including using those same public services. Anyone see a problem with that? Would you be at least a little bit mad? Do you think we deserve an explanation from the 4 or 5? I know I would want one. One of the lamest excuses I've heard was from my own brother-in-law. He didn't want to register to vote, so he wouldn't be called for jury duty. Double disappointment! If you know anyone who doesn't vote, or may not vote this time around, ask why. It's not hard, and it's their country too.

Many "undecided" voters this year can't pick a candidate, so they will probably stay home. That gets us nowhere.

Speaking of lame excuses, I keep hearing a lot "I like Kamala Harris, but I just don't know much about her." What a cop out! If she were a sports or entertainment celebrity, you would make the effort and learn everything they need to know in 10 minutes on the internet! She's our current Vice President. If you don't know enough about her, it's your fault, not hers.

We have a choice this year. A mean spirited, obviously racist, liar who can't even speak in complete sentences, who cares about no one but himself, or an intelligent, compassionate, diplomatic, well qualified woman, who cares about the future of our country. We need to make a choice.

In the past, Republicans voted for Democrats and vice versa. Your arm won't fall off if you vote for the other party.

Mark Ballinger, Sylva

A refresher on Trump's border record

To the Editor:

Recently, I have been reading and hearing that the current border crisis is a result of Trump's failed leadership in handling it. Well, I beg to differ. First, let's remind ourselves that in the past 16 years of presidential leadership, 12 of those years have been under Democrat presidents, yet the rhetoric that comes out states that Trump is to blame for all of our woes. The Democrats have had 3.5 years to fix it!

Let's look at just this one issue briefly. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, FY 2017 there were 415,517 total crossings at the southern border, with a little over 521,000 for FY 2018, spiking in FY 2019 at 977,000, but then to decline to a little over 400,000 for FY 2020. Under Biden and Harris, we have seen 1.73 million, to 2.37 million, to 2.47 million, to 2.03 million crossings for 2021 through 2024, respectively (and 2024 has one more month of reporting to finish!)

The spike in 2019 under Trump was due in large part of families crossing, and they were trying to cross before his deadline of shutting down the border to illegal crossings. Even a USA Today article called the 2019 surge, "unlike any we've seen before." Little did they know that they just needed to wait a few more years to be even more shocked.

Trump is not the one to blame this one and he has also proven that he can reduce the illegal crossings and it is time for us to get back to those common sense policies that have made America great!

Justin Castle, Sylva

Castle is vice-chair of Jackson County GOP.

We should listen to Trump's words

To the Editor:

Straight from the horse's mouth:

"I have great respect for China and Russia" - Trump on CBS News, Aug. 10, 2017.

"The plan is they (Democrats) have abortion in the ninth month, the baby will be born and they (Dems) will decide what to do with the baby. In other words, they'll (Dems) execute the baby." – Trump on the debate with Harris, Sept. 10 2024. (There is no state where it is legal to terminate the life of a baby after it was born).

"I will appoint a prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president in the history of America, Joe Biden, and the Biden crime family." – Trump on Truth Social, June 2024.

"Immigrants are poisoning our country... we will have the largest deportation in history." - Trump at a New Hampshire campaign rally, Dec. 17, 2023.

"Can't you just shoot them?" – Trump on protestors following the death of George Floyd, June 2020 according to former Defense Sec. Mark Esper.

"Anybody who can do a body slam, he's my guy." - Trump praising a House candidate who physically assaulted a journalist, Oct. 18, 2018.

"We're going down to the Capitol. You'll never take back our country with weakness." - Trump on Jan. 6, 2021.

"If we don't win, it depends..." – Trump on political violence regarding the 2024 election to Time magazine, April 2024.

"I call them the J6 Patriots. Yes, absolutely." Trump on whether he will pardon Jan. 6 insurrectionists, July 31, 2024, NBC News.

"They're eating the dogs. The people that came in. They're eating the cats. They're eating the pets..." Trump on the Haitian community of Springfield, Ohio during the Sept. 10 debate. (No they weren't according to the Republican mayor and Republican governor of Ohio).

"The absolute enemy of the people and our country itself." Trump on any non-Trump supporting news media.

"I think my rhetoric brings people together." Trump to the news media, Aug. 17, 2019.

"Your kid goes to school and comes home a few days later with an operation. They school decides what happens to your child." – Trump on school systems forcing transgender operations on students at a Sept. 9, 2004 campaign rally. (There's absolutely no evidence of this happening in U.S. schools or of students being sent from a school for such a procedure elsewhere).

"Every Republican. Every Democrat. Everybody wanted Roe v. Wade overturned." Trump on Fox News, August 2024. (Support for legal abortion since Roe v. Wade remains above 60 percent).

"In the Congo. In Africa. People deposit in our country. Where do they come from? From prison. From jail." – Campaign rally Aug. 2004. (Representatives of both Congo countries say there is absolutely no truth to that statement and Trump has provided no proof of the claim).

"A massive fraud of this type (the 2020 election) allows for the termination of all the rules, regulations and articles, even those found in the Constitution." – Trump on Truth Social, Dec. 3, 2022.

Remember, despite all his bombast, bluster and b.s., Trump, in some cases, can be a man of his word.

Mike Jones, Sylva

Climate and the economy very much linked

To the Editor:

FEMA could be out of funds when the next hurricane occurs, according to Alejandro Mayorkas, Homeland Security secretary. The cause of insufficient funds come from a budgeting process calculated on past events while climate disasters are increasing in frequency and destruction. An extreme weather event that produces \$1 billion worth of damage occurs every three weeks, according to the latest US National Climate Assessment report. Four decades earlier extreme climate disasters occurred every four months.

The economic impact extends to the housing and insurance industries as property values plummet and mortgage payments are delayed or stop altogether. Over time, the U.S. has been spending more and more money on disasters in an ad hoc way, outside its main disaster budget, according to Jeffrey Schlegelmilch, the director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia Climate School. Included in this year's tally are the devastating wildfires that took place in Hawaii over the summer. The damage from the wildfires, which took the lives of over 100 people and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses, cost \$5.6 billion, according to an estimate from the National Centers for Environmental Information, a division of NOAA.

How Donald Trump helps... Trump delayed aid for devastated Puerto Rico and redirected funds from FEMA to finance the return of undocumented migrants to Mexico. Project 2025 would cut funds for FEMA and weather warning services. In an exclusive interview on Fox Business Network's Varney & Company, Donald Trump told host Stuart Varney that climate change is "a hoax." The former president said "in my opinion, you have a thing called weather, and you go up, and you go down."

Trump has spread lies about Hurricane Helene as reported by CNN.

Monday: Trump falsely claims Biden hasn't answered calls from Georgia's governor.

Monday: Trump cites baseless 'reports' about anti-Republican bias in the North Carolina response.

Thursday: Trump falsely claims the Biden-Harris response had received "universally" negative reviews.

Thursday: Trump falsely claims Harris spent "all her FEMA money" on housing illegal migrants.

Friday: Trump falsely claims \$1 billion was 'stolen' from FEMA for migrants and has gone "missing."

Saturday: Trump falsely claims the federal government is only giving \$750 to people who lost their homes.

Saturday: Trump falsely claims there are "no helicopters, no rescue" in North Carolina.

What we can do: Support climate disaster prevention and keep this Trump disaster out of office. Help our friends and neighbors get to the polls and vote. Voting begins October 17. Let's turn the page with a Harris/Walz administration dedicated to climate remediation, job creation and wage growth. Voting for Caleb Rudrow to represent us in Congress and Adam Tebrugge for our state senator in Raleigh will return freedoms to our families and money to our pockets.

The hoax is not climate, the hoax is Donald Trump.

Ron Robinson, Sylva

Says administration is failing on jobs

To the Editor:

The September jobs report shows illegal aliens and foreign-born workers are thriving in Kamala's America

Over the past year, 825,000 native-born Americans lost employment while 1.2 million foreign-born workers gained employment.

Under Harris and Biden we lost another 7,000 manufacturing jobs, in addition to the 27,000 manufacturing jobs lost the month before. At least 34,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost over the past two months alone and manufacturing jobs have been shed in three of the past four months. There are 37,000 fewer manufacturing workers than last September. 9,000 transportation and warehousing jobs were lost last month.

There are now over 6.8 million unemployed Americans, up from 6.3 million just one year ago.

The labor force participation rate remains well below pre-pandemic levels.

The number of long-term unemployed Americans shot up by 97,000 last month

Over the last 12 months, 555,000 more Americans took on part-time work for economic reasons.

There are 502,000 fewer private industry workers and 696,000 more government workers than one year ago.

Americans are poorer today thanks to Kamala Harris and Joe Biden.

Prices have risen 20.3 percent since Harris took office – with Americans still reeling from the lasting effects of inflation.

Nearly half of Americans consider themselves "broke."

65 percent of Americans struggle to save more due to the rising cost of living. Two-thirds of Americans report living paycheck-to-paycheck.

30 percent of retired Americans are considering a temporary job to help offset inflation.

Americans have lost \$4,812 paying higher energy costs since Harris took office.

Americans need a six-figure salary to afford a typical home in nearly half of U.S. states.

U.S. average gas prices currently sit at \$3.18 per gallon, which is almost \$1 higher when Harris became vice president.

Harris and Biden deserve no credit for jobs that have been created – they paid Americans not to work for months and stifled economic growth.

Republican-led states are the ones creating jobs and leading economic growth.

The latest state jobs report shows that 16 of the top 20 states for jobs recovered since the coronavirus pandemic began are led by Republican governors, and 16 of the states have Republican-controlled legislatures.

Despite attempts to downplay their failures, American are not fooled; they know Harris and Biden are to blame.

Kamala wants to be rewarded with four more years in the White House — when she would unleash the largest tax hike in history and punish American manufacturing and reward companies that ship jobs overseas.

When President Trump is re-elected on November 5th, we will lower inflation, put more money back into the hands of hardworking Americans and Make America Prosperous Again.

Latest from Trump-Vance Rapid Response: Foreign-Born Workers Thrive In Kamala's Economy. American Citizens? Not so much.

Keith Blaine, Sylva

Blaine is Chair, Jackson County GOP.

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# A patient, nimble response with respect for the truth

October 9, 2024 | Tabor-Loris Tribune (NC) Author: Deuce Niven | Section: News | 656 Words Page: 4

OpenURL Link

"The media is not telling the whole story." I've been acquainted with the man who said those words to a good sized audience while delivering an update on the devastation Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene wrought on western North Carolina. I believe him to be a man of faith and integrity, and don't doubt that he was sincere, that his motive was to try to make imaginable the unimaginable circumstances our friends and family to the west are enduring.

But his words stung just a bit.

First, because they encourage distrust in "the media" at a time when disinformation and misinformation is threatening the very foundation of our republic.

I've challenged the concept of "the media" in this space before.

It imagines a coordinated, monolithic entity controlling the information we all consume.

"The media" in that context simply does not exist. It never has, it never will as long as people are able to speak their minds.

The very idea that news outlets as diverse as The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, The Washington Post and Washington Times, the various cable and TV networks not to mention the many local news outlets in broadcast, online, and even print like Tabor-Loris Tribune, are somehow delivering a coordinated and unified message is absurd on its face.

If you doubt that truth, consume your news from a variety of outlets, not just those who share a particular worldview, and do so critically.

While federal, state and local agencies were responding to the impacts of Helene last week, "a new storm emerged on social media," a weekend Reuters report said, "false rumors about how disaster funds have been used, and even claims that officials control the weather." "Disinformation of this kind can discourage people from seeking critical assistance when they need it most," a White House memo quoted by the news agency said. "It is paramount that every leader, whatever their political beliefs, stop spreading that poison." Beautiful acts of kindness are met on social media with scorn for someone, especially the government.

Like "the media," the government is also not a monolithic entity. Local, state and federal agencies are coordinating a massive response to Helene's devastation. Are they doing so perfectly? Just as perfectly as I've lived my day. To be clear, I claim no perfection, none. I can screw up with the best of them.

So can you.

As I watched from afar, I told a colleague last week that the response to Helene "is coming quickly. But it can't come fast enough." That's true for those impacted by the storm in ways most of us can't imagine, and it's true for some who want to respond to the disaster zone and help.

Eddie Madden, Columbus County's Manager, spent last week in Buncombe County with others from county government who also fanned out to Polk County and beyond. Responding to what appeared to be a question about process, Madden late Friday wrote that North Carolina Emergency Management is processing "numerous

applications from counties, states, and contractors from across the country who are willing to assist in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene." Processing is, well, a process.

It takes time, and with good son that can frustrate those ready to roll and pitch in.

"Coming prematurely, though, leads to further delays and causes extra work for those that are actively engaged and authorized to be there," Madden wrote. "It also leads to the respective organization assuming liability for their crews and equipment as well as being potentially ineligible for reimbursement of expenses by FEMA." Columbus County's application to offer assistance was made quickly as Helene's impacts were beginning to come into focus, and its team had orders to respond within 48 hours.

"I have suggested to my colleagues across the state to remain patient but to be ready when they receive their orders because the process moves very quickly one the orders are issued by the state." Patience and a nimble response, excellent advice for the current circumstances, and for every day.

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## • Citation (aglc Style)

Deuce Niven, 'A patient, nimble response with respect for the truth', *Tabor-Loris Tribune* (online), 9 Oct 2024 4 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A032418CF900">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A032418CF900</a>



# Housing project decision, DSS Director names, hearings on more & on vape store rules: CC meet - Helene reflections

October 9, 2024 | Tabor-Loris Tribune (NC)

Author: Deuce Niven; tribdeuce@tabor-loris.com | Section: News | 264 Words

Page: 2 OpenURL Link

A decision on expanding the Gregg Tract, one of many housing projects in the works or proposed for southeastern Columbus County, and a public hearing on planned changes for another, were approved by Columbus County Commissioners Monday.

Dwella Hall was also named the county's Department of Social Services Director after serving as interim director most of this year.

Reflections on the county's response to Hurricane Helene's devastation in western North Carolina were also shared during the board's first of two regular monthly meetings.

## Housing projects

Land has been added to the Gragg Tract development in the Dothan area, already the largest of the proposed projects on the southern Columbus border, county planner Gary Lanier said during a public hearing on the project.

Austin Graham, representing the developers, said a "donut hole" in the middle of the development has now been field, with other adjacent acreage added.

That does not mean more homes, Graham said.

"We're reducing the density," Graham said. "There are less total units in the project." Commissioners unanimously approved a county Planning Board recommendation to approve the expansion.

Preliminary plats for the McGill Meadows project near NC 905 at Olyphic are ready for county review, and have already been approved by the Planning Board, Lanier said.

Commissioners scheduled a public hearing for 6:30 p.m. at their next meeting, on Oct. 21.

## **DSS** Director

Dwella Hall has served as Interim Director of the Columbus County Department of Social Services since the retirement of Algernon McKenzie in January.

After adding consideration of the job to the agenda early in the meeting, commissioners acted quickly and unanimously to remove "interim" from her title.

# "I appreciate the oppor

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Deuce Niven, tribdeuce@tabor-loris.com, 'Housing project decision, DSS Director names, hearings on more & on vape store rules: CC meet - Helene reflections', *Tabor-Loris Tribune* (online), 9 Oct 2024 2 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A0322F8E06C8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A0322F8E06C8</a>



# Words from the Mayor

October 9, 2024 | Tabor-Loris Tribune (NC) Author: Royce Harper Mayor; Town Of Tabor City | Section: News | 382 Words Page: 5 OpenURL Link

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the impacts of Hurricane Helene in our state.

While Tabor City fared well, with wind related hazards being scattered across town and the surrounding area, other parts of our state, especially the western regions, are experiencing catastrophic flooding and infrastructure damage.

As many communities in our region understand, recovery is a process and much of our state will be experiencing the tedious nature of this process in the years to come.

Second, I would like to congratulate our new Town Manager. Council extended invitations for interviews and two candidates accepted. Interviews were held on Sept. 24 in closed session at Town Hall.

We thank all applicants for their interest in Tabor City and wish them the best of luck in their careers.

Ultimately, council unanimously selected Josh Ward, who has served as our interim manager since February. Josh has consistently impressed myself and council throughout his interim tenure and we believe that we have developed an effective working relationship with him in the position.

Of all things, I am happy to have a manager that is familiar with our community. Josh served the town for a year prior to becoming interim manager, was raised nearby in Old Dock, and much of his family knows Tabor City as home. He's one of our own.

We look forward to the future and have high hopes for what we can accomplish together.

Josh was sworn in on Oct. 8 at the beginning of the council meeting.

As of last weekend, Yam Festival festivities are officially underway. The Yam Festival Pageant was held on Saturday, Oct. 5 at South Columbus High School. I would like to congratulate those that participated and especially those crowned.

Yam festival events will continue each weekend until the Yam Festival itself on Oct. 26. A full schedule of events is available online.

For additional information, or if you are interested in being a vendor, please call 910-377-3248.

The rescheduled date for the Heroes Cruise-in is Nov. 9. Line up will begin at 4 p.m. and the parade will step off at 7 p.m.

Our final event of the year will be the Annual Christmas Parade on Dec.

5. Lineup will begin at 5 p.m. and step off at 6 p.m.

If you are interested in being apart of the parade, please call the Visitor's Center at 910-653-4141.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Royce Harper Mayor, Town Of Tabor City, 'Words from the Mayor', *Tabor-Loris Tribune* (online), 9 Oct 2024 5 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A032449B5240">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A032449B5240</a>



# Homecoming at Beaverdam Sun.

October 9, 2024 | Tabor-Loris Tribune (NC) Section: News 54 Words Page: 6 OpenURL Link

Homecoming is this Sunday at Beaverdam Original Free Will Baptist Church.

A love offering will be taken during morning worship for victims of Hurricane Helene.

A homecoming singing at 6 p.m. Sunday will feature The Willing Hearts.

All are invited. The church is located at 2665 Beaverdam Road Chadbourn.

For details call Pastor Buddy Seay at 910-918-3446.

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## • Citation (aglc Style)

'Homecoming at Beaverdam Sun.', *Tabor-Loris Tribune* (online), 9 Oct 2024 6 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A0324C1D1EB8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A0324C1D1EB8</a>



#### Great floods of 1916 and 2024

October 9, 2024 | Tabor-Loris Tribune (NC) Author: D G Martine | Section: News | 1711 Words Page: 4 OpenURL Link

One of Miss Letitia Currie's favorite topics in her history class in the 1950s at Davidson Junior High School was the Great Flood of 1916.

Miss Currie was the daughter of a Davidson College professor.

Many of her students also knew what she was talking about because their parents had experienced that 1916 flood and talked about it whenever rain poured down hard.

Today, many of Miss Currie's students, their parents and grandparents, great grandparents, and their children and grandchildren are having a similar experience dealing with the flooding that followed Hurricane Helene.

And they will be talking about it for the rest of their lives, calling it "The great flood of 2024." "News of Davidson," the news outlet in my hometown, published the following account by Gatewood Payne Campbell, granddaughter of Davidson professor Gatey Workman and niece of the late, great opera singer William Workman. Gatewood and her husband Johnny live near Black Mountain.

"Life has stopped. We don't know dates or times. Sirens are 24 hours a day. It's relentless.

Helicopters invade our sky.

Chainsaws sound nonstop and we run outside in hopes it's in our neighborhood.

"Let me back up. We awoke around 6 Friday morning without power.

The storm was loud and pounding but we didn't know where we were in the storm. We could not get updates. Around 8:30 we lost internet across cell lines. I called a friend and got her to look at radar and let me know an ETA on rain ending. That was the last call I was able to make. By 9:30 ALL cell signal was completely lost. The rain was increasing.

We could see the creek rising.

Johnny stepped outside under the porch and was soaked from head to toe after 30 seconds.

"Around 11 we felt like we could go out and survey the neighborhood. We began to feel the weight of the destruction, yet we had NO clue. The creek had turned into a river greater than 50 yards wide. The noise of water heaters, propane tanks, bikes, grills, construction supplies and yard equipment banging on the rails of our bridge to Black Mountain was deafening.

We saw two neighbors with trees on their homes and knew they were taking on water." Meanwhile in Asheville, Bryan King and his wife Angela Koh are assessing the damage to their 12 Bones Smokehouse on Foundry Street in the River Arts District. As I wrote in my book, "North Carolina's Eateries," "Even if 12 Bones had not been made famous by Barack Obama's visits there, it would be a 'must-do' in Asheville." When I first visited 12 Bones several years ago, it was located closer to the French Broad River. Had Bryan and Angela not moved the restaurant few blocks up the hill it would have been completely washed away. At its current location they may be able to repair and survive.

Angela's sister writes, "As the floodwaters recede, we see catastrophic damage to homes and businesses, including the River Arts District, where 12 Bones was founded. Entire livelihoods have been lost. In nearly every direction you look, everything is caked in mud and scattered debris. Broken wood and mangled wiring now stand where intersections once existed." Coincidentally, on October 15, the publisher Blair is releasing "River Road," a book of poems by mountain author Wayne Caldwell. His fine poetry describes the power of the flooding waters on the French Broad as shown in the following excerpt: Selection from "River road" by Wayne Caldwell

The French Broad, being a river, floods.

How many times over the millennia has it left its banks and moved whatever was swept up in it To some far away (and sometimes ridiculous) place?

Perhaps thousands.

And each time it returned to its placid face.

The worst (in the last century) was in July 1916.

Asheville's Riverside Park was washed away.

Parts of which one could have seen rushing by my house Had it been there then.

One On One My Corner This past Monday, Oct. 7, was the one-year anniversary of the brutal, horrific, terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas.

On Monday, I sent a text to family and friends, "Today we are all Jewish." There is a misguided, dangerous attempt by many in America and throughout the world to condemn the Israeli war between Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran as the fault of Israel. Talk about disinformation.

That goes beyond and is more malignant than the Trump Russia collusion hoax.

Demonstrations are taking place trying to convince us that the problem in the Middle East is Israel. As colleges have reconvened for the new school year, many campuses are again experiencing demonstrations castigating Israel for defending their country against annihilation by Iran. Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Yemen Houthis are wholly owned armed terrorist subdivisions of Iran.

In antisemitic demonstrations against Jews and Israel the term "from the river to the sea" is used to mean abolishing the nation of Israel.

The river is the Jordan River, part of the eastern border of Israel. The river that Jesus was baptized in. The sea is the Mediterranean Sea, the western border of Israel.

The older I get, the more I realize that I am an amalgam of religious beliefs. I am a hybrid. I am Presbyterian, Catholic, and Jewish.

I am Presbyterian by upbringing and familial affiliation. I became, in my mind, Catholic as I was an ardent admirer and believer in the leadership of the Catholic faith by Pope John Paul II. Pope John Paul II was Pope from 1978 until his death in 2005.

Prior to becoming Pope, he was the Archbishop of Krakow, Poland. A communist member of the Russian block of nations.

Through the efforts of Pope John Paul II, President Ronald Reagan, and the United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret

Thatcher, Eastern Europe freed themselves from the yoke of atheistic communist Russia and regained their autonomy, freedom, and liberty.

I became Jewish by becoming a friend of Jewish medical students during my first year in medical school. Prior to medical school I really was not wellinformed of Jewish folks.

I developed a kinship for my new Jewish friends.

It started with my dorm roommate being Jewish.

I eventually joined the Jewish fraternity in medical school and was the only gentile in the fraternity. My senior year in medical school the fraternity elected me as their president. It required me to attend the annual meeting of the national Jewish fraternity. I was jokingly made fun of at the meeting as the Jewish Lil' Abner. Six feet five inches tall, blonde hair and blue eyes. Not the physical characteristics of most Jews.

In my junior year in medical school, as the founder and president of a national medical school association, I was one of three American medical students invited to attend the International Federation of Medical Student Association's annual meeting in Jerusalem, Israel. I resided for a week at Hebrew University. The visit to the Holy Land was an epiphany for me. The holiest of places for Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

All Israel wants to do is live in peace with their Arab neighbors. Many of the neighboring states also want to live in peace with Israel. There is one major exception. Iran.

Iran wants to destroy Israel. Iran has stated that Israel is one bomb away from extinction. That bomb being a nuclear bomb. If Iran obtains a nuclear bomb they will use it against Israel.

With America's help, Israel can defeat Iran and their terrorist proxies. I pray the war with Iran ends soon and with an appropriate denouement.

Today, we are all Jewish First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the impacts of Hurricane Helene in our state.

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(Continued From Page 4) (Even this relatively high ground Would have been inundated for several days.)

Only a half dozen people died in Asheville, Which I'd consider a small miracle. Thanks to the telephone, Warning came to Marshall, and only two or three drowned, Even though the courthouse was about the only thing left On Main Street. Fifty-Three houses disappeared.

From high ground one could have seen rushing by Bales of cotton, houses, mules, gas tanks, Vehicles, sheds, chickens, roosting on pieces of roof, Tires, fences, trees, pigs, dogs, cats, Anything thing not tied down - and many things that were.

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D G Martine, 'Great floods of 1916 and 2024', *Tabor-Loris Tribune* (online), 9 Oct 2024 4 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A0323AE59B30">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C9A0323AE59B30</a>



## Commentary: Disaster brings out best, worst

October 9, 2024 | Tideland News, The (Swansboro, NC) Author: Tom Campbell| Section: Opinions | 812 Words OpenURL Link

You can learn a lot about people when they are under stress. We see them at their best – or worst. Hurricane Helene is revealing both.

My family has experienced what it is like to be without power, water and refrigeration, with mud and debris in your home. You feel alone, overwhelmed, and sad. We have also rejoiced when strangers we never met come to help muck out the house, haul out furniture and belongings that must be discarded, do carpentry work and saw tree limbs. Their biggest contribution is to provide comfort.

We can't thank these heroes enough. But they aren't looking for thanks. They see this as their responsibility, a calling to help another in times of distress.

These are the people the musical group Alabama sang about in their wonderful song, Angels among us:

I believe there are Angels among us, sent down to us from somewhere up above.

They come to you and me in our darkest hours

To show us how to live, to teach us how to give.

To guide us with the light of love.

We are blessed by many angels. But times of distress also show the worst side of some.

We all remember when President Trump went to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. His response to the devastation was tossing paper towels into the crowd. It took him weeks to release federal funding for the territory.

His response to Helene wasn't much better. Trump instructed his staff to find a place where the storm had ransacked a business and it was surrounded by rubble. With cameras rolling he declared his visit wasn't political, then started criticizing Governor Roy Cooper for doing a terrible job and "going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas."

The claim was totally fabricated. It was disgusting political pandering. This is no time for politics.

As has always been the case there will be scammers preying on the elderly or those desperate for help, charging them outrageous prices. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between genuine helpers and those trying to make a quick buck. True volunteers won't ask for money. Much as you might need help, be cautious!

Those devastated by Helene are wondering why it is taking so long for help to arrive. Our federal and state government could perhaps have been better prepared to respond. They knew by Wednesday that Helene was going to impact Western Carolina and forecasters predicted it was going to be bad.

But no one could ever have imagined just how devastating this storm was going to be. Not since 1916 has the western section of our state had an event so destructive. By Friday afternoon and evening, when it was obvious how bad the damage was going to be, it was too late to put resources in place without potentially endangering their lives. Surging waters and sheets of rain destroyed roads, landslides demolished buildings and houses were swept away ... some with people inside. The death count is far greater than is being reported.

Media coverage has been uneven. Reporters, photographers and news crews were not allowed into many rural areas because of potential danger. Even so, most of the news coverage has focused on Asheville. It had great damage, but the media has largely neglected a great deal of suffering in smaller communities like Linville, Spruce Pine, Banner Elk, Swannanoa and less populous counties.

Folks are desperate for basic needs. They urgently need water – to drink, to wash themselves, and flush toilets. Wipes, toilet paper, paper towels and even diapers are needed, along with non-perishable food like pop-top cans of chicken, tuna, beans, applesauce fruit and peanut butter. Granola and protein bars and crackers are very welcome. Candles and flashlights with batteries are essential.

Our western neighbors need the right-here, right-now kind of help. Saying help is on the way when you are thirsty, alone and in darkness being doesn't help with immediate basic needs.

There are many ways you can help. Please don't just hop in the car and head west. DOT says heavy traffic on damaged roads is overwhelming efforts to repair roads. But groups of people can band together, accumulate supplies and transport them to coordinated safe staging areas, where they can be transferred to areas of most need. Have a plan for where you take supplies. Recognized charitable organizations will also welcome help.

Money is also badly needed. Fortunately, our state has several billion dollars in "rainy day funds" and the federal government will also provide large amounts of funding. But it is going to take more than money to help restore life for those affected. Regardless of your beliefs, praying for their safety and wellbeing will help.

We are North Carolina, the "goodliest land," with the goodliest people. Let us all do our best to help our neighbors.

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965

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# Tropical storm Helene - 'Our valley people have suffered greatly' - Asheville Christian Academy ravaged by flooding from Helene

October 9, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Zachary Huber; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: Sports | 589 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

SWANNANOA — Asheville Christian Academy athletic director Joe Johnson worked at the school when hurricanes Frances and Ivan struck nine days apart in 2004.

Johnson said those storms pale in comparison to Tropical Storm Helene, which ravaged Western North Carolina on Sept. 27 and 28.

"This is way, way more than 2004," Johnson said. "That looks like a spring rain compared to what happened at least here in this valley. Our valley people have suffered greatly and will for weeks to come."

Asheville Christian Academy lies on the northwest side of Swannanoa. The town was one of the areas in Western North Carolina hit hardest by Helene, and Asheville Christian Academy was no exception.

Johnson first checked out the damage Friday morning after the weather settled down. Upon arriving, he said he couldn't get to campus because a trailer home blocked the road on the far east side of campus. He then accessed the lower soccer field off Riverwood Road. The Swannanoa River runs behind the school's football, baseball, soccer and softball fields.

Johnson saw a trailer home and a white van lying on the soccer field. One set of bleachers was missing from the baseball field, while a red sedan sat about 10 yards from one of the dugouts. The football scoreboard was twisted, and the bleachers and fence surrounding the field were damaged.

"If you thought about all the things that are in your house right now, those same items are strewn all over our fields — cars, houses, laptops, coffee pots, microwaves, clothing, whatever," Johnson said. "We've seen it all out here."

He returned Sunday to see the damage inside the school. Jason Putnam, Asheville Christian Academy head of school, told Johnson the first floor of each school building, including the gym, had been flooded. Putnam said the water rose to as high as two to four feet inside the school, depending on the building. Then, he added, there were two to six inches of mud that needed removal.

Rebuilding Asheville

Christian Academy

Every student and staff member has been accounted for since Helene, according to Putnam. But there is no time frame for the resumption of school. The focus is on the cleanup process.

"But this is a dangerous place here right now," Johnson said. "There's a lot of hazards."

Asheville Christian Academy's fall sports teams will not play at home for the rest of the season. Football had one more home game, while boys soccer had two more left before the playoffs.

Volleyball wrapped up its regular season before Helene hit, finishing undefeated at 13-0. The Lions most likely will earn the top seed in the NCISAA 3A playoffs. As the top seed, they would host each of their playoff games, including the state championship, if they advance that far.

However, because of the damage to the gym floor, the games will have to be played elsewhere. Johnson said ACA would find another gym in the Asheville area where the Lions could host their playoff games.

Johnson said the school's gym couldn't be rebuilt in time for the boys and girls basketball seasons.

Johnson said there isn't a timeline for repairing the athletic facilities because the focus is on cleaning up the academic buildings and preparing them for school to resume.

"God built this campus once," Johnson said. "And I truly believe he'll build it back again."

Zachary Huber is a high school sports reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times and Hendersonville Times-News. Email him at zhuber@gannett.com or follow him on X @zacharyahuber.

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## Perseverance in Pensacola - The land has changed, but the heart of the community remains the same

October 9, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Jacob Biba; Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 1901 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

YANCEY COUNTY – As Tropical Storm Helene ripped through Western North Carolina Sept. 27, torrents of water, rocks, mud and debris tore through small, isolated communities, forever altering the landscape.

In one single day, homes, businesses and families were destroyed.

Pensacola, south of Burnsville in Yancey County, was hit particularly hard.

Washed away

On Sept. 27, as Helene pounded the small, tight-knit community located near the base of Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River, the Cane River, which snakes through the valley along Highway 197, turned into a wall of water. All the roads leading in and out were washed away.

In Yancey County, north of Asheville, creeks and streams that once trickled down surrounding mountains, became raging rivers. In some areas, it looks like the sides of mountains could no longer hold on. They dropped to the ground, burying everything below.

At least three people in Pensacola were killed as a result of Helene, residents told the Citizen Times. As of Oct 4., the death toll reached 115 in North Carolina and is expected rise as search efforts continue.

When Helene came through, Kaye Harris and her husband parked their truck atop a hill and watched as Cattail Creek rose above the roofline of the Methodist church across the road. Soon, water and mud rushed through their home.

"It cut the bank further up the road and came roaring down," Harris said. "Half the pavement was in our yard."

A week later, Harris and her husband, Nolan, were in their living room salvaging all the personal belongings they could. It took them three days to shovel out most of the mud, which was over knee high in some places. Elsewhere in the house, portions of the floor had caved in.

Other Pensacola residents were luckier – flood waters pushed trees, rocks and cars together to form makeshift dams around their homes.

Before the storm, William Pagan parked two cars on one end of his mobile home as a barrier. They caught large trees and other debris that flowed in. At one point during the surge, a tree started to move. He begged it to stay. His home was largely spared.

"The way it all dammed itself naturally, I can't believe it," Pagan told the Citizen Times Oct. 4. "The houses that made it are only because of the way things landed."

His neighbors, Mack and Lucille Thomason, had similar luck – the water raged just underneath their home. Before the water rose too high, the Thomasons evacuated to the Pensacola Volunteer Fire Department a quarter mile away, Mack told the Citizen Times Oct. 4. The couple, who have been married for 55 years, slept in their Ford truck for two nights before they returned home.

Mack snored, Lucille said.

'When you think you got

life figured out, that's

when it screws you'

In Helene's wake, Pensacola's volunteer fire department became the hub for emergency response in the community. Like other rural communities in the area, it's the gathering point for first responders, rescue personnel, family and friends providing not only physical aid but also emotional support.

Bradley Boone, the department's assistant chief, is helping coordinate the recovery effort.

He told the Citizen Times Oct. 4 that in other parts of Yancey County, churches have been able to step in and distribute water and food and other essential items.

"But all our churches were destroyed," Boone said. "So, we're running rescue here and also running relief here."

Next door to his office, a large truck bay was filled with water, food and other essential items, much of it hauled in by community members from the county's less devastated areas. For days, Pensacola residents have been coming by and grabbing what they need, while relief workers load up on supplies, distributing them to residents who can't make it to the fire department, either because the roads are washed out, or they're elderly.

That afternoon, Boone's parents, David and Elaine Boone, showed up at the fire department. David had just used his tractor to help his neighbor unload bales of hay.

Elaine spoke with friends and David collected mail from the postman who happened to be driving by in his Jeep.

David told the Citizen Times that he wasn't surprised he and his family were living through a natural disaster.

"When you think you got life figured out, that's when it screws you," David said.

David said when Bradley was young, he was always pretending to be a policeman or a preacher.

By the time Helene hit, Bradley was working with a local sheriff's department as a school resource officer. He was also the pastor of Concord Baptist Church in Pensacola, taking over the congregation in 1998 when it only had eight members, including his parents. It's now one of the largest churches in the county, David said.

Helene largely spared the building, but the bridge leading to it washed out.

Like many residents, Bradley said even though Helene wrecked the land, it didn't destroy the community.

"A lot of times in other places, disasters spread people apart," Bradley said. "In this area, disasters bring people together."

A few miles away from the fire station, residents were running heavy machinery, rebuilding roads that landslides had, a week earlier, transformed into creek beds. They looked like they had been there forever.

One resident operated an excavator in the middle of the Cane River, pulling rocks, boulders and mud from the bottom to shore up a bank. Helicopters circled above, while all-terrain vehicles packed with supplies poured into Pensacola across washed out roads and bridges.

'All that's gone'

At the fire station, Elaine saw her former pastor's son and broke down in tears. She latched on to her husband David.

For years, the Boone Family had been members of Laurel Branch Baptist Church, just around the corner from the fire department.

During Helene, flood waters pushed an RV across the road into the church. The RV had been parked across the road at B.B. Wilson's Grocery, which was destroyed.

"I grew up two driveways down from here and B.B. Wilson's store was always a hangout for us when I was young," Bradley said. "You'd walk up there and get the evening news from old men sitting around on the porch. That was Pensacola and all that's gone."

At the church, a large portion of the fellowship hall, named after its former pastor Ray Strickland, had been torn off. A week later, a clock hung high on a wall, running two minutes fast.

Inside the church, mud caked the floor, and a piano was overturned. A pew was on top of it.

Six miles away on Toodies Creek Road, Ray Strickland's home was destroyed. A landslide tore through it, killing his wife Susan and leaving Ray seriously injured and stuck on the mountain with his neighbors.

Their son, Aaron Strickland, who lives on the other side of Burnsville, didn't find out what happened to his parents until two days later, he said.

As the storm hit Sept. 27, Aaron's home began to flood, trapping him and his girlfriend inside for most of the day, he told the Citizen Times Oct. 4. They finally made it to an emergency shelter at a fire station and started helping people coming in, feeding them and attending to any medical needs.

At first, Aaron said he wasn't too concerned that he hadn't heard from his parents – he knew cell service was out across the region. But by Saturday night, he had a weird feeling. So, the next morning, he drove into Pensacola as far as he could, getting to the bottom of Ferguson Hill, about five miles from his parent's home, he said. There he ran into some family friends who told him about his mother and father.

He knew he had to get to Ray.

With help from a friend, Aaron devised a plan to hike down to his parents' home from Mountain Air, a nearby country club.

As a child, he would hike to the country club's airport runway and have picnics.

But running down the mountain after Helene, the topography was totally altered by landslides.

"We got to this one place where there's a creek that's normally 4 feet wide and only a couple inches deep," he said. "Now, it's 15 feet deep."

The closer he got to his parents' home, the faster his heart started beating, he said. He didn't know what he was going find.

Finally, making it to the top of Toodies Creek Road, he started processing the scene.

"I looked down to where my parents' house was, and it's gone," he said. "Not pieces of it here and there – I mean, it's gone."

Aaron knew his father was with the neighbors, so he cut a path to their home, jumping over a creek, he said, and climbing through downed trees as fast as he could.

Breaking through the limbs, he saw his dad standing there, with his back to him.

"He turned around and saw me, so immediately I knew he was OK," Aaron said.

They both cried.

But Ray refused to leave his two elderly neighbors behind, Aaron said.

Knowing they were all safe and had enough supplies for a few days, Aaron and his friend continued to hike down the mountain, devising another plan to rescue Aaron's father and his neighbors from the mountain in the coming days.

#### Safety

Susan Strickland started wearing clown makeup to have an excuse for her silly behavior and all her "corny little jokes," her son Aaron told the Citizen Times Oct. 4.

Susan not only worked as a clown, but she was also an artist and sold advertising at the local radio station, Aaron said. She was also the type of person who could back her car into someone's fence, get yelled at, and then foster a years-long relationship with the person whose property she damaged.

"Everyone saw the same smile and compassion, and it was genuine – it wasn't fake," Aaron said. "It wasn't just putting on a show. It was who she was, and that's who she wanted to be to everyone."

Her husband Ray, who Aaron described as calm, supportive and generous, was a good complement.

Both Ray and Susan, in their own very different ways, made people feel safe.

On Oct. 1, Aaron and his friends finally got his father out of Pensacola. Ray's two elderly neighbors were airlifted out by the National Guard. Ray and his other neighbors were evacuated by ATV, Aaron said. He's now with his daughter, Aaron's sister Ginnie, recovering.

The Pensacola community is healing, too. Residents are rebuilding what they can, together. But most have accepted that what Helene has wrought won't be forgotten.

The "rope hole" where Aaron swam as a child is wiped out. The store where he bought candy and sodas is gone, too. His childhood home is destroyed.

"There's so many little landmarks and things that are different now, and that'll be a reminder, I think, for quite a while," he said.

But amid loss, most in Pensacola are confident the community – brought closer together through this disaster – will remain unchanged.

Jacob Biba is the county watchdog reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Reach him at jbiba@citizentimes.com.

#### WHERE TO FIND HELP

See 5A for the latest on emergency resources.

#### **TEXT UPDATES**

We are staffing a text message service to bring you the latest on Helene, connect you with resources and answer any questions you have. To sign up, text "Hello" to (239) 241-6343.

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## Voting rules eased for 13 counties affected by destruction

October 9, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Sarah Gleason; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 733 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

As Western North Carolina digs out from the damage left by Tropical Storm Helene, the State Board of Elections on Monday approved changes to election rules to make voting more accessible for people in the 13 most-affected counties, including Buncombe and Henderson.

With less than 30 days until Election Day, Nov. 5, and early voting starting next week, the rule changes allow:

County election boards to modify early voting sites and hours with a bipartisan majority vote. If a board approves changes, it will need to notify the media and make postings in community relief hubs. The changes also will allow boards, again with a bipartisan majority, to permit voters to cast a ballot at any site in their county, or even at a site in an adjacent county, if necessary.

Change, add or remove voting sites, as needed.

Voters to request absentee ballots in person up until the day before Election Day. The board also voted to allow voters to return absentee ballots to a county board other than their assigned one. Whichever board receives a ballot will mark it and send it to the correct county board to be processed and counted. Absentee ballots must still be received by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

The creation of what the board called "Multipartisan Assistance Teams" of workers who will be able to return absentee ballots for those who cannot do so. These workers will be trained by the board of elections and will be deployed to disaster shelters, for example.

The appointment, with a bipartisan majority vote of an election board, of poll workers to sites outside of their precincts and the reassignment of workers, while maintaining "bipartisan representation among the judges at all sites, to the extent possible," according to the resolution.

The resolution also calls on emergency management officials to help provide temporary voting facilities, generators and bathrooms, among other needs.

There will not be a change or extension in the voter registration deadline, but voters can register in-person during early voting, which lasts from Oct. 17 to Nov. 2.

"It may look a little different in these effected counties, but we fully intend to offer early voting starting on the 17th," Karen Brinson Bell, state board executive director, said in Monday's meeting.

Western North Carolina counties under new voting rules

In addition to Buncombe and Henderson, the counties under the new rules are:

Ashe

Avery

Haywood

Madison
McDowell
Mitchell
Polk
Rutherford
Transylvania
Watauga
Yancey
All county board of elections offices were up and running as of Monday, Brinson Bell said, adding the state board is committed to making the election happen, even if it has to "take voting to the people.".
Unaffiliated voters make up the biggest group of registrants in the affected counties, with Republicans following close behind and Democrats representing a much smaller proportion. WNC as a whole tends to swing red, with the majority of its counties going for Donald Trump in the 2020 election.
Election integrity amid a changing landscape
While many Republican leaders continue to fuel election security concerns, and some refusing to say they will accept November's results if former President Donald Trump does not win re-election, the state board assured reporters Monday that the voting will be secure despite the effects of Helene.
Board member Stacy "Four" Eggers IV, Republican from Boone, said he's normally hesitant to make changes to elections, but that he supports these changes, citing the nonpartisan majority vote requirement for enacting the rules.
Kevin Lewis of Rocky Mount, also a Republican board member, echoed Eggers' confidence, saying he expects it to be a collaborative effort.
In response to misinformation about voting and election security, Brinson Bell told reporters she and her team are working in a nonpartisan manner to serve all voters.
"I don't care what their political affiliation is. We're going to get this job done because that's our work no matter what the election, no matter the circumstances, is to ensure that every eligible voter is able to cast their ballot," she said.
Aside from approving Monday's resolution, she said the board has made a \$2 million request from the Legislature, which is set to consider storm relief measures beginning Oct. 9.
More coverage
After Helene, a small Watauga County community expects a 'new normal.' 2A

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians hatchery loses fall trout stock. 3A

Pisgah football to resume season. 3A

Scenes from Western North Carolina's recovery efforts. 4A

Mental health suffers after natural disasters, here are tips to cope. 9A

Hospitals urge feds to help avert nationwide IV shortage. 10A

Eric Church, Luke Combs to hold Hurricane Helene benefit show. 10A

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