

Fundraising could affect FEMA payouts - Crowdfunding benefits may not be duplicated

October 23, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC)

Author: Lianna Norman; USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA Section: News 891 Words

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For those who lost their homes or belongings as a result of Hurricane Milton or Hurricane Helene, rebuilding and replacing can be daunting.

And there are plenty of rumors flying around about FEMA disaster assistance, which can add a whole other layer of confusion on top of the stress of rebuilding.

Some people affected by hurricanes have made or are considering making a GoFundMe or online fundraiser to help pay for the cost of any damages they have to their home or property. They might be wondering if that interferes with their FEMA eligibility.

The answer: It might. If a person uses crowdfunding or GoFundMe, it isn't likely that they'll be able to receive disaster assistance from FEMA. However, there's still a chance.

According to FEMA's site for mitigating rumors in the wake of Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton, FEMA cannot duplicate benefits or funds disaster victims receive from another source. But it depends on the situation.

"If you receive money from a GoFundMe page for a specific disaster-related expense – such as home repairs, funeral expenses or other emergency needs – you may not be able to receive FEMA aid for the same expense," FEMA's website says.

"For example, if you receive donations to clean up storm damage to your home, FEMA may not be able to also grant you financial assistance for home clean up."

FEMA adds, "We encourage all survivors to apply for assistance regardless so we can review your specific case."

There are a wide variety of post-disaster needs that FEMA can help cover – like temporary housing, purchasing a generator or covering costs related to funerals and reburials caused by a storm. Here's a nonexhaustive list of what FEMA money may be used for, provided by the Asheville Citizen Times.

Home repairs

General repairs: Even if there was a preexisting issue with a home, if it receives major damage from Milton, FEMA can provide funds to repair.

Accessibility: Whether a person has a preexisting disability and the accessibility features of their home were damaged, or they suffer a disability caused by Milton, FEMA can fund the repair or installation of features such as ramps, grab bars, paved paths and more.

Privately owned roads, bridges, docks: FEMA will fund these repairs if they are the only access to the home.

Replacement: "Limited funds may be available under rare conditions to replace a disaster-destroyed home," as per the FEMA website.

Housing expenses

Direct temporary housing: Temporary housing units, multi-family lease and repair or direct lease are available to those who have been displaced by flooding.

Displacement: This money helps those displaced by flooding seek immediate housing needs while looking for a longer-term rental.

Personal property: These funds are allocated for replacing essentials lost in flooding, such as kitchen appliances, computers and furnishings, as well as books, uniforms and tools required for school or work.

Moving and storage expenses: If those affected by a disaster wish to store their possessions in a safe place like a storage unit while looking for a rental property, FEMA may assist.

Group flood insurance: If a home suffered flood damage in a Special Flood Hazard Area, FEMA can purchase a group flood insurance policy on the homeowner's behalf. This policy gives three years of coverage.

Clean and sanitize: This pays for minor damages to a home if the FEMA inspector decides that the home remains livable.

Miscellaneous

Serious needs: Funds cover immediate needs like water, food, first aid, prescriptions, infant formula, breastfeeding equipment, diapers, personal hygiene items and fuel.

Funeral: FEMA can assist with payments for funerals and reburials.

Transport: Repairs for a personal vehicle, if there is no other feasible way to get around.

Child care: FEMA can help with new child care expenses caused by the disaster.

It's important to note that "some disaster aid does not have to be paid back, while other types of help may come in the form of loans. The FEMA representative will explain the details to you when you call," FEMA says.

FEMA money can't be used to go to the movies or buy a lottery ticket. FEMA recommends that disaster survivors keep their Hurricane Helene- or Hurricane Milton-related receipts for about three years "to show how you spent FEMA grants and document how your disaster funds were used."

For people who want to use crowdfunding, GoFundMe has set up a general fundraiser with the money going to people impacted by any hurricane. GoFundMe delivers cash grants from this fundraiser directly to those impacted by domestic hurricanes.

The money goes to "verified individuals who qualify and are fundraising for themselves or on behalf of someone else. We may also provide grants to fundraisers benefiting small businesses and community relief efforts, or to vetted nonprofits coordinating long-term recovery," according to the website. Find information at gofundme.com/f/enxh8-hurricane-relief-fund.

GoFundMe also has a landing page for verified nonprofits that are supporting victims of Hurricane Milton, including Team Rubicon, Feeding Tampa Bay, The Red Cross and Americanes at gofundme.com/c/act/hurricane-milton.

Dozens of families impacted by Milton have set up their own accounts on GoFundMe to raise money. GoFundMe has a page for verified fundraisers for people asking for help with replacing and restoring their houses and belongings. Find them at gofundme.com/c/act/hurricane-relief/florida.

Contributing: Jake Allen, Indianapolis Star

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Major western NC tourist site to reopen next month - Biltmore Estate grounds ravaged by flooding

October 23, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Jacob Biba and Christopher Cann; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 446 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – More than three weeks after remnants of Hurricane Helene ravaged western North Carolina, Biltmore Estate, one of the area's most popular tourist attractions and largest employers, announced it will reopen on Nov. 2.

Helene's historic flooding ravaged portions of the Biltmore grounds, including its entrance and multiple low-lying buildings, the Citizen Times previously reported. Several of the estate's animals were killed in the storm, according to a statement the estate released on social media, adding the vast majority of the animals were safe and accounted for.

Many of the attraction's other facilities, including the Gilded Age Biltmore House, the conservatory, winery, gardens and the estate's hotels, received minimal or no damage.

The reopening, which was announced in a company statement, will mark the beginning of the holiday season for the 8,000-acre estate, which employs approximately 2,400 people.

While the Biltmore House, restaurants and other estate attractions will be open to visitors, the company is still cleaning up roads and wooded areas ravaged by the deadly storm. The company said its trails and outdoor adventure center will remain closed until further notice.

"We are incredibly grateful for the outpouring of support for our community and the determination of our first responders, utility workers and community volunteers," Bill Cecil Jr., president and CEO of Biltmore, said in a statement. "As recovery unfolds, welcoming guests back to Biltmore not only means we can open, but also brings critical support to our region's economy to aid area employees, local businesses and friends."

No storm-related deaths were reported among staff, Marissa Jamison, a Biltmore spokesperson, said in an Oct. 19 email to the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network. All staff have been accounted for, though several employees lost their homes in the storm, Jamison said.

Some are also out of work, at least temporarily.

Citing "a significant decline in tourism that is expected to persist in the near term," Biltmore, one of the largest employers in Buncombe County, furloughed an unspecified number of employees, according to Jamison.

But the furlough is temporary, she said, and staff members will return to work "in phases after reopening."

Helene made landfall along the Gulf Coast of Florida on Sept. 26 before it barreled inland, carving an immense trail of destruction across the Southeast. The storm wrought billions of dollars in damages and killed at least 228 people, making it the deadliest hurricane since Katrina in 2005.

Jacob Biba reports for Asheville Citizen Times; Christopher Cann reports for USA TODAY.

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Jacob Biba and Christopher Cann, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Major western NC tourist site to reopen next month - Biltmore Estate grounds ravaged by flooding', *Fayetteville Observer, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 A6 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C636C34AB84728



Coming together to celebrate recovery

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On Oct. 11, more than 100 participants gathered at the gazebo on the Town Square in Franklin for the fourth annual Come Together Recovery Rally, celebrating recovery in the mountains of Franklin.

Agencies like No Wrong Door, Hazelwood Healthcare, AA, WNCAP, and the National Alliance of Mental Illness (N.A.M.I.) hosted tables with resources from their work in the community. All Saints Episcopal Church provided face painting and fun activities for youth, as the stage rotated between live music and real stories of recovery taking place every day in our community. There were testimonies from local residents Kelsie Diane Elliott, Don Van Meter, and Marcia Doty, as well as updates from Mary Guercio on how All Saints Episcopal Church is utilizing its resources to further support those in recovery. Guercio said the church hosts AA and NA meetings at each of the parish halls and installed a Little Free Food Pantry on the St. Cyprian's property. They recently purchased a Narcan Box, which will be stocked and also located at St. Cyprian's Chapel on Roller Mill Road.

"Everyone struggles with something. All of us. We are here and want to help people who are struggling to know that they are not alone. We see them, we care, and we want to help," Guercio said. Additionally, this year the church sent much needed cleaning, hygiene and warm clothing items to the Church of the Advocate, which serves the unsheltered community in Asheville. Church members also continually donate warm coats, socks and blankets to Smoky Mountain Harm Reduction and Downtown Door for our local unsheltered community.

"Many people come to the mountains of Western North Carolina in recovery, looking for a better life. We know that starting over and getting your feet under you is harder today than ever, but we also know that it is easier with support than it is alone," Guercio said. "We are a small congregation in the heart of the mountains who have been blessed and want to bless those around us. This rally is a way to showcase both the compassion and the resources that are available in our area, while showing that there is still fun and joy in life after Substance Use Disorder."

Guercio said using and abusing substances is most often a bad coping mechanism for deeper seeded troubles, whether it be past abuse and trauma, anxiety, abandonment issues, etc.

"I don't know anyone who has tried to be an addict. I do know several who try not to be, daily. This rally is to acknowledge and honor that person, and their victory, one day at a time," she said. Live music kept the festivities going all afternoon and into the evening, with performances by Modern Mammals, Mongolian traditional music by Odonchimeg, and a set by WNCW's Marshall Ballew. "Look for us again next year, on the last Friday in September, as long as no more hurricanes come to the party," Guercio said. (The event was originally scheduled for Sept. 27, but had to be postponed due to the Hurricane Helene.)

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New Little Free Library

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The Bookish Broads Book Club recently built and installed a Little Free Library at the dog park at Big Bear Park on the Little Tennessee River Greenway. While there are books for people, the ladies of the book club also included dog toys and a stick library for canine visitors. "We had seen where people had done stick libraries and thought that was cool," said Jennifer Kelley of Cozy and Content bookstore, where the club is based. Book club members take turns stocking the library with books and sticks. "We hope people enjoy it and take care of it," Kelley said. The little library received some damage in the flooding after Tropical Storm Helene, but it has been repaired. Pictured are Bookish Broads book club members (front, from left) Lauren Leming and Jocelyn Lister; (standing, from left) Samantha Queen, Jennifer Kelley, Linzi Nicholson, Amber Dunn and Cieara Gregory. (Press photo/Vickie Carpenter)

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Scaly Road closed for four months

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The N.C. Department of Transportation closed the Scaly Road (NC Hwy 106) on Oct. 19 and the road is expected to remain closed for four months for repairs. While examining the road following Hurricane Helene, NCDOT engineers found a deteriorated pipe more than 40 feet below the road surface. A contract will be awarded in the coming days to repair the pipe, rebuild the roadbed and strengthen the slope below the road.

The road is closed to all traffic between the Blue Valley Overlook and the Osage Overlook. Residents will have access to their homes in neighborhoods off N.C. 106. However, this damage cuts the direct route for passenger vehicles between Highlands and Georgia.

The marked detour will direct westbound drivers north on N.C. 106 to U.S. 64 West to U.S. 441 South. The same routes, in reverse, will apply to eastbound drivers. The damage and ensuring repairs add about 20 minutes to a typical drive from Highlands to Dillard, Georgia. Trucks are prohibited on N.C. 106 during normal conditions. Large trucks must use U.S. 441 to Dillsboro, then U.S. 23/74 to Sylva, then N.C. 107 south to Highlands. Transportation officials have identified more than 7, 380 damaged sites in western North Carolina. NCDOT has reopened more than 760 roads. But more than 500 remain closed due to the storm damage.

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Promoting fall tourist season

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Just as the fall tourism season was set to begin, Hurricane Helene blew through causing devastation throughout Western North Carolina. People lost their lives, homes and businesses in the flooding. While recovery continues, some areas of WNC are open and want to let visitors know they are welcome.

Mici Canales, communications and member services coordinator for Smoky Mountain Host, said businesses of all sizes throughout the region were reporting major losses in visitor traffic and bookings, with some businesses experiencing cancellations as high as 90%.

"This was evident from the low traffic at our regional visitor center, which usually welcomes 5, 000-6, 000 visitors by Oct. 10 but saw a drop to just 800 in the first two weeks of October," Canales said. "Many visitors were driving through to Gatlinburg, saying, 'Don't worry, we won't stop; we know WNC is closed.' We knew this message needed to change."

Part of changing that message was differentiating the Smokies Region from those areas further east that received more damage in the storm. Canales said the Smokies Region of WNC was fortunate to be back up and ready for businesses within a day or two after the storm.

"As an organization, we had been reaching out to the governor and working on a legislative level, but it was clear that the Smoky Mountain Host needed to take on the responsibility of differentiating the Smokies region from WNC as a whole," she said. "Part of recovering from the current region-wide economic crisis is raising awareness and inviting informed visitors back at a time when we need them most."

Even in the midst of struggling to keep their own businesses afloat, Canales said they saw many businesses in the region supporting, volunteering, and housing Helene victims from neighboring counties. "We recognize that our mountain towns cannot continue to pour from empty cups," she said. To help address the issue, Allison Outdoor Advertising donated a billboard that went up on Oct. 10 listing the towns that were open. The sign included Franklin and Highlands in Macon County.

Canales said the billboard has garnered media attention regionally, as well as nationally in "The Washington Post," on MSNBC, and on Southern Living's website. But more importantly it is helping to attract visitors.

"Visitors to our visitor center are increasing, with many mentioning seeing the billboard," Canales said. "Even with the uptick of visitors throughout the region during this beautiful time of year, we understand that we are not out of the woods yet. Every step we take must be critical and both short-sighted and long-sighted for our region's businesses. Many businesses are still reporting unrecoverable cancellations and will not qualify for FEMA, so they need a voice now."

In addition to the billboard, which is located on 441 North, Canales said they are targeting their marketing efforts in areas such as Jacksonville, Florida, Atlanta, and Chattanooga to bring awareness to audiences that could visit and help the region. Smoky Mountain Host will present a workshop this week to help tourism-related businesses address the challenges presented following Hurricane Helene. The workshop will be held from 8:30-11:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 24 at Clarion Pointe in Sylva. For more information about Smoky Mountain Host and tourism in WNC go to visitsmokies.org.

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NCDOT calling on businesses to help with Helene recovery - Contract work will include debris removal, paving, construction, traffic control

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State transportation officials are reaching out to businesses interested in helping restore Western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene brought catastrophic damage to the region. It will take several billion dollars to restore roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure, according to the N.C. Department of Transportation's initial estimates. "We are going to need help from qualified businesses with many skill sets," said state Transportation Secretary Joey Hopkins. "There is debris to be moved, roads and bridges to be designed, fixed or rebuilt, as well as other types of contract work to be done. We're going to need a lot of help to rebuild Western North Carolina." NCDOT is working to educate the business community on the many contracting opportunities that will be available and the requirements to bid on state transportation contracts. On Oct. 29-30, NCDOT staff will host six "Special NCDOT Prequalification Outreach" in-person workshops at the Buncombe County

NCDOT Division 13 Office, 55 Orange St., Asheville. Businesses interested can attend one or more of the sessions to learn about prequalification, a requirement for any business that wants to bid on state transportation contracts. Prequalification ensures a firm has sufficient ability, experience and resources to perform the work specified on NCDOT contracts. The work sessions will cover how to apply online to become prequalified, the North Carolina Identity Management Service process, and the documentation and experience requirements for various scopes of work. Registration is required and limited to two persons per firm. Register at forms.office.com/g/qGZ6npiHuL. Space is limited so people should register soon. The prequalification sessions will be held on the following schedule: · 8-11 a.m. Oct. 29 · Noon-3 p.m. Oct. 29 · 3-6 p.m. Oct. 29 · 8-11 a.m. Oct. 30 · Noon-3 p.m. Oct. 30 · 3-6 p.m. Oct. 30 NCDOT will also be offering other prequalification work sessions from 1-4 p.m. on Nov. 14 at Nash Community College in the Continuing Education Building (Room 8123), 522 North Old Carriage Road, Rocky Mount. Participation in any work session is not required to become prequalified. For more information, email Hurricanehelene@ncdot.gov or call 919-707-6909.

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Disaster relief funding available

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC) Author: Brenda Elliott 828-342-1511 | Section: News | 724 Words Page: 2B OpenURL Link

The storm continues to be the topic of many conversations, and I expect the recovery and rebuilding to be news for quite some time. And we, who have been blessed with little or no damage, are in a position to reach out to others who are suffering.

The nights have become cold in our northern mountains. Snow has fallen. A tent is not much protection. Warm coats are necessary. Gloves. Socks. Caps. Can you imagine trying to take care of your children in that? Your elderly relatives?

Gr828 WNC Intake/Distribution Center, located at Discover Church near Bojangles, is doing an excellent job of supporting those in need. Volunteers are always welcome, and they keep a current list of needs available for those who wish to donate. Benjamin Vanhook posts needs on his Facebook Page. You can also check out wncstrong.com for information or just go by Discover Church to check out the needs or volunteer for a day or longer. As we move from immediate disaster to looking at rebuilding communities, there will be an ongoing need for volunteers.

There are a number of grants available to help individuals and communities through WNC Communities organization. Community Center Disaster Recovery Grants are available for those who have had damage to their community centers. Please note that WNC Communities is focused on their member community centers for this grant. WNC Communities' Immediate Needs for Farm Businesses Grant is available to help farmers get back on the road to recovery. Recognizing that farmers in the region have immediate disaster relief needs to stabilize their farm businesses and to support a resilient regional food system, the goal of this program is to provide resources quickly, while making reasonable efforts not to duplicate other funding sources. These funds are meant to assist legitimate farm businesses with urgent needs that will directly impact the ability to get the farm business back in operation as soon as possible. The Immediate Disaster Needs grant is offered by WNC Communities as part of their WNCC Regional Support, LLC.

Farm businesses with damages directly related to Tropical Storm Helene are eligible. Any farm with direct damages within WNC Communities' 20-county service region may apply: Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Madison, Macon, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Yancey. For the first round of funding, applications will be accepted through Oct. 31. Apply online at wnccommunities.org.

WNC Bridge Foundation's Community Initiatives assist underserved individuals in the 18 counties and Qualla Boundary of Western North Carolina with basic and medical needs to remain safely in their homes. In response to Hurricane Helene, WNC Bridge has modified their CI process to address needs arising from the storm's impact.

WNC Bridge Foundation's NOW Grants have shifted to focus on relief and recovery efforts in response to Hurricane Helene. Through this fund, WNC Bridge will provide grants of up to \$10,000. The application process is designed to be straightforward and stress-free, with a quick turnaround for funding decisions. Organizations must clearly demonstrate that NOW Grant funding will be dedicated to Hurricane Helene relief and recovery efforts. These funds are designated to cover the costs of providing emergency relief services to individuals and/or eligible organizations impacted by the storm.

A number of organizations are selling disaster T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies with all proceeds going toward disaster relief. Perhaps you can't volunteer to help, but you could purchase a shirt or jacket. You might even purchase a jacket that you then donate to the organization as a gift to someone who needs the warmth and a hug.

Knowing the trauma many have experienced during this time, WNC Communities is communicating with Blue Ridge Health to see what their capacity is to bring their mobile unit onsite to community centers to aid those who have been traumatized by the hurricane and to serve other mental health needs.

We will continue to stock the pantry at our community center. We are not a collection center for hurricane relief supplies; however, if you are unable to get to a distribution center and would like to bring warm coats, gloves, socks and similar items to our Nov. 4 community meeting, we'll be happy to get them to a center. We meet at 5:30 p.m. at the Carson Community Center, 3001 Old Murphy Rd. We would love to see you there. Brenda Elliott can be reached at beejayelliott@aol.com

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Mountain Theater Co. postpones 'The Burnt Part Boys'

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Citing supply chain disruptions caused by Hurricane Helene and staffing issues caused by Hurricane Milton, the Highlands-based Mountain Theater Company's scheduled October/November run of "The Burnt Part Boys" won't happen this year.

"A decision like this is not an easy one," Executive Artistic Director Scott Daniel said. "Though we were hopeful and eager to return to the theater following Hurricane Helene, we sadly discovered that the supply chain disruptions and telecommunications failures resulting from the storm were at minimum going to cause us to delay and abbreviate the production run. Now, Hurricane Milton has unfortunately prevented many of the artists involved in the technical process from being able to remain in the area, as they must return to their families and serve their damaged communities. "Mountain Theatre Company said it will send home the contracted artists not personally impacted by the storm while providing local housing to cast and crew members displaced by the hurricanes.

"The full time MTC staff will be shifting our labor and resources to the relief efforts in WNC," Daniel said. "We at MTC know the devastation around us and understand our responsibility to liftup our community."

MTC will include "The Burnt Part Boys" in its 2025 season on an "extended run," which MTC said they will announce shortly. Patrons with reservations for "The Burnt Part Boys" are instructed to visit nountaintheatre.com/the-burnt-partboys to reassign their reservation. "Phone lines are limited, so we kindly ask you do not call the box office with reservation requests at this time," Daniel said. "Submitting the reservation request form on the website will be the quickest and easiest way for our team to assist you and we thank you for your patience and understanding at this time." MTC's annual festive season finale, "Home for the Holidays," is scheduled to run Dec. 6-22.

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Cross country girls place 2nd at conference

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC) Author: Will Woolever sports@thefranklinpress.com| Section: Sports | 803 Words Page: 4B OpenURL Link

Panther women's cross country are Mountain Seven runners-up. On Tuesday, Oct. 16, the conference gathered at the International Paper Sports Complex for a seventeam meet to dole out bragging rights for the year. With three All-Conference finishes including two from the girls, Franklin turned in a strong day ahead of the upcoming 3A West Regional. "It was a pretty good day. All of our newer girls PR'ed [set personal records] and three of the boys PR'ed," said head coach Melissa Ward of the conference meet. "We're in a good place right now. We basically just started our peaking phase and should be dropping some more times going into regionals and state, so we're in a good spot for that." Following Hurricane Helene, the frigid meet in Canton was the team's first in more than three weeks, adding an extra challenge to their last act of the regular season. Now rounding into late-season form with some of their toughest workouts of the year, the Panthers nevertheless turned in some solid times.

Franklin's deep and talented girls team took the course for the day's first race, led once again by sophomore Morgan Cress and junior Amy Mendoza Lopez. Cress traversed the looping course with a time of 20:43.28, good for Franklin's best finish of the day at sixth overall. Mendoza Lopez placed 11th in 21:57.44, joining Cress in the girls' top 12 to earn All-Conference honors. After Mendoza Lopez, Breanna Pendergrass, Abigail Pope and Mindi Holbrooks finished back-to-back, placing 17th, 18th and 19th with times in the 23-minute range. Sophomore Anna Timan also ran a sub-24-minute time (23:54.90), placing 21st just ahead of fellow sophomore Katelyn Lopez (23rd, 24:16.33). From there seven more Panthers ran times rang- ing from 25 to 38 minutes, led by Briseida Tlahuice-Flores (29th, 25:05.49) and Lilly Tux Xol (31st, 25:12.71). As a team the numerical values of their top five finishes added up to 71, good for second place behind powerhouse West Henderson (20) and just ahead of third-place Tuscola (74). After the girls, Franklin's boys took the course for an even colder, windier race. With just five runners on the starting line, the team needed strong runs from each. Matheson Post continued a strong senior season for Franklin, earning All-Conference honors in eighth at 18:07.71. Seniors Tristan Gibbs and David Rogers also ran solid times, placing 16th (19:25.78) and 21st (19:38.37), respectively. After Rogers, Evan Pyles and Eli Stewart nearly placed back-to-back, rounding out Franklin's scorecard in 33rd (20:29.74) and 35th (20:49.98).

As a team Franklin's five finishes added up to 99 points, good for fourth just behind Smoky Mountain (96), Pisgah (72) and a dominant West Henderson (18). After the conference meet Franklin turned their attention to the 3A West Regional, which has also been affected by damage from Hurricane Helene. "Apparently part of the course at Freedom [High School] was destroyed by the hurricane. I'm not sure if it's something that can be repaired for the future or how bad it is, but they didn't feel comfortable hosting," said Ward. "They sought out some other locations, which unfortunately are further away for us. So, we'll be going to Salisbury. We ran a race at this course about three years ago, but I'm not sure that any of [Franklin's distance runners] would even remember it." With the 3A West's usual regional course at Freedom damaged by the storm, officials decided to combine this year's 3A West and 3A Midwest meets, planning both for Oak Grove High School in Salisbury Oct. 26. On a flatter course than most in the mountains with plenty of gravel and dirt roads, Ward says she'll try to keep both teams fresh for the regional meet. "We're gonna have kind of a free day today of some cross training, playing some frisbee, just something fun," said Ward the day after the conference meet. "Friday [Oct. 18] and next week we'll have some much faster workouts, and then really coming down in mileage for the rest of next week. They should start feeling really recovered and fresh." The top 25% of teams or top four teams (whichever is greater) from each regional will qualify for the state meet in Kernersville Nov. 2, as well as the top seven individuals not on a qualifying team. Both Panther teams qualified for state for the second straight year last fall, led by a 3A West Champion time from former senior Logan Russo.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Will Woolever sports@thefranklinpress.com, 'Cross country girls place 2nd at conference', *Franklin Press, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 4B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62D3C73556350



MCS debates Facebook comment policy

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Author: Thomas Sherrill reporter@thefranklinpress.com | Section: News | 358 Words

Page: 6A OpenURL Link

A plan to turn off comments for all Macon County Schools' Facebook pages faced more questions at the Oct. 14 Board of Education meeting and tabling of a decision. The idea was first brought forward at the Sept. 30 school board meeting and board members decided to wait until this month's meeting to discuss more in detail. Board attorney John Henning said he was comfortable from a legal perspective with completely shutting down Facebook comments on all MCS-affiliated pages. All the MCS principals are in favor, board Chair Jim Breedlove confirmed. "We've been talking about doing it for years and years," Henning said. "I think we've had some posts over years we're not real comfortable with." Henning said some of his other school system clients have wished they shut down Facebook comments sooner before something offensive was put out there. Board member Stephanie Laseter said she was torn, telling the board she found good information from asking questions in Facebook comment sections. Not only would the comment ban be for the Macon County Schools Facebook page and each school's page, but for all sports and clubs. Laseter wants to make sure the people who run those pages communicate information clearly so there's no confusion.

"Why do we have social media? To communicate and to share tidbits of information, and a lot of that results in questions," Laseter said. She suggested there needs to be training so faculty and staff are clearly communicating. Board Clerk Renee Burt said the principals have not discussed shutting down comments for all MCS sports and club pages. Most of Macon County Schools' Facebook posts receive no comments or maybe one or two positive ones, tagging other people or asking questions. Recently, the Oct. 2 announcement that school would resume Oct. 3 following Hurricane Helene had 100 comments, with a mix of positive and negative. The Sept. 25 announcement of remote learning days on Sept. 26-27 due to Helene got 36 comments, almost all positive. A Sept. 9 statement from Superintendent Josh Lynch after the school shooting in Winder, Georgia, had 48 comments, including allegations from parents of unchecked bullying going on at various schools.

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Thomas Sherrill reporter@thefranklinpress.com, 'MCS debates Facebook comment policy', *Franklin Press, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62D3C46C51010>



#WNCStrong

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC) Section: News 56 Words Page: 7C OpenURL Link

Playing for the came together Playing for the first time since Hurricane Helene, Franklin and North Henderson came together at midfield pregame in a show of unity on Friday, Oct. 11. The gesture shows that despite rivalries and the tensions, sports bring people together and offers a great athletic outlet for young people.

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'#WNCStrong', Franklin Press, The (online), 23 Oct 2024 7C https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62D3CA07D0058>



Toys for Tots needs volunteers, donations

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Section: News 447 Words

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Toys for Tots is ramping up for another season of serving Macon County children. In 2023, Toys for Tots provided 373 local children with plenty of toys and Christmas cheer. "This year, North Carolina is struggling with the devastation of Hurricane Helene, which will provide many opportunities for the Macon County Toys for Tots campaign to overcome," said coordinator Jack Brennan. Volunteers make the event possible. "We cannot express enough gratitude to the Toys for Tots volunteers who worked tirelessly last year, distributing collection boxes, picking up toys, and packaging them for local families," Brennan said. Last year, notable supporters included Countryside Chevrolet, which collected truckloads of toys at its annual car show, which will take place on Nov. 16 this year; Allen Field of Franklin, who personally purchased thousands of dollars of bikes, was the most significant personal donor; and Old Edwards Inn, which held an employee holiday party and collected a massive number of toys from the associates. Vignette Realty pulls out the checkbook whenever Toys for Tots run into a tight spot. "The list of businesses and local organizations participating in the toy collection was incredible," Brennan said. They estimate they will need to collect toys for 380 children this year. "Financially, we exhausted most of our reserves last year, and hopefully, we will be able to fill the gap with some timely donations," Brennan said. The age groups for which Toys for Tots will be collecting toys are as follows: ages 0 -2 (47 children); 3 -5 (70 children); 5 -8 (75 children); 9 -10 (82 children); 11 - 12 (99 children).

To ensure everyone has a great Christmas, the goal is to collect at least 1, 200 toys. Donate and volunteer Toys for Tots in Macon County is dependent on volunteers and financial donations. The Macon County Chamber of Commerce will collect donations on behalf of Toys for Tots. You may make donations by mailing or dropping a check off to: Toys for Tots, c/o Linda Harbuck, Macon County Chamber of Commerce, 98 Hyatt Road, Franklin NC 28734. Donations may be made online at smokymt.toysfortots.org. If you wish to volunteer over the next few weeks, knowing your assistance helped many needy families is rewarding. Bring your children and let them learn the gift of giving. For more information, contact Jack Brennan at jb@Vignetterealty.com or call 404-275-9575. "We appreciate everything Macon County and local businesses have done over the past to support this much-needed program. Merry Christmas!" Brennan said. Family requests Registration for needy families opened last week and in just a few days they received 130 family applications. Families can submit a request online at smokymt.toysfortots.org. Applications are due by Dec. 13.

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'Toys for Tots needs volunteers, donations', *Franklin Press, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 7A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62D3C50FE3458



Corbin, Tebrugge in running for NC Senate seat

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Section: News 2036 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

Republican Kevin Corbin of Franklin is running for a third term in representing the 50th District in the N.C. State Senate. He is being challenged by Democratic candidate Adam Tebrugge of Jackson County. The district includes the eight westernmost counties of North Carolina: Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Macon, Swain, Jackson, Transylvania and part of Haywood County. Kevin Corbin Going into 2025, what are the three most important WNC issues for you and how will you tackle them?

Corbin (interviewed Oct. 17): I have the same three that I've had in the past: health care, public education, and internet, high-speed internet access. So those are things I have worked on. Health care, for example, I helped lead the charge to pass Medicaid expansion. So that is in the process of being implemented. We're in the process of insuring 600, 000 North Carolinians that were previously uninsured. Last year, 2023, I was named legislator of the year by N.C. Child, and that is an advocacy group for children and women. So, I've worked very closely with health care to make sure that North Carolinians get their proper health care.

Second, public education. I worked with my rural legislators to get state-funded supplements for our teachers, and we got those in all eight of my counties in this past budget and will again this year, and that is up to \$6,000 per teacher. Some counties got more than others, and it's based on the tax values in the county, the land valuation, the poverty level, there's several things that go into that. But all my counties got at least \$2,000 supplement for the teachers.

Last thing is high-speed internet. We've worked hard on that for the past several years and we're approaching 80% and in some cases 90% coverage in the western counties now and that was less than 50% just a few years ago. So, we've made tremendous strides, but we still have a few folks in that last mile to get hooked up, and that that's a huge issue for not only education but commerce in the western part of the state.

What would you strive to put in the 2025-2026 state budget for Macon County?

This past year we were able to get \$62 million for Franklin High School. So, I think accessing state grants, making sure that our county is aware of state funds that are available, and I have always done that. I would just say continue working with local leaders to make sure that Macon County gets their fair share of state grants because those are available. I'm not sure what the needs will be or what state grants will be available, but I'm always working to make sure we get our fair share out here in the west.

Do you feel the legislative leaders in Raleigh listen to the voices of Western North Carolina?

Absolutely, period. I'm not sure that that has always been the case, but I've worked closely with Rep. [Karl] Gillespie to make sure that they know where we are. I have worked hard to get legislative leaders out here to visit the western part of the state and literally in the last several years I've gotten dozens of folks from the legislature and in leadership out here to see what our needs are firsthand. So yes, I do. When they ask me if Hickory's in the west, I tell them "no." That's where we stop and get gas so we can get back home. Rep. Gillespie and I are always working to make sure that folks know that the western part of the state extends far beyond Asheville.

If you can change one thing about the North Carolina General Assembly, what would it be?

Well, I guess first of all, if I could change it, I would make the state capital closer to the western part of the state. It's so far away. I know that's not possible, but it's pretty far for those of us out here to drive.

Probably to make terms four years rather than two [years]. We have to run every two years and that seems kind of redundant after a while. You're running every two years instead of having four years like county commissioners or sheriff candidates or other elected officials, school board. That would give you more time to do your job in a single term.

How well do you think the North Carolina General Assembly currently operates?

From my perspective, it works well. I feel like we have the ear of leadership for those of us out here in the west. We have several of us in the west that have leadership positions. For example, I chair two pretty influential committees, health care and appropriations for health care. Rep. Gillespie is a Majority Whip in the house. We have the Deputy Pro Tem is Sen. [Ralph] Hise from Mitchell County. We have a lot of leadership in the west and I think that helps us to be more effective in bringing funds to the western part of the state.

Do you feel the Macon County Commissioner's election change bill to create two at-large positions could pass in 2025? I think it can. I talked with Rep. Gillespie on the house side and he and I both, we have no problem with it. It appears that it would just allow more flexibility for people to run for those seats, and as long as he and I both agree, I think we can pass it this next time.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

I think local experience is key to being in the legislature. I didn't just run for the North Carolina Senate. Before I did that, I served a good bit of time on the Macon County school board. Also served as a Macon County Commissioner for a couple of terms, and I think having done that, it gives you a real perspective how state government affects local government and local people. So that experience has been invaluable to me. It's such a learning curve to go to Raleigh to understand how the processes work, how the budget works, and having local government experience has been very valuable to me in becoming an effective legislator.

Adam Tebrugge Going into 2025, what are the three most important WNC issues for you and how will you tackle them?

Tebrugge (interviewed Oct. 7): The primary responsibility of the North Carolina General Assembly is to administer the state budget, which is approximately \$30 billion. That means you have to concentrate on having enough revenue to make the \$30 billion, and then you decide the best way to spend that revenue.

Number one, it has become apparent to me that there are serious problems with the North Carolina budget that have been caused by the North Carolina Republican Party. The budget is not transparent. We don't know where it comes from. And it turns out there is an enormous amount of grift in that budget. Millions of dollars of giveaways to their cronies. Number two, that money can obviously be much better spent. And now that Hurricane Helene has ravaged Western North Carolina, we are going to be looking for every dollar we can find to help the affected population. Obviously, recovery from Hurricane Helene is going to be a massive priority for whoever is in the General Assembly in 2025.

Number three, it is the primary responsibility of the budget to fund public education and to make sure that there is a high-quality public education system available to all our students throughout the state. That is incompatible with giving away a half billion dollars in the form of vouchers to private citizens. I am opposed to the voucher scheme. I want that public money to be used on public schools. And again, in light of the disaster that has just befallen us, now is not the time for such huge giveaways.

What would you strive to put in the 2025-2026 state budget for Macon County?

Number one, Macon County suffered some major damage from Hurricane Helene. And while it is not of the scale of those suffered by other counties, I want to make sure that Macon County is reimbursed for all the services that they did provide during Hurricane Helene and for all the services that they will provide going forward.

Number two, again, it is my position that public education has been systematically defunded by the North Carolina General Assembly over the past 15 years. I want to make sure that Macon County public schools receive the maximum funding that is available under our budget for all the services they provide, so that we can have pay increases for our hardworking teachers and staff in Macon County. And number three, in Macon County, like in the other seven counties that are in [N.C.] Senate District 50, the number one issue that people have been talking to me about is affordable housing. I know that the Franklin [Town] Council has been exploring affordable housing options over the past 10 months. I want to make sure that the General Assembly has funds available for municipalities like Franklin and for counties like Macon so that we can create a stock of affordable housing.

Do you feel the legislative leaders in Raleigh listen to the voices of Western North Carolina?

My primary criticism of Sen. Corbin is that he does not listen to the citizens that he represents. Sen. Corbin is part of the Republican leadership of the General Assembly. He is deaf to the concerns of average citizens in this district. Sen. Corbin has not shown an ounce of independence in his terms in either the North Carolina House or North Carolina Senate. He votes with Republican leadership 100% of the time, even when the citizens that he represents beg him not to.

And the primary example are these vouchers. Vouchers are wildly unpopular in Western North Carolina because it represents a transfer of money from an already poor district to wealthy districts in the center and eastern part of the state.

If you could change one thing about the North Carolina General Assembly, what would it be?

My goal would be to work on reforming the budget process to make it transparent to all citizens in the state about how the money is collected and how the money is spent, and to make sure that the needs of our citizens are reflected in that budget process, because that is not happening right now. How well do you think the North Carolina General Assembly operates?

Tebrugge: That's a big question. The way they operate right now is that the members of the majority party meet in secret, make their decisions and then bring them to the floor for a "yes" or "no" vote. Over the past year and a half, they have had a super majority in each chamber in both the House and in the Senate. What that means is that not only are they able to override the veto of the governor, which they have done on multiple occasions, but they have no incentive to compromise. They have no incentive to attend to the needs of our most vulnerable citizens, and instead they are in the pockets of wealthy donors and wealthy corporations, and they don't give a damn about the people.

Do you feel the Macon County Commissioner's election change bill to create two at-large positions could pass in 2025?

I suppose that will depend on who is elected. I am not familiar with the particulars of that issue. I would like to hear the reasons why that is being proposed. I would like to hear the arguments against, and then I would be in a better position to make a decision on that issue. I have no idea whether it can pass when we are contesting so many seats in the General Assembly at this time. Is there anything else that you would like to add? I decided to run for the North Carolina Senate so that I could be a voice for the people of North Carolina. And by that, I mean someone who is responsive, someone who listens to people's concerns, someone who is out there in the community, and someone who is independent so that I can represent the people, not the powerful.

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Grant available for Macon County youth-led projects

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Section: News 378 Words

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Deadline to apply: Nov. 30 The Democratic Women of Macon County are again funding grants to help youth make a difference in our community. The Youth Community Service and Leadership Grant is for school-aged youth through 12th grade who are residents of Macon County. Up to \$500 each will be awarded to an individual or a group for a project that addresses a need in our community. The project might be aimed at a specific group like veterans, senior citizens, youth or animals. It might bring focus on a specific need like housing, food instability or mental health. Or it may create a way of helping meet a need, like protecting the environment, teaching about substance abuse or helping with after school programs. Youth organizations, as well as individual youth, are eligible to apply. One of last year's applicants, Gracie Parker, conducted workshops to teach other young people how to advocate and obtain support for service projects.

The purpose of this project is to provide a way for youth to lead the way in helping develop community while also developing leadership skills. The Democratic Women of Macon County believe a sense of community can bring us all together, helping one another, like we have seen recently after Hurricane Helene. A sense of community helps us thrive despite differences of opinion, political beliefs, socio-economic status and life experiences. The members of the grant committee are Paige Selking, Betsy Baste, Rebecca Sexton, Linda Tyler, Mary Judernatz, Mary Teslow and Janet Greene. Selking says there are lots of grants and funding sources available to organizations and adults, but we feel it is important to empower our youth. Rebecca Sexton said, "The grant is a wonderful way to encourage young people to get involved in community service and to give them the financial means to carry out their plans." The application for the Youth Community and Leadership Grant provided by the Democratic Women of Macon County can be completed online at tinyurl. com/YCSLGapplication. The application must be completed by Nov. 30. For more information, contact maconcountyyouthgrant@gmail.com.

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Helene's impact on local tourism

October 23, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Author: Mia Overton editor@thefranklinpress.com | Section: News | 1111 Words

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The Oct. 14 Franklin Tourism Development Authority meeting included an update on the local tourism industry following Hurricane Helene. Morgan Stewart, owner of Stewart Communications, which manages the TDA's marketing efforts, was living in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005. He recalled how the devastation impacted the tourism and convention businesses, and put the lessons learned there to work here locally in the days following Helene.

"We started reaching out to all of our stakeholders to find out how they had fared," Stewart said. They soon noticed a trend with cancellations at the lodging businesses, Fish Tale's guided trips were canceled, and businesses were seeing reduced retail the weekend following the storm and they feared that would continue.

"I started getting very concerned about the idea that we may be facing a wider path of destruction from the storm after the storm," Stewart said, adding if the businesses didn't make it through the season there "could be trouble for a lot of us."

Stewart said he reached out to Rep. Karl Gillespie, Sen. Kevin Corbin, Smoky Mountain Host, town and county officials, the Franklin Chamber of Commerce, and other tourism-related organizations to put together a meeting. He said they wanted "to get ahead of this so that we had our messaging ready to go when we were ready to say we were open."

"All of the counties were suffering," Stewart said. "All of the counties were not real happy with the idea that the governor was saying all of Western North Carolina's closed. The far west counties really needed help."

Stewart said he lobbied for state and federal funding for tourism marketing, preferably in the form of grants. "Our small businesses really can't afford to keep paying off loans and more loans," he said, adding that they hope the next round of state funding for storm recovery will include funds for marketing.

Stewart Communications had started the process of rebuilding the TDA's website prior to the storm, with the new "Experience Franklin" tagline and logo. Stewart said they hope to get that up soon and that they will be sensitive to the messages that are sent out related to being open for tourism. They also launched a new "Experience Franklin NC" Facebook page.

Stewart said by working with Smoky Mountain Host and others they can collaborate on better getting the message out that the area is open for visitors. "The idea is that if we work together, we will strengthen our messaging. You know, it will be a better, stronger message if we have one voice."

Tim Crabtree from Motor Company Grill said business was slow immediately following the storm, but then picked up as Hurricane Milton started threatening Florida. "There are so many people in town from Florida," he said. While he was out of town one day his manager texted him asking if they could take down the online ordering because they couldn't keep up with all the orders coming in.

Hannah Edwards from Yonder Community Market said they too have been busy; it was her 14th straight day of working and she wasn't expecting a day off until later in the week. "We have been covered up," she said.

Funding requests The TDA board voted on two applications reviewed at last month's meeting. The board unanimously approved funding Streets of Franklin's \$1,000 request for Monster Mash on Oct. 26. The event will be

from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and include trick or treats, classic cars, music, a dog costume contest, music and scary monsters. The Macon County Art Association's Witches Walk will be held at 11 a.m. and the weekly Macon County Farmers Market will be in operation as well on that day.

A \$2, 500 request from Horse Tales Farm was denied. In the funding application, Pamela Swanson-Heaslip said they planned to purchase a car or ATV to raffle during PumpkinFest. Proceeds were to be split between Horse Tale Farms, Appalachian Animal Rescue Center, and Macon County Animal Control.

"I'm just thinking, this not being an event, I just really don't know if we're the right organization to be funding this need," said TDA member Guy Gooder before making a motion to decline the request. "I'm not saying that they don't have needs. I'm just saying it doesn't seem to meet the criteria for us to fund."

Town Manager Amie Owens presented on behalf of the Town Council a request for \$13, 000 to replace 62 of the banners throughout town. Owens said some of the older banners were installed in 2018 with some being so faded you can barely see what's on them. "They have survived lots of different types of weather," she said. If approved, the funding would come from the TDA's undesignated funds.

Jim Akins from the Scottish Tartans Museum & Heritage Center presented a request for \$10,000 for advertising the museum. Atkins said they are the only tartan museum outside of Scotland, and right now even the world, as Scotland doesn't have a tartan museum at this time.

"We are asking for \$10, 000 so I can heavily advertise in different magazines," Akins said, specifically mentioning two magazines that focus on Scottish interests and advertisements in the magazines for the Highland games.

He said the museum had 12, 969 visitors last year. "Hopefully that number will increase a lot through this advertising."

The requests from the town and the museum will be voted on at the November meeting.

Financial Report With the first two months of lodging tax collections recorded in the new fiscal year, the town is running above its 10-year average for the months of July and August. July's collections totaled \$16, 996.76, which was below last July's collections of \$20, 240.73, but topped the 10-year average of \$16, 016.15. August's collections totaled \$14, 874.07, an increase of \$1, 376.43 over August 2023. The 10-year average for August is \$13, 315.15.

Owens said she added the 10-year average to the monthly report since there was a lot of fluctuation during the COVID pandemic, ranging from the lows during the shutdowns, followed by record highs, and then a return to a more realistic pace in the past year. "So, you can see we're still rolling about where we have been in the past," Owens said. Lodging tax collections for October are expected to be good as the hotels were filled with restoration workers and first responders following the storm in addition to out-of-town visitors. Next meeting The next TDA meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 12 in the board room on the lower level of Town Hall. This is a change in meeting day due to the Veterans Day holiday on Monday, Nov. 11. The annual audit report will be presented at the November meeting.

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House approves disaster relief funding

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On Wednesday, Oct. 9, the North Carolina House of Representatives reconvened in Raleigh and passed the first emergency disaster relief bill following the devastation of Hurricane Helene. Over \$273 million is appropriated in HB149, "Disaster Recovery Act of 2024" from the rainy day fund for hurricane recovery.

This legislation funds urgent needs to rebuild communities, support small businesses, meet water and transportation needs and make election changes to ensure voters in Western North Carolina will be able to vote in the upcoming election. Various provisions of the bill include: • Provides critical flexibility for school calendars, allowing remote instruction days for districts impacted by Hurricane Helene.

- · Guarantees that teachers and staff will receive full compensation for any instructional days missed due to the hurricane, ensuring that our educators are supported as they work to maintain continuity in students' education during this challenging time of recovery.
- · Allows flexibility for the 25 counties in North Carolina most severely impacted by Hurricane Helene. · Expands absentee ballot return options, allowing voters registered in affected counties to submit their ballots at any county board of elections office statewide. While these changes increase flexibility for absentee voting, they are accompanied by additional logging requirements and clear chain of custody requirements for absentee ballots processed outside their home county, reinforcing the security of the voting process for those in these hard-hit areas. Karl Gillespie (R-Macon) represents District 120 of Cherokee, Clay, Graham and Macon counties in the N.C. House of Representatives. He may be contacted at Karl.Gillespie@ncleg.gov.

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Late, but colorful, fall leaf season predicted

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Author: Thomas Sherrill reporter@thefranklinpress.com | Section: News | 396 Words

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Despite Hurricane Helene and warmer weather stretching into October, Franklin and most of Macon County could experience a late but colorful leaf season. Dr. Howard Neufeld, a biology professor at Appalachian State University known as the Fall Color Guy, said areas below 2, 500 feet in far Western North Carolina and the foothills will likely see the most color of anyone in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The Coweeta and North Georgia areas will probably have the best color," Neufeld said. Typically, late October is peak leaf season for the Franklin area, at around 2, 100 to 2, 200 feet. The Highlands plateau, at 4, 000 feet, usually peaks a week or two earlier. These vibrant red, yellow and orange leaves cause the area's busiest tourist season. But since Hurricane Helene in late September, nothing about this leaf season is typical. First are the physical effects. Hurricane Helene and the flooding rainfall it brought in late September destroyed the foliage above 3, 000 feet in areas between the greater Asheville area and Boone, Neufeld said. And then there are the logistical effects. With the Blue Ridge Parkway through North Carolina closed indefinitely and both I-40 and I-26 at the N.C./Tennessee border closed until next year, visitors have been advised to stay away from Asheville and Buncombe County as recovery efforts move forward.

With warmer weather lingering well into October, leaves have been shy about turning color in the mostspared areas of Macon, Jackson, Swain, Clay, Graham and Cherokee counties. "From 2, 500 feet and below, it's still pretty green," Neufeld said. "We're still starting to see some color at those elevations." Leaf season got its first boost last week as cold air started to stimulate color. However, daytime temperatures are expected to remain in the 70s through the end of the month with overnight temperatures dipping into the 40s. "If they're looking green now, they still will go through color change," Neufeld said. The cold can bring a negative against what appears to be a promising leaf season. If the weather gets too cold and snows or ices over, as it did on the tallest peaks of the Great Smokies on Oct. 15 and 16, it can destroy a peak season. "Sometimes with cold like that, they'll quickly drop their leaves,"

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Pisgah Ranger District reopens - Visitors should be aware of potential hazards in the area from storm damage

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The Pisgah National Forest reopened the Pisgah Ranger District on Oct. 18. While crews continue to work throughout the district clearing debris and repairing roadways and trails, the USDA Forest Service urges the public to use extra caution when visiting the area. Closures remain in effect for the Appalachian and Grandfather Ranger Districts of the Pisgah National Forest.

Like many areas in Western North Carolina, the Pisgah National Forest was heavily impacted by Hurricane Helene, and visitors may encounter several hazards caused by storm damage, such as: landslides along forest service roads and trails, fallen trees and large limbs crossing trails, washed out trails and bridges, rough roads that require high clearance vehicles where previously it did not, limited cell phone service in case of emergency.

Several restroom facilities on the Pisgah Ranger District are currently out of order and will remain closed. In addition, the following roads will be closed to motor vehicle traffic: · Avery Creek Road · Yellow Gap Road (between Wolf Ford and North Mills River) · Headwaters Road (from 475 - to the Sunwall TH) · Catheys Creek Road (northern portion) For the status of campgrounds on the Pisgah Ranger District please contact Naventure at naventure.com/outdoor-adventures-north-carolina For the status of the Cradle of Forestry on the Pisgah Ranger District please contact Find Outdoors at gofindoutdoors.org/sites/cradleof-forestry/"Thank you for your patience as we work to clear roadways and trails," said Dave Casey, district ranger, Pisgah Ranger District. "We understand the forest is a place of refuge for many, especially during times like these. There's still plenty of work to do, but we look forward to once again having folks back on their public land." Remember: You are responsible for your safety and for the safety of those around you.

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'Pisgah Ranger District reopens - Visitors should be aware of potential hazards in the area from storm damage', *Franklin Press, The* (online), 23 Oct 2024 8B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C62D3C8832B1A0>



News Briefs

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what is being done to help people, locally and regionally.

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Public meetings The Macon County Behavioral Task Force will meet from 9-12 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 24 at Discover Church, 47 Macon Center Dr. Guests will discuss the mental health impacts of those impacted by the storm and

The Macon County Library Board will meet at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 29 at the Hudson Library, located at 554 Main St., Highlands.

Wilkie Street construction update The Town of Franklin has been informed by Bryson Enterprises, that construction is progressing well on Wilkie Street sewer line project. Construction will continue until the line is fully installed and operational. Work should begin around 9 a.m. each day and the road will remain closed during the overnight hours.

Individuals who live on Wilkie Street below Walnut Grove Apartments may now use the entrance from West Palmer Street. Residents from the apartments, Meadowbrook Drive and Treeline Trail, should continue to use Trimont Trail to enter and exit the area. There will be barricades and signs in place indicating the work zone.

Should you have any questions, please contact Bill Deal, Public Works Director, at 828-524-2516, ext. 402.

Second Helene death in Macon added A 68-year-old man who went missing in the days after Hurricane Helene and was found dead nearly a week later is officially being attributed as a storm death.

Macon County Emergency Management Director Warren Cabe said Keith Max Arvey, who was found behind Currahee Brewery on the Little Tennessee River on Friday, Oct. 4, is that second storm death. Arvey went missing on Sunday, Sept. 29.

Warren said he was told by medical examiner Shane Corbin that because of the timing, Arvey's death would be classified as a storm death.

During the storm on Friday, Sept. 27, Macon County Sheriff's Deputy Jim Lau's truck ended up in the Cullasaja River. His body was recovered the next day.

According to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, there have been 95 storm-related fatalities in North Carolina across 21 counties. Of those, 42 were in Buncombe County.

Thursday deadline to apply for D-SNAP benefits

Residents may apply for Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits at the Distribution and Disaster Recovery Center located at 183 Holly Springs Plaza in Franklin through Thursday, Oct. 24. Hours of operation are 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Macon County terminated its State of Emergency declaration at 8 a.m. Friday, Oct. 18, according to Emergency Services Director Warren Cabe. The waiver of tipping and transfer fees for storm-related vegetative debris has expired. Standard fees will now apply. An email has been established for residents to submit unmet needs and other requests. Send information to Heleneneeds@maconnc.org and the request or information will be routed to the most appropriate agency, department or individual.

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