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**DAMAGE UPDATE**  
Burke County launches Helene dashboard; sheriff warns of scams in aftermath of storm.



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Police chief calls for Valdese board to move forward on renovations to department building.



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Donate money instead Catawba, Burke, McDowell organizations stop accepting supplies

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Send money, not water. That's the advice Catawba County United Way Executive Director Mark Bumgarner offered Wednesday for people wanting to aid people in the portions of North Carolina ravaged by Hurricane Helene.

At one point, the Catawba County United Way had four drop-off sites for donations. As of Wednesday, all sites have been closed to donations.

Bumgarner said donations were stacked to the ceiling in every room of the Catawba County United Way office building. Volunteers would send out the donations. As soon as the mountain of items disappeared, new donations would arrive to take their place.

"We are actively turning people away with donations now. Not because we want to but because we have to," Bumgarner said. On Wednesday, there were still piles of items throughout the Catawba County United Way offices. Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way also has two warehouses full of items such as toiletries, nonperishables and bottled water.

Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way sent supplies in small amounts to pocket communities near Marion and Hendersonville that still needed help on Wednesday.

"There is the possibility that we may need to warehouse things for just a small amount of time until the need develops again, or we see if the need develops again," Bumgarner said. "I certainly can't rule out that if we discover that western North Carolina truly has what it needs, and that's not going to be an issue, then depending on what happens in Florida (as Hurricane Milton approaches) some of these things get sent to Florida. I don't



SARAH C. JOHNSON, RECORD

Catawba County United Way Executive Director Mark Bumgarner stands in front of a small portion of the surplus supplies at his office building. Organizations like the Catawba County United Way are asking people to stop donating supplies and donate money instead.

know those answers yet, it's still too fluid."

Bumgarner said the response made him proud to live in Catawba County.

Bumgarner said he appreciates that people still want to help. He said the best way to help now is to send money. Bumgarner said checks can be brought to Catawba County United Way. Monetary donations can also be given to the United Way of North Carolina, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Samaritan's Purse.

"If you're not sure about who a legitimate partner is, feel free to call us and we'll give you tools for you to research organizations for yourself before you make a donation," Bumgarner said. The Catawba County United Way can be contacted at 828-327-6851. The office is located at 2760 Tate Blvd. in Hickory.

**McDowell County**

Our neighbors to the west in McDowell and Burke counties are recovering from flooding.

McDowell County suffered devastating flooding, especially in Marion and Old Fort, during Hurricane Helene.

Burke County experienced major flooding as well in Morganton and Glen Alpine. Areas along the Catawba River were ravaged by the intense overflow.

McDowell County has stopped accepting donations of supplies, according to the county's Hurricane Helene information website mcdowellcares.org.

Money can still be donated to McDowell County by visiting mcdowellcares.org.

**Burke County**

Burke County has stopped accepting donations, too. "Our donation room is full of surplus

supplies, and the number of individuals seeking assistance through donations continues to decrease now that power is rapidly restored," Burke County officials said in a news release on Monday.

Burke County said their donation center at 2128 S. Sterling St. stopped taking donations at 8 p.m. on Tuesday. The county said donations can be restarted at any time if the need arises.

"Thanks to your incredible outpouring of support, the community is saturated with clean water, food, hygiene supplies, blankets, and other items," Burke officials said. "Burke County will continue to warehouse the surplus supplies and to serve as a western North Carolina resource hub."

If Burke County citizens need help getting supplies, they can still contact one of four fire departments: George Hildebran Fire/Rescue, Longtown Fire Department,

Enola Fire Department, Brendle-town Fire/Rescue station 1 or the Jonas Ridge Fire Department.

"The community is returning to work, school and their daily responsibilities," Burke County said. "This requires relief efforts to transition from short-term, life-sustaining efforts to a more long-term relief strategy that supports housing, food and economic insecurities."

Anyone who wishes to donate money toward relief in Burke County can send money to the Community Foundation of Burke County. The group set up an emergency relief fund to provide grants to local nonprofits providing resources for housing, food and economic insecurities created by hurricane Helene. As of Monday, the fund had raised more than \$100,000. The fund will provide grants of up to \$10,000, according to the foundation's website.

**FEMA rumors**

"There's things out there like FEMA is confiscating items or supplies, there's no truth at all to that," FEMA spokesperson Nate Custer said, referring to a rumor that FEMA is taking donated items and not disbursing them to affected communities. "We always say, particularly for people outside the affected area, a cash contribution is the most effective way (to help)."

Custer said people should give to the Red Cross or other established organizations. Custer also said well-intentioned deeds may not be helpful.

"People get a pick-up, get a few neighbors, get a few supplies in a truck and head on down to western North Carolina," Custer said. "That's difficult with the roads, they're not sure where to go, there's a problem in not knowing exactly where to drop those (donations off)."

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory Daily Record.

Early voting in Burke County starts Thursday

**FROM STAFF REPORTS**

North Carolina is expected to be a swing state in this year's presidential election and will likely see large voter turnout.

For those who want to avoid long lines on election day, early voting is a good option to do that.

Early voting starts Oct. 17 and ends Nov. 2, with weekday hours from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Saturday (Oct. 19, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2) hours from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. No voting will take place

on Sundays, according to the Burke County Board of Elections.

Early voting sites are:

■ Burke County Elections Office, located at 2128 S. Sterling St., Morganton.

■ Glen Alpine Town Hall, located at 103 Pitt St., Glen Alpine.

■ Burke County Senior Center, located at 501 N. Green St., Morganton.

■ Rutherford College Town Hall, located at 980 Malcolm Blvd., Connelly Springs.

■ East Burke Senior Center Library, located at 101 Main Avenue West, Hildebran.

Don't forget to take a photo ID with you to vote. Election Day is Nov. 5.

To check your voter registration, visit [www.vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLookup](http://www.vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLookup).

For more information on registering to vote or about this year's election, call the Burke County Board of Elections at 828-764-9010 or email [burke.boe@burkenc.org](mailto:burke.boe@burkenc.org).

\$200,000 lottery prize

Burke County man cashes in Emerald 8s ticket

**NC EDUCATION LOTTERY**

When Ashley Abbee of Morganton saw zero after zero appear on his \$5 scratch-off ticket, he had trouble believing he just won a \$200,000 top prize.

"I saw one zero then another zero then another," Abbee recalled. "I just kept looking at

it over and over again!"

Abbee bought his lucky Emerald 8s ticket on Wednesday from the Walmart on North Green Street in Morganton.

"It really was overwhelming," Abbee said.

He arrived at lottery headquarters Thursday to claim his prize and, after required state and federal tax withholdings, took home \$143,001.

Abbee plans to put his winnings into savings.

The Emerald 8s game debuted in December with six \$200,000 top prizes. Three \$200,000 prizes remain to be claimed.

Burke County received a \$42 million grant, using money raised by the lottery, to help build a new elementary school. For details on other ways Burke County education programs benefit from lottery funds, visit [www.nclottery.com](http://www.nclottery.com) and click on the "Impact" section.

THE NEWS HERALD

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