

What to know about polling locations in North Carolina for the 2024 election

October 11, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Author: Sarah Gleason, Wilmington StarNews | Section: News | 509 Words OpenURL Link

This Election Day North Carolinians will make their voice heard in several high stakes races. Along with the presidential election, voters will decide who their next governor will be and several other council of state, state legislative and court seats.

Election Day takes place on Tuesday, Nov. 5, with early in-person voting and mail-in voting getting started weeks before then.

How do I find my polling location?

Depending on a voter's place of residence, they are assigned a polling location. To find your polling location, search using the Election Day Polling Place Search on the North Carolina State Board of Elections website.

Election 2024: Your guide to statewide races in North Carolina

What do I bring to the polls?

North Carolinians are required to present photo ID to vote this election. Many will use a North Carolina driver's license, but there are also more than five other acceptable IDs. Tribal enrollment cards with photos, military or veterans IDs with photos and approved college photo IDs can all be used on Election Day, among other options.

County board of election offices are also issuing free photo ID cards for those who do not have one.

Voters are also allowed to bring a sample ballot or any notes into the polls. Phones are allowed, but cannot be used to take photos of a ballot or make calls, texts while voting.

When do polls open and close?

On Election Day, the polls are open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Those in line by 7:30 p.m., will be able to vote.

Can I vote early elsewhere?

Yes. Residents can also vote early in-person between Thursday, Oct. 17 and Saturday, Nov. 2. In-person early voting locations are different from Election Day polling locations. Find an early voting poll near you on the NCSBE website.

What happens if there are issues casting my ballot?

There are polling help stations at sites to help voters navigate the process. For example, if a voter fails to bring an acceptable photo ID, their voter registration cannot be found, or records show they have already voted, workers at the help station can aid voters. In any of these events, voters can fill out a provisional ballot that will get reviewed for voter eligibility.

If a voter fills out a provisional ballot, they will also receive a Provisional Identification Number (PIN) which they can use to track the status of their ballot. To check the status using the PIN, use the NCSBE's provisional search tool online.

What if my polling location was impacted by Hurricane Helene?

The State Board of Elections said they intend to have all counties open for voting on time despite the devastating impacts of Helene on Western North Carolina. But it's still unclear what, if any, early voting sites may have been impacted by the storm.

In the event that a voting site cannot be used, the board could create temporary polling sites, in the form of tents for example, like they did when Hurricane Dorian struck, the board's executive director said.

Check the page on the board of elections website for updated Helene-specific information on polling sites: Helene Disaster Recovery | NCSBE

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Trop assessment could take 'weeks'

October 11, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Mapping | 223 Words OpenURL Link

The Tampa Bay Rays said it may take weeks to fully assess how much damage was done to Tropicana Field, which saw its roof ripped to shreds by the force of Hurricane Milton as the deadly storm barreled across much of Florida.

The team said no one was injured when the St. Petersburg ballpark was struck by the storm on Wednesday night. A handful of "essential personnel" were inside Tropicana Field as the roof panels were blown apart, much of the debris falling on the field and seats below.

"Over the coming days and weeks, we expect to be able to assess the true condition of Tropicana Field," the Rays said Thursday. "In the meantime, we are working with law enforcement to secure the building. We ask for your patience at this time, and we encourage those who can to donate to organizations in our community that are assisting those directly impacted by these storms."

Milton was the second hurricane to hit Florida's Gulf Coast in the span of two weeks, preceded by Hurricane Helene, which flooded streets and homes on that same side of the state and left at least 230 people dead across the South.

The Rays aren't scheduled to play in the ballpark again until March 27, when they are supposed to play host to the Colorado Rockies to open the 2025 season.

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BRIEFLY

October 11, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Briefly | 229 Words OpenURL Link

UNEMPLOYMENT: The Labor Department reported Thursday that applications for jobless aid jumped to 258,000 last week, up by 33,000 from the prior week. That's the most since Aug. 5, 2023, and well above the 229,000 analysts expected.

GEORGIA: A federal judge said Thursday that she won't order the presidential battleground state of Georgia to reopen voter registration for November's elections despite disruptions caused by Hurricane Helene.

MORTGAGES: The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. surged to 6.32% this week from 6.12% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday, amid high prices and a limited supply of houses for sale.

RECALL: BrucePac of Woodburn, Oregon, this week recalled nearly 10 million pounds of meat and poultry products made at an Oklahoma plant because they may be contaminated with listeria bacteria. The products have a best-by date of June 19, 2025, to Oct. 8, 2025, and should be thrown away.

MINE ACCIDENT: One person was killed and 12 rescued from about 1,000 feet below ground in a former mine after an elevator malfunctioned at the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine tourist site near Cripple Creek, Colorado, authorities said Thursday.

HAITI: Gunmen invaded a town north of Haiti's capital Thursday, shooting at people and setting homes on fire, a week after a similar attack killed at least 115 people in Haiti's central region. The number of casualties was not immediately known.

- Associated Press

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NC is red hot as election battleground state

October 11, 2024 | Thomasville Times, The (NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson PAXTON MEDIA GROUP | Section: Thomasville Times | 639 Words OpenURL Link

TRIAD — With Election Day less than a month away, North Carolina's role as a battleground state for the presidential race couldn't loom much larger, area political analysts say.

Vice President Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump and their campaign surrogates have made regular trips to the Tar Heel State seeking to convince voters to support their cause. The visits to North Carolina have included local campaign rallies for Harris in Greensboro and Trump in Asheboro.

Results released last week by the High Point University/Survey USA Poll showed the race a dead heat, with Harris and Trump tied at 48%. Other polls have reflected a close race, with Trump leading in most surveys of voters but by a slight margin.

North Carolina will play a critical role down the stretch as voters decide the contest Nov. 5 because each presidential campaign needs the infusion of North Carolina's 16 Electoral College votes, said John Dinan, professor of political science at Wake Forest University.

"The general expectation is that Trump needs to win North Carolina in order to chart a path to victory, because North Carolina has been a Republican state for all but one election during the last half century," Dinan said.

Harris could still triumph in the presidential election without winning North Carolina, he said.

"But she is still spending a lot of time and resources in the state in the hope that it would turn Democratic this year, just as it did back in 2008 for President Barak Obama," he said.

Prior to Obama, the last Democratic presidential nominee to carry North Carolina was Jimmy Carter in 1976.

North Carolina's role is magnified because there are only about a half-dozen states classified as swing states, said Brandon Lenoir, professor of political science and strategic communication at High Point University.

"North Carolina could help decide the next president of the United States," Lenoir said. "For those reasons we can anticipate a lot of campaign activity from both candidates in the runup to the election."

But the stretch run of the presidential race in North Carolina has been cast into uncertainty because of the destruction wrought by Tropical Storm Helene in the western region of the state. Election officials are scrambling to come up with contingency plans to find ways for voters to cast ballots in areas devastated by the storm.

Leaders of the N.C. State Board of Elections held a briefing last week and pledged to find options for voting despite the destruction, which included destroying a dozen county election offices. Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell acknowledged the daunting task on a short time frame.

"We are taking this situation one step at a time, and this will be an ongoing process between now and Election Day," Bell said. "We do not have all the answers at this time, but we are diligently working to figure them out."

Lenoir said it's hard to gauge what the devastation in the western part of the state will have on the election because there's no precedent in North Carolina for such a devastating storm striking so close to voting.

"The storm hit traditionally Republican and Democratic communities," Lenoir said. "Watauga and Buncombe

counties voted for Biden in 2020, while the neighboring counties went for Trump. The disaster did not pick sides."

Dinan said that state and western North Carolina election officials will confront challenges getting polls set up for the start of in-person early voting Oct. 17.

"But it is also certain that a lot of efforts will be made to help ensure that all western North Carolina residents who want to do so will be able to cast ballots under these circumstances," Dinan said. "In short, too early to tell what effect the storm will have on the election outcome, even if we know it will have an effect on where and how votes are cast in that part of the state."

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How to keep your dog safe in wake of Helene's flooding

October 11, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Iris Seaton; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 684 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE – Tropical Storm Helene took many things from the Western North Carolina community, including the ability to take furry friends to city, county and privately owned dog parks.

Now on the minds of many dog owners with increasingly antsy pets are potential environmental hazards that may harm their canine friends through something as simple and crucial as a walk around the neighborhood.

Dr. Tina Wismer, senior director of toxicology at the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, told the Citizen Times that, while she couldn't speak to exact toxins and diseases that may be present in WNC, certain concerns do arise in these situations.

"If we still have standing water, we're going to want to try to avoid that if possible. The water itself could be contaminated, especially with bacteria."

In particular, Wismer mentioned leptospirosis, E. coli and salmonella. Blue green algae, which Wismer described as appearing similar to green paint in standing water, was another potential risk, with compounds that can cause seizures and liver failure.

The good news is that these contaminants aren't absorbed easily through the skin — though you should rinse your dog's paws with clean water if they do come into contact with standing water. The bad news, Wismer said, is that even in areas where standing water has dried, health hazards may still exist.

"When those little puddles dry up, the bacteria that is in there can be inhaled and potentially cause sneezing, and potentially things like pneumonia," Wismer said. "We can also see some funguses that live in the soil that will get churned up and inhaled, and those can cause problems in our pets."

Unfortunately, the best way to avoid this contact is to avoid areas where floodwaters have evaporated, leaving dusty sediment and potential contaminants in their wake.

In addition to immediate concerns, Wismer said many vets expect several issues to arise in dogs 4-6 months out from a disaster like Helene.

"We see an increase in things like heartworm disease and other mosquito borne diseases, and intestinal parasites, because some of those will live in the soil, and then if the dogs are sniffing around, licking the ground, they can get infected that way."

Because of this risk, Wismer said keeping up with deworming, heartworm prevention and tick control are all particularly crucial for dog owners following serious flooding.

After the storm, not back

to business as usual

Of course, to anyone living in areas flooded by Helene, avoiding walking the dog around the neighborhood indefinitely isn't ideal, particularly with a severe current shortage of dog parks. All public dog parks in Asheville, Fletcher, Mills River and Jackson were closed — if not destroyed completely — by Helene. However, Asheville bar

and dog park Wagbar reopened Oct. 6, and has remained active on social media with updates since.

An Oct. 6 post informed the public of free bottled water and water for dogs, as well as a still-functioning dog park that "looks good as new." Through Oct. 13, the bar is open 1-7 p.m. to humans and cooped up dog friends.

As in the case of many Asheville area establishments, Wagbar hasn't just gone back to business as usual. The bar is giving back to the community with dog food and cases of water for anyone in need of supplies, which are available at the bar.

The ASPCA, too, is offering assistance to pet owners for post-Helene recovery, with an animal assistance hotline available from 7 a.m.-7 p.m., seven days a week at 888-808-0810. The organization also has offered help in animal search and rescue efforts in WNC and provided pet food and supplies to those in need.

Susan Anderson, director of ASPCA Disaster Response, spoke about the importance of our furry friends in a recent news release.

"In times of crisis, people often turn to their pets for comfort - they play a vital role in our lives and it is important to safeguard their health and welfare as much as we possibly can."

Iris Seaton is the trending news reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network. Reach her at iseaton@citizentimes.com.

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After Tropical Storm Helene, neighbors bonded before help arrived

October 11, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Ryley Ober; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 676 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE - Residents in Deaverview — a West Asheville public housing complex — said truckloads of supplies have started pouring into the neighborhood, brought by different local organizations and by volunteers from as far as New York and Florida.

But for four days after Tropical Storm Helene tore through Western North Carolina Sept. 27, bringing record-high rainfall and river flooding, widespread power outages and leaving dozens dead, multiple residents told the Citizen Times Oct. 8 that no one had come to check on them.

"In spite of nobody coming, our neighbors got together and were taking care of one another, and that's what was so beautiful — just to see that," Vivian Pagan, an eight-year Deaverview resident, told the Citizen Times Oct. 8.

Without power and cell service for nearly a week after the storm, as some neighbors estimate, they were isolated from the outside world, unable to tell family members they were safe. The level of destruction left in Helene's wake was unknown to them.

Sitting in her apartment at the bottom of two hills, Pagan said she remembers looking out the back door, thinking, "Oh God, please don't let the water come in." Soon after, a tree fell on the left side of the apartment building. The rushing water blasted through the ground, creating a sinkhole in a drainage ditch nearby.

Meanwhile, Angela Clemmons, who works in resident services at the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, was fighting "major flooding" in the basement of her Asheville home and helping her mother, whose metal roof had flown off.

Without any cell service, she was also trying to contact Housing Authority coworkers, many of whom live outside of downtown Asheville and were unable to reach public housing sites due to downed trees and powerlines.

"(Residents) may have felt discouraged by the lack of assistance, but we just had to get some type of game plan together because it was literally impossible to get to them," Clemmons told the Citizen Times Oct. 8. "But immediately, from our end, we began preparation."

While Clemmons spoke with a Citizen Times reporter, residents and children were pumping water from barrels in the back of her mud-lined truck. When she was finally able to reach Deaverview after the storm, Clemmons started bringing rainwater from her house to flush toilets, she said. Now she fills her barrels with potable water supplied by volunteers at Asheville High School.

Power and cell service has come back to the neighborhood, but they are still without running water. Roger Reid, who moved into Deaverview just before the storm, said large water containers with non-potable water have been set up at different public housing sites, allowing residence to pump water into buckets to flush toilets.

Down the street, Pagan manned post at tables set up in the housing complex's basketball court, "answering the call" as an impromptu supply coordinator for Deaverview Apartments, she said. Amid water bottles and canned food, Teresa Lewis dug through baby supplies to bring to her neighbor.

Lewis said she's happier as a resident after the storm because the whole neighborhood came together as a community.

"I guess you could find the blessing that comes along with it. We just sat out there in misery together, trying to keep each other's spirits up," Lewis said.

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NC legislators OK \$273M for Helene recovery

October 11, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Sarah Gleason; Wilmington StarNews| Section: News| 927 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

Mountain people don't normally ask for help, Rep. Jennifer Balkcom, R-Henderson, said as she shuffled tears away from her eyes, but right now, they need it.

North Carolina legislators returned to Raleigh for a morning news conference and votes in the afternoon on Wednesday for initial Helene recovery funds.

The bill, which passed in the House and Senate unanimously and now heads to the governor's desk, was introduced by Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, and House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, and includes \$273 million in funds. for now.

Helene swept across the Southeastern U.S., devastating Western North Carolina. In the wake of the devastating effects of the storm, entire homes were swept away in the overflowing rivers, landslides destroyed personal property, and residents were left without power and service, some even losing their family and friends.

It's been a little over a week since the unprecedented destruction occurred, and over 20 counties are finally able to start repairing some of the damage. But one thing is very clear, this recovery will take years.

"This is just a first step for us to take as legislators," Berger said.

Legislators are scheduled to return on Oct. 24 to continue what Moore called "a herculean task."

House Bill 149, is just one piece of the relief puzzle, with federal funding and assistance flowing in and community members stepping up.

"If it weren't for nonprofits, if it weren't for the churches, if it weren't for just ordinary citizens, we would have a much bigger crisis on our hands than what we do right now," Moore said.

President Joe Biden approved 100% Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement to affected North Carolinians for six months, Cooper has been on the ground connecting residents with resources, over 1,500 North Carolina National Guard members have been deployed and the state's Department of Justice is working to hold companies accountable for any instances of price gouging.

Affected residents can apply for aid at Home | disasterassistance.gov.

What the bill includes

In total, they are spending \$273 million which will go toward the established "Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Fund (Helene Fund)," according to the bill. It also extends the declaration of emergency until March, 2025.

The funding can be used in the affected counties established by the president and Nash County.

For those wondering why more money is not being spent, Berger said this is just the beginning.

"This is not all of it," Berger said. "Not by a long shot."

Moore also noted the role that federal funding plays in the matter, saying they expect the federal government to contribute 90 percent and the state 10 percent. They don't want to get ahead of federal funding as to take up unnecessary costs, he added.

The Department of Public Safety and the Division of Emergency Management, state agencies who are supporting Helene recovery, will receive \$250 million.

The Department of Public Instruction will receive \$16 million, which will support the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The bill also includes school calendar flexibility, remote instruction allowance and states that teachers will still be compensated regularly.

To provide grants to local government, \$2 million will go to the Office of State Budget and Management.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections will receive \$5 million. The board asked for around \$2 million, but the legislature wanted to provide additional funding to support local boards as well as include several other counties affected by Helene that were not included in the board's resolution made this week that only applied to 13 counties.

The bill also includes water treatment, building and burning provisions that Moore said are supposed to help speed up recovery efforts.

"We don't need these efforts tied up in bureaucracy," Moore said.

Additionally, this bill, if signed into law by Cooper, asks the governor to put a hold on late and lost fees within the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Rep. Caleb Rudow, D-Buncombe, requested a separate bill be brought to the floor which would have extended the deadline to register to vote among other voting asks, however, the bill was not picked up for a vote.

Despite both chambers having Republican supermajorities, House Democratic Leader Rep. Robert Reives, D-Chatham, said "This is not a partisan issue," saying they represent the entire state.

The House also took a moment of silence for those lost in the storm before adjourning for the day.

Looking forward

Misinformation surrounding the presence of relief efforts from the state and federal government has been swirling, some fueled by top politicians like Donald Trump who has been criticizing the administration's handling of Helene recovery efforts. His claim that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) doesn't have enough funding because they've been using it on undocumented immigrants is false.

Without referencing specific concerns, Mark Pless, R-Haywood, Madison, said the legislature will need to look into why certain issues occurred directly after Helene, while adding that now is not the time to do so.

"There were some challenges initially that could not be met for reasons that we will determine," Pless said, who is co-chair of the House Disaster Recovery and Homeland Security committee.

In response to a New York Times article which claimed regulatory reform from state Republicans made Helene worse in the state, Moore said it was not true.

"They want to play politics with a disaster," Moore said about the claims that he rejected.

Rep. Lindsey Prather, D-Buncombe, spoke with emotion about her community, saying "we need to show folks that the government has their back, right now, at the time they need it most."

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Fletcher charter school destroyed by rising water - 'This was something unlike anything we had ever seen'

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Author: Deirdra Funcheon; Hendersonville Times-News | USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 559 Words
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Under normal circumstances, the 1,200 feet of waterfront property along Cane Creek is an asset for teaching hands-on science lessons to 430 kindergarteners through fourth graders who attend school at the FernLeaf Community Charter School's Creek Campus.

School buildings were constructed on the far end of the campus in Fletcher, outside of what school officials believed was the 200-year flood plain, Michael Luplow, executive director of FernLeaf, told the Citizen Times/Times-News. In nearly 10 years of operation at the site, they saw only minor flooding in the ball fields and parking lot.

As Tropical Storm Helene approached Western North Carolina, FernLeaf switched to remote learning. Staff moved buses and a food truck from the Creek Campus to higher ground on FernLeaf's 93-acre Wilderness Campus two miles away, which serves roughly 300 students in 5th through 12th grades.

"We began pulling out class pets and materials just as a precautionary measure," Luplow said.

But when rain began dumping Sept. 27, "it became very clear that this was something unlike anything we had ever seen or had expected, and water had risen to probably the halfway point of all of our buildings," Luplow said. "Each of the three buildings were raised up off of their foundations and swept off the foundations, and the mucky, muddy water was flowing through, four to five feet high in all buildings. It was absolutely heartbreaking to watch this unfold."

The buildings were condemned. Furniture, supplies, athletic fields and outdoor learning spaces were destroyed. School leaders jumped into action and began making sure all staff members were safe and accounted for.

Fortunately, the school is in the midst of construction at its Wilderness Campus, and has enough space to accommodate more kids. FernLeaf is planning to reopen Oct. 16, with all students attending the Wilderness Campus.

Students in grades K-4 will start on an alternating A Day/B Day schedule for a week and a half. After a fall break, they may return to their normal daily schedule Monday, Nov. 4th. When its current development plans are complete in six to seven years, the school should accommodate 1,200 students. It has had waiting lists since it opened, Luplow said.

The school is asking the community and supporters for their help with recovery efforts. An online fundraiser raised roughly \$71,000 as of midday Wednesday.

Between private funds, insurance coverage, and federal and state disaster aid, "I am very confident that we will be able to pull together the resources we need to rebuild our school," Luplow said. "Now, where we rebuild is a conversation that is being had, but no decisions have been made. It's just too soon."

Henderson County schools announce reopening date. 3A

Volunteer cooks, unemployed workers help others in wake of Helene. 4A

NC legislators vote to approve \$273M in Helene recovery funds. 4A

Scenes from Western North Carolina's recovery efforts. 8A

MORE COVERAGE

After Tropical Storm Helene, before help arrived, neighbors bonded. 2A

How to keep your dog safe in wake of Helene's flooding. 3A

Indefinite WNC school closures brought by Helene: What we know. 3A

CLEANING UP, GETTING HELP

See 6A for the latest on resources available.

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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Cleaning up, getting help - Resources available in Henderson County Curfew lifted for county

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Henderson County has lifted its curfew as of Thursday morning, though a State of Emergency remains in effect.

Travel is still restricted along U.S. 64, U.S. 74 and N.C. 9 in the Bat Cave and Gerton areas of Henderson County. Some areas may have barricades, with access limited to local residents and law enforcement/emergency personnel.

What to do with debris

Henderson County will provide free curbside storm debris pickup for all county residents on NCDOT, municipal and private roads. All storm debris that is pushed to the right of way of a property will be picked up for free.

Burning debris is not the safest method under the current conditions. We want to reduce the risk of accidental fires while emergency responders continue to work. We strongly encourage residents to use this free curbside service provided by the county to reduce the risk of accidental fires.

Apply for disaster assistance at https://www.disasterassistance.gov/.

Find a job as debris

collection monitor

Debris Tech is hiring hurricane debris collection monitors to support recovery efforts in Henderson County. With immediate work available, applicants can earn \$1,000 or more per week based on full-time hours.

These positions offer hourly pay, overtime eligibility and on-the-job training, with no prior experience required. Hurricane debris collection monitors will be responsible for ensuring that eligible debris is properly collected and loaded, as well as maintaining safety standards and reporting any issues during removal operations.

To apply, visit www.debrisjobs.com and check the "Debris Monitor" box or text your name, contact information, and city/county/state of residence to 407-205-9602 or 407-205-9627.

Find a place to do laundry

Express Laundry, 5839 Asheville Hwy., Hendersonville. Open 6 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Sunday. 828-551-5053.

Pocket Change Laundry, 1620 Brevard Road, Suite 50, Hendersonville. Open 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Laundry drop-off from 8 a.m.-noon at Pocket Change Laundry, 282 New Leicester Hwy., Asheville, or 1620 Brevard Road, Hendersonville. 50% off wash, dry and fold for regular customers. Free for first responders and linemen. (828) 540-2625 or www.itspocketchange.com.

Resource Hubs

Henderson County will have two Resource Hub locations from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on Oct. 9-10 for water distribution and other supplies. The Resource Hub locations are:

Etowah Elementary, 320 Etowah School Road, Etowah

Mills River Town Hall, 124 Town Center Drive, Mills River

In addition, two churches will provide community distribution lines this week:

Ebeneezer Baptist Church, 2557 Chimney Rock Road, Hendersonville, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 9, and Friday, Oct. 11.

First Baptist Church, 312 5th Ave. W., Hendersonville, from noon-4 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 10, and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12.

Donations: Fnancial aid

most needed now

Donation and volunteer information: http://www.visithendersonvillenc.org/helene-relief

Sign up to volunteer at distribution center: https://signup.com/.../invitation2/secure/3613728180100/...

Henderson County is no longer in need of physical donations like water, food and supplies after an outpouring of support from the community and beyond.

Henderson County does continue to encourage financial contributions. The Community Foundation of Henderson County has set up a special page for Hurricane Relief and Recovery, and donors may choose among funds specifically for Henderson County and the surrounding area, WNC recovery and Lake Lure and Chimney Rock.

If you're interested in volunteering, the United Way of Henderson County is managing volunteers.

Wellness Check Status Map

Henderson County has launched a Wellness Check Status Map for missing contacts. This map shows individuals whose location and safety are unknown in red. Blue dots show contacts that were made. Check the map to see if you are listed or if you know the whereabouts of anyone on this map. Call (828) 771-6670 to notify of anyone's status. View the map at https://hendersoncounty.maps.arcgis.com/.../76a0a66ff2ff4...

Environmental health

Have questions about your well water, septic system or food establishment after Tropical Storm Helene? The Environmental Health team has compiled a list of guidance and resources to help people navigate their situation. Visit https://www.hendersoncountync.gov/.../environmental...

To view Hendersonville Water Department updates and a map for up-to-date status of water advisories, visit http://www.hvlnc.gov/wateralerts. Depending on where customers are in the system determines if they still need to boil water. The majority of customers have water and no longer need to boil water.

The state of North Carolina will provide free well testing kits for those affected by Tropical Storm Helene at a future date. Test kits are expected to arrive by Monday, Oct. 14. More details are forthcoming.

Government offices

City government offices in Hendersonville have reopened with walk-in services at some facilities from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

City Hall, 160 6th Ave. E.

Hendersonville Police Department, 630 Ashe St.

Community Development, 100 King St.

Visit www.hvlnc.gov/Helene or call (828) 697-3052 for updated city service information.

FEMA assistance

President Biden has approved federal disaster assistance that is available for survivors in designated counties in North Carolina. Survivors may apply online at disasterassistance.gov, call 800-621-3362 or on the FEMA App.

Recreation

The Oklawaha Greenway in Hendersonville is open for walking.

Information call center

The call center is available for all non-medical requests for information. Call (828) 771-6670 or email Helene-info@hcem.org. For emergencies, call 911.

For information visit www.hendersoncountync.gov and click on the Hurricane Helene Updates banner.

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Volunteer cooks, unemployed workers help others in wake of Helene

October 11, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Tiana Kennell; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 1173 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE - More than a week after Tropical Storm Helene caused mass destruction in Western North Carolina, local philanthropists are pivoting to address the latest needs of the community.

Unemployed hospitality workers serve in different capacities to ensure hot meals and assuage hunger. Restaurants have converted dining rooms into supply distribution centers. Locals, including those with a knack for culinary arts, prepare and deliver plates and resources to residents' doors.

"I love this community," said Chris Hornbeck, a volunteer cook for Grassroots Aid Partnership's disaster relief food truck. "It's such a lovely place to be and the people here give what they have and whatever they can. That's so beautiful to see."

Service industry

workers volunteering

Rebecca Jones was laid off from her job at Old Europe Pastries as the café closed due to the citywide water outages that are predicted to last several months after the Sept. 27 storm.

Yet, on Oct. 9, Jones served free hot meals and coffee to strangers from the downtown bakery's front window.

"We're working as volunteers right now," Jones said. "We have a pretty stocked staff here every day to help out."

She said since Sept. 28, and now from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. daily, Old Europe has provided free hot meals like grilled cheese and quiche. Packaged and dry foods and ingredients like eggs, beef sticks, ramen, and baby food are available, and the restaurant has accepted donations and distributed supplies like toilet tissue and dog food.

"It's kind of whatever we have," Jones said.

Jones said the bakery boils sourced potable water and hasn't had issues accessing food. Ingredients were ordered from national food supplier, Sysco, purchased during supply runs to Charlotte, and donated by community members.

Jones, a West Asheville resident, said after the storm she was worried about not having food at home but was relieved when she saw free food made and handed out at a neighborhood bar, The Odd.

Jones said the service industry came together to provide for the community, and the more she ventured out the more she saw people helping.

For more, visit oldeuropepastries.com and follow @oldeuropeasheville on Instagram.

The union of professional and volunteer culinary artists

For four days, Chris Hornbeck, a software technical writer and Leicester resident, had put his skills and hobby for cooking into action on the food truck operated by the Black Mountain-based nonprofit, Grassroots Aid Partnership.

Hornbeck said other volunteers have included massage therapists and social work professionals.

"I've been trying to find kitchens to cook in because a lot of us like to cook and we've got a lot of professional chefs here so we're trying to find some way to use our skills," Hornbeck said.

On Oct. 9, the food truck was stationed in a parking lot at Haywood Road and Balsam Avenue, across from Asheville Fire Station 6 in West Asheville.

Grassroots members and volunteers cook on-site, serving dishes like tuna sandwiches and chicken fried rice using ingredients from the Asheville area's agriculture community.

Next to the food truck, to-go containers were readied for transport and delivery to underserved communities and other residents with limited or no access to food, like senior citizens' homes.

The distribution menu of the day featured pasta with bison red sauce, cauliflower and potatoes and a stew made with chicken, beans and potatoes and served with tortillas.

Aslan Cray, co-founder of Grassroots, said the organization is a collective of groups formed to provide relief aid to communities nationwide, including areas affected by previous hurricanes, beginning with Hurricane Katrina and including Rita, Michael, Gustav, Florence and Harvey.

"Luckily, we were stationed here because a lot of times we go down South, like Louisiana, Florida or the Gulf Coast and Asheville's supposed to be a safe place from flooding," Cray said. "Fortunately, the warehouse didn't flood so we were able to get boots on the ground."

Amanda Krause, co-founder, said the organization is seeking additional volunteers, and the needs are assessed daily.

"In Asheville, we have a lot of multitalented people," she said. "We always want to work with artists and musicians — people who are currently out of work and need to get involved in something."

Krause said the organization supports the local economy by purchasing produce from local farms.

On Oct. 1, Krause said organization leaders transported a generator on a bus to provide electricity to Mother Earth Foods, a local market that sources from a network of local farms, preventing refrigerated and frozen food from going bad, which was then delivered to low-income residents.

Cray said that one of the next tasks is to figure out how to get potable and non-potable water from uncompromised creeks and streams to low-income neighbors.

He said nearly 1,000 meals were distributed since operations began, and organizations plan to increase meal delivery to assisted living facilities and community centers.

'For more, visit grassrootsaidpartnership.org and follow @grassrootsaidpartnership on Instagram.

Café-turned-supply

delivery service

After Tropical Storm Helene passed Sept. 27, the business partners at Flour, a downtown café, began dispensing coffee to the public later that evening.

Carter James said the small staff — himself, his brother, Kyle James and Chef Gordon Gibbs — have continued to feed and provide for community members from downtown to impacted areas outside the central business district.

He said in the week following the storm, Flour had about a week's worth of food in stock that was cooked and distributed to those who lined up outside of the Patton Avenue café, inside S&W Market. He said in the first days many were displaced hotel tourists displaced with limited access to food and resources, and downtown residents.

James said after Flour exhausted its initial fresh food, canned and donated goods inventory, the partners are preparing meals on a smaller scale with a different purpose.

"Downtown, with power coming back and water sources coming down here, we noticed the focus is more on the outside regions," James said. "We're still cooking the food that we get in but not as much food as we were getting before. Now, when we're cooking, we're taking it out to first responders."

James said they're assessing what's needed to reopen to meet Buncombe County Health and Human Service Department's newly instated protocol for food and beverage establishments opening amid the water outage, stating they're in no rush to reopen Flour and will continue serving the community.

Last week, Flour began accepting food and supplies, including chainsaws and generators and has worked with volunteer drivers to deliver them to communities. James said there's a growing need for personal protective equipment gear like hazmat suits and N95 masks for the storm clean-up stage.

For more, visit swmarketavl.com and follow @flouravl on Instagram.

Tiana Kennell is the food and dining reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA Today Network. She is a graduate of Michigan State University and covered the arts, entertainment and hospitality in Louisiana for several years. Email her at tkennell@citizentimes.com or follow her on Instagram @PrincessOfPage.

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Mission nurses, HCA reach deal

October 11, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Ryley Ober; Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 569 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE – A month after registered nurses at Mission Hospital voted 97% in favor to allow a strike over pay, staffing and safety issues, a new deal has been struck between HCA and its nurses.

This week, Mission nurses represented by National Nurses United voted in favor of ratifying a new three-year contract with HCA Healthcare management, as announced by the NNU Oct. 9.

Since the last union contract ended July 2, nurses and HCA management have been negotiating over a new contract and in mid-July appeared to have gotten closer on some issues. But by the end of the month, local union leaders said there were still many disagreements, including pay, staffing, extra money for holiday and night shifts, paid time off and protection from workplace violence.

A post on the local union's Facebook page in July claimed understaffing at the hospital meant no guaranteed food and bathroom breaks, saying, "We often can't pee or eat at work because we are caring for our patients."

Despite picketing and public outcries for better conditions, the agreement in early October came before any strikes were called by nurses on the bargaining team, even though the vote in September authorized a strike if necessary during negotiations.

"Mission Hospital is so important to Asheville and all of Western North Carolina," Hannah Drummond, a registered nurse in the Mission catheterization lab recovery unit, said in the news release.

"This contract is another step forward to making Mission the hospital it needs to be for our patients. Nurses are the backbone of Mission Hospital, and this contract adds steel to our spine."

Mission Hospital spokesperson Nancy Lindell confirmed to the Citizen Times Oct. 9 that a contract was ratified but declined to answer questions about the specifics of the contract.

"As we indicated all along, our goal was to reach an agreement that was fair for our colleagues and maintained the flexibility that allows us to operate in an ever-changing healthcare environment, and this contract meets those goals," Lindell said via email Oct. 9.

"Now, as our Western North Carolina community comes together to heal from Hurricane Helene, we are eager to move forward together in providing high-quality care to our patients."

NNU, which represents more than 1,600 nurses at Mission Hospital, listed some highlights from the new contract in its news release, including a prevision that may better allow for needed breaks:

"Substantial wage increases" that include up to 29% for some nurses over the contract's three-year term. This will hopefully "improve nurse recruitment and retention," the release said.

A pilot program for break relief staffing that will ensure nurses can take their meal and rest breaks during their shifts.

New measures to ensure nurses are "floated," or temporarily reassigned, to units similar to their normal specialty.

Staff can use preferred names and add personal pronouns to name badges.

"We are excited to have this new contract and ensure that our hospital is on a path to taking the best possible care of our patients and community," Huns Brown, RN in the pulmonary progressive care unit, said in the news release.

"The devastation Hurricane Helene brought to our region underscores how Mission being the best possible version of itself is more important than ever."

Ryley Ober is the Public Safety Reporter for Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA Today Network. She is a graduate of Indiana University and was the Citizen Times Summer News Reporting Intern in 2022. Email her at rober@gannett.com and follow her on Twitter @ryleyober

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Region's educators offer resources as indefinite closures continue

October 11, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Iris Seaton; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 893 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE - Though power and other vital utilities are slowly returning to schools in Asheville and Buncombe County, there is still plenty of work to be done before students can return to class.

Superintendent Rob Jackson told the Citizen Times that Buncombe County Schools were "blessed" to have suffered no major damages to any campus. As of an Oct. 9 briefing from Buncombe County, only five of 45 schools were without power — but 32 of the 45 were still without running water.

"To open our schools, we need 939 portable toilets and 391 handwashing stations," Jackson said in the Oct. 9 briefing. "This comes with a large financial burden, especially in a large school system with 45 schools and 22,000 students."

Jackson said the district has turned to emergency management authorities to help. BCS has put in a request to get portable restroom facilities on campuses as soon as possible.

While BCS has no specific goal reopening date announced, Asheville City Schools Superintendent Maggie Fehrman offered Oct. 28 as their target date for fully reopening schools at the same briefing. Fehrman said that promised well-digging efforts were starting strong, with groundwater located at Hall Fletcher Elementary's new well.

Both districts have offered resources to families and students as WNC recovers from Helene's destruction including food, water, and directories of additional assistance. BCS provided a long list of community resources through the district website in addition to social media updates. ACS posts regular updates on the district Facebook page, from food, water and toiletries to FEMA assistance clinic information and more.

What are teachers doing?

Teacher pay has long been a contentious issue in WNC. Jackson said that BCS has informed the entire staff, educators included, that their salaries will "not be impacted by the storm." At the moment, many BCS staff members are actively engaged in the district's response efforts, helping to distribute supplies and other aid to the community.

"Our immediate first response was to work with our county leaders to offer our help in any way we possibly could, because we live here, we care about our neighbors and friends, we love our students and our staff, and so it is in an educator's DNA to help, and we've been honored to do everything we possibly could to help our community," Jackson said.

Tim Lloyd, president of the Asheville City Association of Educators, said he felt the district handled the situation well, checking in on staff following the storm and providing vital supplies to teachers and students alike. He also said that pay has continued in the district, though he was uncertain as to how long it would continue with schools closed. Like BCS, many ACS educators are assisting with outreach during closures.

"All work that's being done is volunteer, which is actually very good, because many people want to volunteer and they want to help out at different sites, handing out aid, checking in on people, doing whatever they can," Lloyd said. "But we do think that within at least a couple weeks, some staff will be returning back to schools."

academic progress?

Jackson said that, when it comes to academics, BCS is confident that students aren't in danger of falling too far behind. Part of the confidence in this process lay in practice teachers had in the restart process.

"Our teachers and staff had preparation for this through the pandemic, and so we've certainly worked on helping our students recover from the academic learning loss that was experienced during the pandemic, and have felt really good about the metrics that we were seeing prior to this storm. And so I remain confident in our faculty and staff that we'll be able to help our students recover from any learning loss and then continue to progress forward."

During the Oct. 9 county briefing, Fehrman spoke on ACS bridge learning plans beginning Oct. 14 at Isaac Dixon and Haw Fletcher Elementary Schools for students from kindergarten to 12th grade.

"We know that bridge learning is meant in no way to meet all the educational, social and emotional needs of our students," Fehrman said. "We know that can only be done through fully reopening our schools. We do hope that bridge learning provides our students and families with a bit of normalcy, and an opportunity for our students to gather, learn and have fun together while we continue to fully dedicate our time to opening our schools."

Messages to the community

Lloyd summed up ACS teacher experiences as he had observed them during closures.

"Everybody right now is very much feeling the itch to actually get back in schools, both because they really enjoy their jobs and they really enjoy helping out students, and they also know that many parents are also wanting to return soon as well," Lloyd said.

On behalf of BCS, Jackson signed off with a message for the community.

"Our hearts are breaking for all of the loss that our community has suffered, loss of loved ones, loss of homes, significant damage to homes. And we stand with our community. We know that we are strong as a community and resilient as a community."

Iris Seaton is the trending news reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network. Reach her at iseaton@citizentimes.com.

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Helene brought out the best in Carolinians

October 11, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: John Hood| Section: Opinion| 541 Words OpenURL Link

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

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

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

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

On the ground, we've seen a great deal of cooperation across jurisdictional and political boundaries. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, lawmakers from both parties — all have pitched in to comfort victims, survey damage, coordinate responses, and convey timely, accurate information to the public.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The post Helene brought out the best in Carolinians appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

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NCDHHS urges well and septic safety following Hurricane Helene

October 11, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Submitted article| Section: Community | 869 Words OpenURL Link

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is urging western North Carolinians who rely on a private well for their drinking water and were impacted by Hurricane Helene to continue to use bottled, boiled or treated water until private wells can be disinfected and tested for dangerous bacteria. Safety measures and precautions are also needed for septic systems impacted by the storm before returning to use.

People in flood and storm-impacted areas should have their private wells and septic systems inspected and repaired if damaged. Wells should be disinfected and tested after repairs to ensure water safety, while septic systems should be inspected to confirm they are functioning properly.

North Carolinians who lost access to water or septic through a private well or damaged septic system due to Hurricane Helene may be eligible for FEMA assistance. Visit disasterassistance.gov or call 800-621-3362 to apply for FEMA disaster assistance and learn about other resources available to help you and your family recover from the storm.

Safety Measures for Private Wells

Excessive rain and flooding can cause water in private wells to become contaminated, making people sick if they consume it. People with medical conditions can be particularly susceptible to severe illness or even death related to dangerous bacteria from contaminated wells.

After a flood, your private well must be assessed for damage, disinfected, and tested. People mustn't drink or use water from a private well that has been damaged or flooded until it has been properly disinfected and tested after the storm. Potentially contaminated water should not be used for drinking, washing and preparing food, making ice, preparing baby formula, washing dishes, brushing teeth, or washing hands. Use an alternative water source until testing confirms contamination is no longer detected in your water. Alternative sources include bottled water, a source you know isn't contaminated, or boiling your water for at least one minute before use.

If you can determine that your well is not damaged and you already have the necessary disinfection materials on hand, you can disinfect your well to prepare it for testing. For assistance, use the NCDHHS instructions on How to Disinfect Your Well After a Flood.

If you do not have disinfectant supplies or have questions about disinfecting your well, contact your local health department for assistance. Because you cannot see, taste, or smell bacterial contamination in your well, it is imperative to have the water tested after disinfection to determine whether it is safe for use.

The North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health provides free testing through local health departments.

If you live near animal feeding operations, agricultural fields where pesticides are applied or industrial chemical factories, you should talk with your local health department about additional testing, especially if you smell fuel or chemicals in your water.

Your local health department or testing lab will return the water testing results to the well owner as quickly as possible. If you need help interpreting your results, use the Be Well Informed tool (select North Carolina) or contact the NCDHHS Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch at 919-707-5900 or oeeb@dhhs.nc.gov.

NC State Laboratory of Public Health and NCDHHS Environmental Health Section are working to provide disinfection

and sampling kits at point-of-distribution locations across Western North Carolina. More details will be announced soon.

Safety Measures for Septic Systems

Your septic system can also pose a public health risk after a flood or storm because of sewage back-up, dangerous gasses, or contaminated wastewater. It is important to keep your family, especially children and pets, away from areas affected by sewage or wastewater to reduce the risk of disease.

If your property has been flooded, do not use the plumbing system while the septic tank is still underwater. Look for signs that your septic system may have been damaged, such as soil settling around the tank or drain field, septic system components that have moved or surfaced, sewage backup into your home, or wastewater on the ground.

Do not use your plumbing system if sewage water has backed up into your home and avoid contact with any sewage from a septic tank that is not operating.

Avoid putting floodwater or disinfectants into the system as these can cause further damage. Instead, contact your local health department if your system requires repairs.

Have your septic system inspected by a certified wastewater system inspector after a flood or if you suspect storm-related damage. You can call the NC Onsite Wastewater Contractors and Inspectors Certification Board at 336-202-3126 to find a certified inspector near you.

Before restoring power to the system, ensure your electrical and system components are working properly. Check the electrical system for any damage, clean the effluent filter or screen, and determine whether your septic tank needs to be pumped by a licensed professional before coming back online.

For assistance or additional information on repairing or constructing a septic tank system, contact your county health department.

If your flood or storm-impacted septic system has caused sewage to back up into your home, take precautions while cleaning the area to avoid exposure or direct contact with the debris. Wear rubber gloves, boots, and eye protection while cleaning and disinfecting the area.

More Hurricane Helene resources are available at ncdhhs.gov/helene.

Submitted by Joshua Kennedy

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NFL star makes generous donation towards Hurricane Helene relief in Upstate

October 11, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Jamie Lewis | Section: Community | 244 Words OpenURL Link

49ers wide receiver, Deebo Samuel Sr., donates \$20,000

UPSTATE—Deebo Samuel Sr., an NFL wide receiver with the San Francisco 49ers, recently donated \$20,000 to Spartanburg County in relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Samuel Sr. grew up in Inman and attended Chapman High School, where he stood out as a football player, breaking school records with 53 touchdowns, 94 tackles, and 12 interceptions. His time at Chapman High School earned him the opportunity to play as a Gamecock at the University of South Carolina before the 49ers drafted him in the second round of the 2019 NFL Draft.

Samuel Sr., who frequently visits the area and donates to local charities, says he is "taking care of home" by helping those in need following the storm's devastation.

Spartanburg County experienced significant damage from Helene, with many downed power lines and trees, and tallied nine storm-related deaths.

"I do it for my community," said Samuel Sr. in a recent interview. "As athletes, a lot of people look up to us, and I want to be a voice that inspires others to take action and make a difference in their own hometowns."

Samuel expressed deep concern for his community, sharing that many of his friends and family spent multiple days without power. He also emphasized the importance of staying connected to his roots and motivating others to give back wherever possible.

The post NFL star makes generous donation towards Hurricane Helene relief in Upstate appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

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Progress inspiring hope at Chimney Rock Village

October 11, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Jeff Allison | Section: Community | 456 Words OpenURL Link

Helene leaves Village in ruins, recovery efforts underway

CHIMNEY ROCK—Two weeks after Helene devastated Chimney Rock Village in Rutherford County, officials' updates on the progress of clean-up efforts and road and bridge construction have been inspiring.

Flood waters caused by Helene destroyed numerous structures on the side of the main street closest to the Rocky Broad River and severely damaged many others. Tons of mud and debris poured across downtown and into nearby Lake Lure. The storm also severely damaged the road itself, washing it away entirely in some places.

"The base for the new road from the Village toward Bat Cave is progressing nicely," Chimney Rock Village Mayor Peter O'Leary said in a social media post on Wednesday. "The North Carolina Dept. of Transportation is working on a plan for a temporary bridge to Southside. No timeline is available yet."

Federal agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and state officials have been onsite to coordinate the recovery response and survey the damage. NC Governor Roy Cooper visited on Tuesday and spoke with local officials and firefighters, offering words of hope and encouragement.

On Wednesday, officials were finally able to allow some Main Street business owners and Terrace Drive residents to return to the Village for the first time since the storm. Due to heavy road construction traffic and hazards, the passes issued for entry were suspended temporarily on Thursday until further notice. However, simply being able to access the site is a sign of hope.

"NCDOT and their contractors are making steady progress with the reconstruction of Main Street headed west to Bat Cave. While this will be a long process, it is encouraging to see the initial progress," says O'Leary. "Debris, sand, and silt cleanup are going well on Main Street. Power crews are doing great work, and there are visible signs of progress in our immediate area. Power has been restored as close as Lured Market in Lake Lure (as of Monday).

Officials say engineers from Odom Engineering have donated time to inspect commercial buildings on both sides of the river and will determine when the remaining buildings are safe to enter.

The government of Chimney Rock Village has expressed gratitude for the influx of generously donated food and supplies and the US Army's efforts in helping Village businesses recover by removing mud and debris.

Officials also thanked workers with Shields Tree and Grading, who uncovered the Chimney Rock Village Medallion in the Village Square on Wednesday, symbolizing the progress being made there.

Although work is underway, there are still many months of rebuilding ahead.

To make a financial donation to support efforts, individuals can donate to the Chimney Rock Village Disaster Relief Fund at www.givesendgo.com/chimneyrockrelieffund.

The post Progress inspiring hope at Chimney Rock Village appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

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Cell service, infrastructure, economy main topics at Tryon Council candidate forum

October 11, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Claire Sachse | Section: Community | 1103 Words OpenURL Link

TRYON—Tryon residents filled the Depot Plaza on a cool, clear fall evening for a lively forum that introduced five candidates running for two council seats and three candidates for mayor.

Andy Millard moderated the Oct. 10 forum. He asked candidates the audience-submitted questions which focused on cell phone service, downtown parking, economic development, local ordinances, term limits, and Tropical Storm Helene's aftermath.

Millard also informed the audience that Tryon's election-day polling place will be relocated to Tryon Presbyterian Church on Harmon Field Rd., due to the storm damage at Harmon Field.

Julie Lambakis, Neill Rogers and Nathan Shields are running for the unexpired two-year term on council. Shields did not attend the forum. Of those three, one will be elected.

Skip Crowe, Tracie Greenway Morris and Steve Nelon are running for a four-year term on council. Of those candidates, two will be elected. Ian Griggs' name is on the ballot for this seat, however, he announced his withdrawal from the race in September.

The three candidates for mayor are Doug Arbogast, Mayor Pro Tempore Chrelle Booker, and the incumbent mayor, J. Alan Peoples.

Cell phone service was on all the candidates' minds. All mentioned how limitations affect daily life and not just in the aftermath of Helene. Arbogast, Booker, Peoples and Rogers support placing a cell tower in town. Peoples said that the town had a cell tower but it was never working, and that he has been negotiating with Verizon for three years. Nelon, Lambakis and Rogers said that Starlink could be an option. Rogers added that multiple towers are needed. Greenway Morris said the town should investigate options and talk to experts.

Infrastructure issues, including water and sewer, were discussed at length in relation to planning for future growth and tourism.

Arbogast, Crowe and Lambakis said the town needs to retain Jim Fatland so he can continue to apply for grant money for water and sewer repairs. Peoples said that in the long run the town will need to have municipal bonds to pay for repairs estimated at \$15 million. Lambakis agreed with pursuing bonds. Rogers stated that he has seen manhole covers boiling over into the creek, the town has had to pay DEQ fines, and that a local Airbnb had brown water in its pipes.

Downtown parking issues were also addressed.

Crowe, Booker, Arbogast, Rogers and Lambakis talked about the possibility of a parking deck. Crowe said it would be "outrageously expensive," but Lambakis said it could be "aesthetically pleasing" and include more housing and shops. Arbogast said the town could charge to park in a new parking deck on the backside of Tryon, but Rogers said that he would not want visitors to have to pay to park. Booker mentioned a smart city parking app that tells drivers where parking is available.

Peoples, Lambakis, and Rogers said the town needed to utilize parking lots at churches, the school, and Harmon Field, with golf cart shuttles to get people into town. Arbogast said merchants should not use parking spaces in front of their own businesses. Greenway Morris and Lambakis mentioned accessibility issues and making more parking

available for seniors with walkers and wheelchairs.

With a large-scale housing development coming to Landrum, and rails to trails on the horizon for Tryon, the candidates' thoughts on economic development focused on supporting existing businesses, assessing the community's input, and planning for the future.

Lambakis expressed a desire to incentivize veteran-owned businesses. Greenway Morris proposed community input meetings to develop a comprehensive 5-10 year plan and charrettes. Arbogast questioned the status of the Pine Crest Inn, and said that the community needed a hotel or hotels to support tourism and the economy with a "heads in beds" tax.

Rogers said that the town needs to gather momentum on economic development before the Saluda Grade Trail arrives, and suggested partnering with the county's economic development team. Crowe said most of Tryon's businesses are locally-owned and the town needs to cultivate and support private, local entrepreneurs. Booker proposed a public/private task force and neighborhood advisory committees, and emphasized the need for diversity. Peoples proposed a municipal service district that could yield \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year toward a parking lot and streetlights, an idea supported, he says, by eight businesses so far.

Should Tryon's businesses be open more days and more hours? All candidates said that it would be ideal, but not enforceable unless codified or stipulated in leases.

Greenway Morris, Rogers and Lambakis said it would be helpful to talk with business owners and determine what issues drive their hours of operation. Lambakis said that restaurants struggle with staffing issues, and Arbogast said that restaurants could consider sharing part time staff.

"We need to encourage more young people to come here to help out with the staffing for the restaurants," Lambakis said.

Should council members and the mayor be term-limited? Peoples, who has served as mayor for 21 years, says no. Crowe, Lambakis, Nelon, Rogers, Arbogast and Booker say yes. Booker proposes forming a youth commission that she said will encourage Tryon's young people to serve in town leadership positions in the future.

Regarding the role of law enforcement, candidates agreed that the town's police department is doing a good job and they support the 20mph restriction on Trade St., especially with reversing out of diagonal parking spaces.

Arbogast said he'd like to see more visibility of police officers in town. Peoples mentioned that the department has a new officer on staff and another in "the hopper." Lambakis said the department needs a new fingerprint machine.

Lastly, the candidates were given a chance to state their top priorities if elected.

Nelon said his priority would be a cell tower. Greenway Morris said she would focus on infrastructure, transparency and accountability. Crowe said his priorities included addressing infrastructure needs, supporting town employees "who did an unbelievable job the last two weeks," and starting the planning for rails to trails. Peoples said he would continue working on infrastructure issues. Booker plans to focus on budget and finance stewardship, infrastructure and her proposed youth commission, and added that she would like to become Tryon's first woman mayor.

Arbogast stated that he learned from Helene that the town needs "a good communication system in the event of a disaster," and that all the candidates on stage have Tryon's best interests in mind. Rogers said that infrastructure, responsible spending of the town's \$5.3 million grant, and transparency are his three goals. In addition to infrastructure, Lambakis said she is for "thoughtful development, and being analytical with our development to get ready for what's going to be happening over the next few years."

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Rodeo Carolina at TIEC canceled

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Organizers say event to return next year

MILL SPRING—Due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene across Western North Carolina and the region, World Champions Rodeo Alliance, Professional Bull Riders, and Tryon International have canceled the 2024 Rodeo Carolina. In the days preceding the storm, the event had been rescheduled for October 30 through November 2 in Mill Spring at the Tryon International Equestrian Center.

WCRA and its partners look forward to returning Rodeo Carolina to the region in the fall of 2025.

In the wake of Hurricane Helene, Tryon International has been instrumental in the region's recovery. It currently serves as a staging area for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a community food distribution base camp, and a 10-acre North Carolina Emergency Management Field Hospital. First responders also occupy Tryon International's lodging and facilities with an indefinite departure date.

All ticket purchasers will receive a refund from ETIX.com, Tryon International's ticketing partner.

Rodeo Carolina Leaderboard points will be applied to the 2025 Rodeo Corpus Christi Leaderboard; athletes who do not want their points applied to Rodeo Corpus Christi can email eventsecretary@wcrarodeo.com and receive a refund on their nominations. The 2024 VRQ Points Champion Bonus will now conclude on May 10 at 2025 Rodeo Corpus Christi. For more information, email eventsecretary@wcrarodeo.com.

TIEC adds that it appreciates the understanding of its competitors, partners, and staff, and its thoughts and prayers are with everyone in the region affected by the storm.

The post Rodeo Carolina at TIEC canceled appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

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Two rivers of destruction, one of misinformation

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It was heartbreaking enough that we had to deal with rivers unleashing death and destruction in our beloved Western North Carolina. Compounding that was the river of harmful misinformation driven by political miscreants, evildoers, and well-intentioned but clueless people.

When a disaster strikes, victims need to know that their local, state and federal governments will help, because they are.

For days afterward, however, there was a torrent of lies flowing both from the highest political levels in the country as well as from the bowels of evil swimming on the internet. The big lie was that FEMA, our federal government's primary support for needy disaster victims, wasn't coming, didn't have any money because it was being spent on immigrants and other such conspiracy drivel, or that it was "confiscating" donations.

The big lie quickly spread via the internet in Polk, Rutherford and Buncombe counties, coming mostly via Elon Musk's X but also other social media. Falsehoods ranged from a planned government seizure of the entire town of Chimney Rock to FEMA siphoning relief money to illegal immigrants and mysterious events surrounding a non-existent lithium mine. So pervasive were the spreading lies that some North Carolina Republican legislators begged their colleagues to stop it.

State Sen. Kevin Cobin, a Republican from Macon County in WNC, wrote, "Friends, can I ask a small favor? Will you all help STOP this conspiracy theory junk that is floating all over Facebook and the internet about the floods in WNC?"

According to the Washington Post, Mark Robinson, the state's lieutenant governor and a candidate for governor, repeatedly falsely alleged that there had been no state government response to Helene.

But equally troubling to me was that some of my friends allowed themselves to be sucked into the vortex of conspiracy theories about FEMA.

One drove up from Florida with a pickup truck bulging at the seams with water, food, diapers, medical supplies and even Fruit Loops, calling and texting all along the way that he was bringing supplies but that FEMA had already stopped one of his buddies and "confiscated" his goods. When he arrived on our property, where Helene had already brought down trees on our buildings and left us without power, he said he was looking for a preacher he heard about who was in the area and accepting donations.

What's the preacher's name? He couldn't remember, but he knew he didn't want to let his precious cargo fall into the hands of FEMA. When he asked where he should take it, I told him the best place to go was the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Mill Spring. I gave him the address and said it was less than a 10-minute drive and that when he got there, guess what he would find-FEMA, helping people.

When he left our area to go back to Florida, he texted to say, "You were right."

Another local friend kept sharing on Facebook-that vein in America that confiscates common sense and critical thinking-a video of a Florida "friend" saying FEMA was "confiscating" donations that he was attempting to bring to us in his convoy of helicopters. The video was mostly about what a swashbuckling savior he was.

I sent the swashbuckler a message requesting an interview about his FEMA revelations. No response. I repeated the

request later. No response. I asked my friend to let him know that I wanted to interview him. She did. Still no response from the Florida whirly boy.

Apparently he wasn't interested in talking to someone who might expose his lies. He was much more comfortable posting them on social media, where gullibility is a prerequisite for earning those blue ribbon badges.

Larry McDermott is a local retired farmer/journalist. Reach him at hardscrabblehollow@gmail.com

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Donated supplies available at FENCE

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TRYON—FENCE has been amazed by the incredible support from all over the country for Western North Carolina, with generous donations pouring in from many different places.

"We are grateful to be able to provide these supplies to the people in our community who are in need, especially after the devastation caused by Helene," said FENCE Administrative Assistant Ashely Brewington. "Thank you so much to all who have donated and volunteered to help our community.

"FENCE can provide diapers, wipes, water, food, hygiene products, drinks, female products, and household items."

All the human supplies were donated by We 3 Mission, Sod Pro Landscaping, Jonathan Weaver with Momentum Church, Parks Chevrolet of Spartanburg, and East Coast Underground.

Livestock items are also available at FENCE for those in the community who may need them.

"We can provide the livestock of our community with food, hay, electrolytes, shavings, and salt blocks," Brewington added. Dark Sky Farm, Double Diamond Cattle, Tractor Supply of Greensboro, and Mariah Rigos donated livestock items.

FENCE thanked its team, which helped load and unload supplies: Sarah, Shelley, Whitney, Tracie, Ashley, Roy, and Salvador.

FENCE is located at 3381 Hunting Country Rd. in Tryon. Human supplies can be picked up Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Livestock supplies must be coordinated by calling. 828-859-9021.

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