

Empty Bowls event to support hunger efforts

October 14, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 438 Words OpenURL Link

LENOIR — Yokefellow will host its eighth Annual Empty Bowls event on Sunday, Oct. 27, 11 a.m. — 2 p.m. at William Lenoir Middle School in Lenoir, according to a press release from Yokefellow.

Yokefellow is a Lenoir non-profit, organized in 1969, committed to serving people in need. The ministry is committed to translate faith into action, which cares for the social, physical, economic and emotional needs of people. Empty Bowls is Yokefellow's only annual fundraiser, according to the press release.

A week and a half ago, Yokefellow became the county's designated Helene relief clothing and housewares donation site. Thanks to the help of St. James Episcopal, Lenoir Presbyterian and Fellowship Baptist literal tons of donations have been opened, processed and sorted and bagged for Caldwell communities. Last Monday Yokefellow drove their 20ft truck to Happy Valley full of blankets, diapers, clothing and food. Then last Friday, the Yokefellow truck and a rental truck delivered four full loads of clothing and much needed household goods to Collettsville, according to the press release.

In addition to this direct Helene relief, Yokefellow sponsored a community wide grocery distribution on Wednesday, providing food to 228 households feeding 627 individuals. On Tuesday, Yokefellow was gifted two tractor trailer loads of food this past Tuesday from a SC utility contractor. Subsequently, Yokefellow sponsored a truck load drive thru food give away loading 218 cars, feeding 707 individuals with a more than 50 pounds of food. In just these two events Yokefellow provided food support to 446 households, feeding 1334 individuals, according to the press release.

So as you can see, Feeding Our Neighbors is a priority for Yokefellow and Empty Bowls proceeds support this daily effort. Yokefellow reminds everyone that hunger continues to be an issue for our neighbors and now there are refrigerators to fill after the widespread power outages, according to the press release.

"Empty Bowls: Feeding Our Neighbors" encourages artists and groups to create and donate bowls, local chefs to prepare their delicious signature soups and breads, then serve a simple meal.

The Empty Bowls Steering Committee has recruited several local chefs to prepare seven local favorite soups for a hearty meal of soup, bread and a hand prepared desserts. Guests choose a bowl that day to keep as a reminder of all the empty bowls in our community. In exchange for the meal and the handcrafted bowl, guests will pay a suggested donation of \$25 each. One hundred% of the Oct. 27 meal proceeds are designated in support of the Yokefellow food pantry program. Tickets are available at Yokefellow and will be available on the day of the event, according to the press release.

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Open burning permits waived until further notice for 21 counties in Western North Carolina

October 14, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTRS| Section: Archives | 287 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — The N.C. Forest Service is waiving the requirement for open burning permits in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties effective at noon Saturday, Oct. 12, until further notice. This measure is enacted through the authorization of House Bill 149, the Disaster Recovery Act of 2024, according to a press release from N.C. Department of Agriculture.

"Hurricane Helene left excessive amounts of storm-related debris on the ground in the western part of the state," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "Critical infrastructure is still being restored, and many communities continue to have limited access, making it difficult, nearly impossible, for people to comply with the law and get a burning permit. While we're waiving the requirement for a permit in these 21 counties, we cannot stress caution and safety enough when it comes to burning outdoors this time of year.

"With more fuel on the ground as a result of the hurricane, seasonal leaf fall and as conditions continue to dry, burning storm-related debris as safely as possible is paramount. We need our emergency personnel focused on hurricane response and recovery efforts, not pulled away by escaped debris burns. Use the best practices and wildfire prevention tips recommended by the forest service," said Troxler.

This waiver does not apply to permits required by other agencies, including the N.C. Division of Air Quality or a local fire marshal's office, according to the press release.

When burning outdoors, recommended best practices include the following:

- § Never burn on a dry, windy day.
- § Never leave your fire unattended.
- § Keep a water source, shovel, rake and a phone nearby.

For additional best practices and wildfire prevention tips, visit www.ncforestservice.gov/fire_control/fc_firesafetyoutdoors.htm.

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Hibriten edges South Caldwell in overtime

October 14, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: CHRIS CHURCH Special to the News-Topic | Section: Archives | 1082 Words OpenURL Link

The South Caldwell Spartans visited the Hibriten Panthers Friday night for what would turn out to be one of the year's best regional football games. Jeff Storie Memorial Stadium was rocking for a contest that would not only crown Hibriten's homecoming queen, but would also reveal the Caldwell County champion for the 2024-25 season.

As game time approached, there was a thoughtful moment of silence dedicated to all those affected by the recent devastation of Hurricane Helene, followed by a somber but lovely a capella version of the national anthem by Hibriten's chorus. That would be the last quiet moment of the evening, as big cheers for the home team began with Hibriten winning the coin toss at midfield. The Panthers elected to kick, and the battle was underway.

Kaden Loritts returned the kickoff for South Caldwell, and made a nifty move to take the ball to the Spartans 46 yard line. A succession of running plays predicted the main offensive strategies of the evening, as very few passes were thrown. Excellent defense by Hibriten's Drew Martin, Caleb Swanner and others, plus a critical illegal motion penalty call against South stalled the Spartans drive, which resulted in a punt. The kick took a South Caldwell bounce, and rolled to the Hibriten 24 yard line, where the Panthers would take over.

Like South Caldwell, the bulk of Hibriten's offensive strategy was placed on the running game. Luckily for head coach Sam Mackey's Panthers, the Hibriten backfield and offensive line were there fighting for every yard. Early in the possession, Dexter Mosley made a nice run on a fourth down play to move the ball to the 30 yard line of South Caldwell. The fine rushing game was briefly put on pause for a quick pass from quarterback Avin Crawford to Drew Martin for about 5 yards, but then the Spartans defense took hold. The Panthers were stopped on fourth down, and South took over at their own 23.

This turn of events provided momentum for the Spartans offense, which employed three different quarterbacks and some well drawn plays by South Caldwell head coach Casey Justice and his staff. On second down, Kaden Loritts took a handoff from quarterback Corbin Mcghinnis to the 41 yard line for a first down. Loritts and Landon Borders continued to move the ball on several rushing plays, as Martin, Ashton Woodard and others made several quality defensive plays for Hibriten in the open field. South Caldwell continued to grind out gains on offense, and the first quarter ended with a fourth down and 2 yards to go for the Spartans. As the second quarter began, Borders got the call and gathered another Spartans first down at the Hibriten 30 yard line. He took off for 11 more yards on the next play, placing South at the 19. After several more short gains, South Caldwell got on the board with a touchdown by Loritts and a successful 2 point conversion, taking an 8-0 lead.

The Panthers offense took over at their own 29 yard line after the ensuing kickoff, and the Spartans defense held again and forced a punt. South took their offense onto the field and ran into a fired up Panthers defense led by D'Kodan "DK" Mitchell, Martin, and a host of others, who stopped the running game, ganged up on a quarterback sack, and then caused a South Caldwell fumble, recovered by Hibriten near midfield.

The Panthers offense, led by the excellent running of Mitchell, Mosley and Martin, moved the ball downfield. South Caldwell's defense did their best, but the biggest enemy for the Panthers on this drive was the clock. With 23 seconds left in the half, number 23 Avin Crawford crossed the plane on a quarterback keeper for a Hibriten touchdown. The 2 point conversion was good, and after the kickoff, plus two exciting runs by South Caldwell that moved them all the way to the Hibriten 25 yard line as time expired, the first half ended with the score knotted at 8 apiece.

The homecoming ceremony, scored by the Hibriten band's version of Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline", gave the home crowd more reasons to keep their attention locked on the field. Isabella Hawkins was elected as homecoming

queen, and crowned by last year's queen Jada Brown. The extended halftime period came to a close, and the teams returned to the field as the comfortable 70 degree game time temperature fell into the mid 50s.

Great individual second half efforts by Crawford, Mitchell, Martin, and others for Hibriten, as well as South Caldwell's Borders, Loritts, and quarterbacks Mcghinnis, Gunner Ferrell, and Burke Wilson provided intensity, but the biggest drama was saved for two moments. One of those took place at the end of a South Caldwell drive that began at their own 26 yard line. After recovering one of their own fumbles, and a costly penalty, the Spartans found themselves with a 4th down and goal at the Hibriten 2 yard line. Excellent gang defense, led by the Panthers' Trenton Stevens, gave the Spartans no room, and denied the South Caldwell attempt to take the lead.

Much of the second half was anything but boring as play continued, but as the clock wound down in the fourth quarter, the second big moment happened. Hibriten drove the ball downfield on their last possession, featuring Mitchell's strong running, and the Panthers moved into position to win the game on a field goal attempt from the 19 yard line with 3 seconds left. South Caldwell's defense crowded the middle of the line and blocked the kick, forcing the game into overtime.

Hibriten got the ball and scored first in overtime, but did not succeed on their try for a 2 point conversion. South Caldwell did exactly the same, and a second overtime began with the score now tied at 14. South Caldwell had the first possession of the second overtime and again reached the same result, a touchdown, but the 2 point conversion failed. The score now was 20-14 in favor of the Spartans. The roar of the Hibriten crowd was noteworthy as the Panthers offense returned to the field. The Panthers scored a touchdown, but this time, there was no attempt at a 2 point conversion. The point after kick sailed through the uprights, and the Panthers walked off the field with a 21-20 win, and bragging rights as Caldwell County champs for the year. The Panthers improved their record to 2 and 3, while the Spartans are now 2 and 4 on the season.

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What it was, was football: Week 6

October 14, 2024 | North State Journal (NC) Author: Shawn Krest| Section: Article | 731 Words OpenURL Link

The state broke even last week, going 15-15. That's two straight weeks without a losing record for North Carolina's 33 college football teams.

Schedule havoc: A week after the storm, Helene continued to impact college football. Catawba's game at Anderson, SC was moved to a home game and rescheduled for Sunday. Western Carolina's game with Wofford was played with no fans in the stands.

North Carolina's record: 15-15 (81-87 overall)

Last week's winners (ranked in order of impressiveness of the victory—a combination of opponent and performance):

1. NC Central: 45-14 at Campbell

2. Wingate: 33-0 at UVA-Wise

3. Brevard: 55-21 at Southern Virginia

4. Mars Hill: 34-9 at Newberry

5. Wake Forest: 34-30 at NC State

6. UNC Pembroke: 35-32 at Wheeling

7. Charlotte: 55-24 over ECU

8. Davidson: 42-19 over Marist

9. Shaw: 35-17 over Bluefield

10. Western Carolina: 21-17 over Wofford

11. Livingstone: 23-17 over Elizabeth City State

12. Johnson C. Smith: 21-17 over Virginia State

13. Fayetteville State: 27-24 over Bowie State

14. NC Wesleyan: 19-17 over Methodist

15. Catawba: 44-41 over Anderson in overtime

Last week's losers (ranked in order of impressiveness, despite the result):

1. NC A&T: 20-17 at Richmond

2. Methodist: 19-17 at NC Wesleyan

3. Elizabeth City State: 23-17 at Livingstone

4. Duke: 24-14 at Georgia Tech

5. Lenoir-Rhyne: 31-20 at Emory & Henry

6. Barton: 28-17 at Carson-Newman

7. Winston-Salem State: 31-13 at Virginia Union

8. App State: 52-37 at Marshall

9. UNC: 34-24 to Pitt

10. NC State: 34-30 to Wake Forest

11. Gardner-Webb: 35-17 at UT Martin

12. Guilford: 31-0 at Hampden-Sydney

13. East Carolina: 55-24 at Charlotte

14. Campbell: 45-14 to NC Central

15. Chowan: 54-9 at Delta State

Off: Elon, Greensboro, St. Andrews

Remaining unbeatens (1 remaining, down from 4 last week): Duke. Lenoir-Rhyne and Guilford all lost over the weekend.

Johnson C. Smith: 6-0

Winning records (11, up from 9 last week):

Duke: 5-1

Davidson, Lenoir-Rhyne: 4-1

Livingstone, NC Central, Shaw, Winston-Salem State: 4-2

Fayetteville State: 3-2

Guilford, Wingate: 3-1

Brevard: 2-1

At .500 (4, down from 5 last week)

Charlotte, ECU, NC State, UNC: 3-3

Losing records (17, up from 11 last week):

Western Carolina, App State, Wake Forest, Western Carolina, Barton, Catawba, Elizabeth City State: 2-3
Campbell: 2-4
Mars Hill: 1-2
Greensboro, Chowan: 1-3
NC Wesleyan, Elon, UNC Pembroke, Methodist: 1-4
Gardner-Webb, NC A&T: 1-5
Still winless (1, down from 4 last week):
St. Andrews: 0-3
Mars Hill, UNC Pembroke and NC Wesleyan got off the schneid this weekend.
State title standings: Wake moved into a tie for first with a win over state, Central beat Campbell, Charlotte blew out ECU, Limestone beat ECSU and NC Wesleyan got the win over Methodist to shake up the standings.
2-0 Duke, Guilford, Fayetteville State, Wake Forest
2-1 UNC, Charlotte
2-2 NC Central
1-1 NC State, Campbell, Shaw, Catawba
1-2 Methodist, NC A&T, Elon, Western Carolina
1-3 Elizabeth City State
0-1 Gardner-Webb, Winston-Salem State, Mars Hill
0-2 ECU, Chowan, UNC Pembroke, Greensboro
State title games this week:
Barton at Wingate
Fayetteville State at Livingstone
Shaw at Winston-Salem State
Greensboro at Brevard
Out of state battles for Week Seven:
Clemson at Wake Forest, Syracuse at NC State, Georgia Tech at UNC, Virginia Lynchburg at NC Central, App State at Louisiana, Davidson at Dayton, New Hampshire at Elon, The Citadel at Western Carolina, Limestone at Catawba,

Shorter at Chowan, Elizabeth City State at Virginia Union, Newberry at Lenoir-Rhyne, Carson-Newman at Mars Hill, West Liberty at UNC Pembroke, Guilford at Randolph-Macon, Huntingdon at Methodist, LaGrange at NC Wesleyan,

Union Commonwealth (KY) at St. Andrews.

Off: Duke, Campbell, Charlotte, East Carolina, Gardner-Webb, NC A&T, Johnson C. Smith,

Bad neighbors: Bluefield and Bowie State are the biggest out-of-state resume boosters for NC teams. The state has three wins against each. Virginia continues its dominance, with teams from the state having a 19-9 record against NC schools.

All-state performances for Week Six:

Quarterback: Justin Fomby, NC A&T, 22-of-27 for 261 yards, 2 touchdowns

Running backs; LJ Turner, Catawba, 35 rushes, 329 yards, 5 touchdowns, Hahsaun Wilson, Charlotte, 15 rushes for 164 yards, 3 touchdowns,

Receiver: Josiah Hayes, UNC Pembroke, 8 catches, 183 yards, 3 touchdowns, Ger-Cari Caldwell, NC A&T, 7 catches for 130 yards

Defensive line: Quantez Mansfield, NC Central, 6 tackles, 3 solo, 3.5 TFL, 2.5 sacks, Marquise Fleming, Wingate, 6 tackles, 4 solo, 3.5 TFL

Linebacker: John Tessman, Davidson, 5 tackles, 2 solo, 1 TFL, 2 pass breakups, TreShaun Harris, Elizabeth City State, 6 tackles, 2 solos, 1 fumble recovery, 1 pass breakup.

Defensive back: Tamarcus Cooley, NC State, 7 tackles, 4 solo stops, 1 sack, 1 TFL, 1 forced fumble, Dereck Barringer, Barton, 16 tackles, 4 solos.

Special teams: Darryl Taylor, NC Central, 68-yard punt return for a touchdown, Winston Wright, ECU, 94-yard kickoff return for a touchdown

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NCDOT Makes Progress, Faces Long Road to Recovery

October 14, 2024 | Pilot, The (Southern Pines, NC) Author: Staff Report | Section: News | 691 Words OpenURL Link

The N.C. Department of Transportation crews and contractors have reopened more than 600 North Carolina roads as workers make steady progress to help communities impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Helene left unprecedented damage in Western North Carolina when it hit the state near the end of September.

"Damage estimates from what we have been able to assess to this point are up to several billion dollars and we're not done," said state Transportation Secretary Joey Hopkins. "The damage to our roads and bridges is like nothing we've ever seen after any storm, and this will be a long-term recovery operation. But we will be here until Western North Carolina can get back on its feet."

As of Monday, more than 2,000 NCDOT employees are working on recovery operations with, including 375 central support staff. More than 230 of the employees working on recovery operations were deployed from eastern and central North Carolina. The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles has 50 employees in its License and Theft Unit providing security in seven mountain communities.

Transportation crews have nearly completed operations using chainsaws to cut and move debris to the shoulders to reopen roads. Those "cut-and-shove" crews have created more than 4,100 debris sites on roadsides.

The roads that have been reopened include I-40 near Old Fort and in downtown Asheville, I-26 in Henderson and Polk counties, as well as U.S. 221, U.S. 321 and U.S. 421 in the Boone area, and U.S. 70 and U.S. 25 in Asheville.

But the agency continues to ask people to not travel in Western North Carolina unless they are local, responding to the recovery effort or have essential travel needs.

"Non-essential traffic continues to hinder our efforts to reopen roads," Hopkins said. "Many of our crews are having to stop work to allow traffic through damaged areas. We're working as hard as we can, but we need most of these travelers to use alternate routes outside of the impacted areas to get through and around Western North Carolina."

Also, NCDOT is urging truckers not to use routes that are restricted near the Tennessee border because those roads are not equipped to handle trucks longer than 30 feet.

NCDOT has identified more than 6,900 sites where roads and bridges are damaged. The agency reported Monday there are still nearly 600 road closures, with 100 of those on interstates and state and federal highways. Closures continue to impact Interstate 40, U.S. 64, U.S. 19, N.C. 215, N.C. 226 and N.C. 197.

The number of road closures could rise as the state agency continues its assessment, Hopkins said. But the state agency is making headway on its busiest road, Interstate 40.

NCDOT has awarded a \$10 million contract to Wright Brothers Construction to stabilize the westbound lanes of I-40 in the Pigeon River Gorge. The contract includes incentives to be completed by Jan. 4. NCDOT is working with Tennessee transportation officials and the Federal Highway Administration on the long-term plan for reconstruction.

Getting power restored also remains a priority. As of Monday, there were more than 19,000 places — down from over 1 million — without power in Western North Carolina. NCDOT crews are being intentional in their work with utilities to get roads open so power can be restored.

Aerial Technology Helping Response

NCDOT's Division of Aviation has coordinated many flight missions to air-drop emergency supplies to affected areas and gather aerial imagery that can be used to photograph difficult-to-access areas.

NCDOT's drone teams and Photogrammetry Unit, the Civil Air Patrol and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have flown about 250 missions to capture images to inform the disaster response effort.

The division has supported the NC National Guard's 517 search and rescue operations and the guard's air delivery of more than 3 million pounds of food, water and supplies to Western North Carolina communities inaccessible because of damaged roads and bridges.

The division is also working with emergency management partners, airports and private pilots to ensure safe air operations by putting in place safety strategies and ensuring public airports have sufficient supplies and staff to operate.

As of Monday, NCDOT's Aviation Division had supported the mobilization of 30 qualified staff to impacted general aviation airports to help airports managing significant increases in air traffic.

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Rob Schofield: The best way to improve disaster relief is to prepare now

October 14, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 818 Words OpenURL Link

Government officials and average citizens of all guises and stripes have done a mostly remarkable job of carrying out relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Notwithstanding the understandable frustrations of those in devastated areas still waiting for aid and the calculated lies of some cynical politicians and shameless social media creeps, the truth is that government agencies and elected leaders of both major parties have been working tirelessly, and even heroically, in the storm's aftermath.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County, said Oct. 4 in response to the wild and false rumors and crazy conspiracy theories that continue to spread on social media: "turn that garbage off...get off Facebook and get out there and put on a pair of boots and pair of gloves and get to work."

Meanwhile, average citizens and private organizations across the state are heeding Wilke's call by contributing millions of dollars, tons of supplies and, where and when possible, large amounts of physical labor to the effort.

In some places, officials have been inundated by so many donations that figuring out a way to distribute them efficiently is one of the big current challenges. And this latter fact helps illustrate an important good-news-bad-news truth about the current situation.

The good news, of course, is that notwithstanding the yawning political divides that plague us these days, the vast majority of North Carolinians still care about their neighbors and are anxious to do what they can to help people in need — whatever their politics or beliefs. We may be a tense and quarrelsome body politic these days, but thankfully for most people, basic human decency still prevails.

The bad — or at least maddening — news in all this, however, is how sadly familiar it all feels. As with the societal outpourings of shock, grief and goodwill toward the victims that invariably follow in the aftermath of the mass shootings that so plague us, the hurricane response is wonderful and inspiring. But it's also, as the old saying goes, a day late and a dollar short.

In other words, the overwhelming societal response to Helene and other similar disasters demonstrates the happy fact that Americans remain willing to sacrifice for the common good. But as with the shootings, what's needed is not just post-disaster relief and sacrifice, but pre-disaster prevention.

Think about it: As climate change and population growth conspire to place millions and millions more people in harm's way, disasters like Helene are certain to become increasingly common unless society comes together quickly to do two things that only government can spearhead.

First is dramatically enhancing physical infrastructure and disaster planning, as well as the rules governing where and how buildings are constructed.

Simply put, we can and should have water and sewer systems and power and communication grids that are vastly more resilient, but it will take money — lots of it — to construct and maintain them.

The same is true for the kind of pre-positioned disaster relief and recovery equipment and personnel that could spring into action in huge numbers on a moment's notice to the remotest mountain holler, and for stricter zoning and building codes that could make homes and businesses much tougher and storm resistant. We can have these things, but only if we're willing to pay for them.

What's lacking, sadly, are political leaders who have the courage to speak these hard truths, to say "no" to greedy industry lobbyists who try to block every proposed regulation and to ask voters to come together and sacrifice a little ahead of time so that a crazy patchwork of public and private relief efforts will be less necessary in the future.

And, of course, the same is true for climate change itself. As Helene made clear yet again, global warming and sealevel rise may appear to be steady, incremental processes when viewed from a distance, but up close they are violent and episodic.

Happily, we have the knowledge and capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rapidly so that climate change doesn't spiral utterly out of control in the coming decades, but again, probably only if we're willing to make some modest sacrifices. And that means — at least initially — things like slightly higher taxes and energy bills, and lifestyle changes like winding down the overwhelming societal reliance on internal combustion vehicles.

Will a majority of American politicians ever get to the point — as is already the case in some more enlightened countries — at which they're willing to level with voters about these facts?

The current electoral cycle in which one side constantly repeats the virulent lie that climate change is a hoax, while the other mostly avoids the issue or implies that it can be addressed in a pain-free manner, inspires little confidence.

One prays that it won't take several more Helene-like disasters to convince a majority of Americans and their leaders to grasp the wisdom of sacrificing a little now to save a lot later.

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Rallying the faithful: Stein speaks to Nash County Democrats in campaign stop

October 14, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Bill West | Section: Local | 947 Words

OpenURL Link

Democratic gubernatorial nominee N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein spoke Thursday afternoon to an enthusiastic gathering at the Nash County Democratic Party's headquarters in downtown Rocky Mount.

"My goodness, y'all are a sight for sore eyes," Stein told the attendees after having arrived in a room filled with numerous Stein signs and other Democratic candidates' signs ready to be deployed locally.

Stein, who is completing his second four-year term as the state's attorney general, also received applause and cheers when he promised that if he is elected governor, then he is going to veto any further proposed legislative restrictions on a woman's reproductive freedom.

The Republican-controlled N.C. General Assembly in May 2023 overrode a veto by Gov. Roy Cooper of a bill to further restrict abortions in the state.

Prior to that bill becoming law, the state had a ban on most abortions after 20 weeks.

The new law reduced it to 12 weeks, but added new exceptions and a medical emergency exception also remains in place.

Stein, in speaking to the Nash County Democrats gathered, also blasted his Republican opponent, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, who is completing his first four-year term as the state's number two elected official.

Stein called Robinson's vision "one of division, violence and hate."

Early voting in the 2024 general election begins Thursday. Election Day is Nov. 5.

Stein and Robinson are vying to succeed Cooper, who is barred from seeking a third consecutive term.

Cooper has endorsed Stein.

"It's about fighting job-killing culture wars," Stein said of his campaign.

Stein referred to the Sept. 19 report by CNN's KFile investigative team alleging that Robinson from 2008-2012 posted sexually explicit comments via a pornographic website and referred to himself online as "a Black Nazi" as well as making pro-authoritarian comments online.

"It's despicable, but guess what? We did not need that CNN story to know that that man is unfit to be governor," Stein said.

Robinson has denied the allegations specified in the KFile story and has hired a law firm to look at how what Robinson called "false smears" started.

Stein also told the Nash County Democratic Party gathering Thursday afternoon that Robinson disrespects women and has said they are not called to lead. That was in reference to Robinson having said that Christians are "called to be led by men."

To applause and cheers, Stein said, "I don't think he knows Vice President Kamala Harris," in reference to the

Democratic presidential nominee.

Stein also noted that Robinson has called public school teachers "wicked" and gays "filth" and from, "of all places, a church pulpit," yelled "some folks need killing."

Stein said Robinson's actions if elected governor would be more harmful than his words.

Stein said that he believes Robinson would slash funding for the public schools, firing 13,000 educators in the process, would make voting harder and would ban abortion in North Carolina without exception.

He also called Robinson "a conspiracy theorist" who denies that President Joe Biden, a Democrat, won the 2020 presidential election and denies the Holocaust occurred during World War II.

"Friends, we must deny him the governorship of North Carolina," Stein said, also to applause and cheers.

A spokesman for the Robinson campaign, in response Thursday evening to an email seeking comment, called Stein "a far-left career politician" with "a long history of lying to North Carolina voters."

The Robinson campaign spokesman said Stein has no plan or vision for the state.

"As governor, Mark Robinson will fight every day to solve the real problems facing the people of North Carolina: like crippling inflation; a wide-open border flooding our communities with violent crime and dangerous drugs; and struggling schools," the spokesman said.

Before Stein arrived at the Nash County Democratic Party gathering, he met in Nashville with Nash County Sheriff Keith Stone, Edgecombe County Sheriff Clee Atkinson and some of the law enforcement officers there who had responded to western North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Stein also met at the Rocky Mount Police Department with police Chief Robert Hassell and law enforcement officers there.

Stein told those gathering Thursday afternoon that, in the eastern part of the state, "You all know floods better than most anybody, but we have to be there for them the way that folks have been here for us when we had our own problems."

Stein said recovery in the western part of the state would take years, noting that entire roads no longer exist.

"So, we have to be ready to do the work over time," Stein said.

Among other remarks Thursday afternoon to the Nash County Democrats, he called for knocking on doors, making phone calls, posting via social media and speaking to friends and neighbors.

"These races in North Carolina are going to come down to the wire, but you know what that means?" Stein said. "It means we have power. We have power to determine who wins and who loses."

Stein said the path to the White House will go through North Carolina, meaning voters will have the power to shape the future of not only the state, but of the nation as well.

"Voters in other states hunger for the power that we have here in North Carolina," Stein said. "It is a privilege to possess that power. It is also a responsibility. We must use it."

Local resident Pat Mauldin, who attended the gathering Thursday afternoon, said afterward that she was thrilled that Stein came to Rocky Mount and that one could see from the enthusiasm of the crowd that they felt the same way.

Asked about her belief in Stein's chances of winning election, Mauldin said, "I think they're excellent, and I'm hoping he helps down ballot also — and helps the turnout."

Mauldin said that, overall, regarding the outcome of the race, "It will all depend in this election as to which side gets the biggest turnout."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Bill West, 'Rallying the faithful: Stein speaks to Nash County Democrats in campaign stop', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3624AC24E2620>



Weather watchers eyeing system in Atlantic Ocean

October 14, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Mike Snider; USA TODAY | Section: News | 472 Words Page: A12 OpenURL Link

As west-central Florida assesses the aftermath of Hurricane Milton – and the Southeast continues its recovery from Helene – the National Hurricane Center keeps watch for the next potential storm, which would be called Nadine.

Forecasters had been watching a developing system off the east coast of Florida, but it had dissipated before becoming Tropical Storm Nadine.

Now being watched: a system in the east tropical Atlantic Ocean. It is a couple of hundred miles west of the Cabo Verde Islands, which lie off the west coast of Africa. It is moving westward and could develop into a tropical depression. Additional development is not expected until at least the middle of next week, with the system having 40% chance of formation over the next seven days, the NHC said.

Still, the tropics near the U.S. could be quiet for most of next week, AccuWeather forecasters say. But they forecast a medium risk of tropical development Thursday to Saturday in the western Caribbean, the region where Helene and Milton formed.

A gyre, an area of spinning air currents, is expected to form over Central America next week.

"From this large, slowly spinning area of low pressure, a more distinct area of showers and thunderstorms may form, and from that, a tropical depression or tropical storm may evolve," AccuWeather lead hurricane expert Alex DaSilva said in the forecast.

Where is Tropical Storm Leslie?

Designated as a tropical storm on Oct. 2, Leslie strengthened into Hurricane Leslie then weakened again Thursday into a tropical storm. On Saturday, the National Hurricane Center said Leslie – about 975 miles west-southwest of the Azores – had degenerated into a trough and posed no threat to the U.S.

The storm is producing maximum sustained winds near 50 mph, with higher gusts, and is expected to gradually weaken during the next couple of days, the NHC said.

When does hurricane season end?

There remains more than seven weeks in the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, which typically runs from June 1 through Nov. 30. So far this season, there have been 13 named storms. The next storms to form will be named Nadine and Oscar.

After a relatively quiet five weeks or so, the 2024 season – especially with the arrival of Helene and Milton – became an above-average hurricane season, according to Colorado State University meteorologist Phil Klotzbach.

Having generated 127 on the Accumulated Cyclone Energy index, a metric that includes storm frequency, intensity and duration, the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season ranks as "officially meeting NOAA's definition of an above-normal season," Klotzbach said Wednesday on X.

Contributing: Natalie Neysa Alund, Max Hauptman, Laura Lordi, Samantha Neely, Doyle Rice and Jennifer Sangalang, USA TODAY NETWORK

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Snider, USA TODAY, 'Weather watchers eyeing system in Atlantic Ocean', *Star, The* (online), 14 Oct 2024 A12 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C33A6991189640



Morganton farmer lost acres of crops, Burke County nursery damaged by Helene

October 14, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Chrissy Murphy cmurphy@morganton.com | Section: News | 611 Words OpenURL Link

Jeff Houk is a third-generation farmer. His family has lived on land around Morningstar Church Road in Morganton since his grandfather bought it in 1920.

In the 60 years Houk has farmed the land, he's never seen flooding like what came during Hurricane Helene's onslaught.

"The other day when I was down here, I was crying and stuff," Houk said.

Flooding carved wider banks for the nearby Silver Creek, taking a chunk out of the land where Houk plants his corn. Of the 7 acres planted, Houk thinks he lost about 2 acres of the crop. Some of his soybean crop was damaged, but not as much as the corn.

In his cow pastures, trees toppled onto the fencing. Houk had to put down one of his cows after he believed she broke her hip or back trying to get over a fallen log.

But looking at the damage Wednesday, nearly two weeks after the storm, Houk said he now feels grateful the damage to his farm was limited.

"Now that I've went other places and seen the loss, mine ain't nothing," Houk said.

Houk, president of the Burke County Farm Bureau, said he hasn't been able to make it out to many of the farms in the county to see how widespread damage is.

Mike Causey, NC Insurance Commissioner, said early estimates showed there could be about \$7 billion in crop losses.

In Burke, Caldwell and McDowell counties, damages for the agriculture industry are estimated to be about \$70 million in plant nurseries alone, NC Cooperative Extension Burke Center Director Spring Williams-Byrd said

At Fitzgerald Nursery, just north of Morganton on N.C. Highway 181, this is usually the busiest time of the year. Owner Mike Fitzgerald said workers are usually loading up three or four tractor trailers full of plants a day.

But since floods from Helene caused waterways like Upper Creek to rise, workers are spending time cleaning up the fields instead.

Flooding destroyed many of the nursery's 1-gallon plants that were ready to be sold. Other plants are littered with trash and debris that was swept downstream with the flooding. Some plants still have roots in the ground, but Fitzgerald said it could take a couple weeks before signs of damage show.

The impact of the flooding on the nursery could be seen for years, Fitzgerald said. Most of the plants the nursery grows take four to six years before bring harvested and sold.

He estimated property damages and lost revenue to be more than \$1 million. He said at least 50% of the nursery's farms were damaged.

"That's just us, and everybody else is in pretty much the same boat, or worse," Fitzgerald said. "We're lucky to have

some farms on higher ground."

Despite the losses here and to the west, Houk said he feels confident farmers will recover. He said he's passed truckloads of farming supplies like hay, gates and fencing materials headed west on Interstate 40 when he's transported supplies to towns that were hit hard by the hurricane.

"The farming community's going to come together and take care of each other," Houk said. "There's outreach all over. The farmers will stick together and help each other out, and the majority of the people will overcome."

At Houk's Green Hill Farm, he's hopeful he can salvage most of his crops and has faith things will be better next season.

"My daddy never got excited," Houk said. "He'd pick up the pieces to what was left and just rebuild and do whatever it takes to move back on. You can't quit. When you farm, you get in it to stay in it.

"If you're a true, dedicated farmer, you gotta get in it to stay. You've just got to take the good with the bad."
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• Citation (aglc Style)

Chrissy Murphy cmurphy@morganton.com, 'Morganton farmer lost acres of crops, Burke County nursery damaged by Helene', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3F124C9914B88>



Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 14, 2024 | Times-News (Burlington, NC) Author: JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP | Section: Local | 369 Words OpenURL Link

As donations of water, food, baby formula, generators and so many more items continue to arrive in hurricaneravaged western North Carolina, here's a donation item you may not have considered — blood.

The American Red Cross is working to restock much-needed blood products that went uncollected in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which forced the cancellation of more than a hundred blood drives across the region.

"We are in critical need of donors," said Kaitlyn Connolly, regional communications manager for the American Red Cross. "When we don't have electricity or we don't have running water, we can't collect blood, so we had to cancel a lot of those blood drives."

According to Connolly, the organization has missed out on collecting approximately 2,500 blood products because of the hurricane.

"So the need is critical right now," she said. "We're trying to restock the blood on the shelves, because that blood on the shelves is what saves people's lives."

Donors outside of the affected areas, in particular, are encouraged to make an appointment to donate blood now and help keep the blood supply stable in the weeks to come, Connolly said.

As the news has spread about the shortage of blood, citizens have been stepping up to help meet the need, Connolly said.

"We've seen a lot of people coming out and donating, and we're very thankful for them, but we can always use more blood donations, especially now," she said. "We'll take any blood product — whole blood, platelets or plasma."

As an added incentive, anyone who donates blood between now and Oct. 31 will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card by email and will be automatically entered for a chance to win one of three \$5,000 gift cards.

For a full list of blood drives, visit redcross.org.

Want to help?

To find a blood drive near you, visit redcross.org, hover your cursor over "Give Blood" and then click "Find A Blood Drive." Type in your ZIP Code for a list of upcoming blood drives in your area. Anyone who donates blood, platelets or plasma between now and Oct. 31 will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card by email, and will be automatically entered for a chance to win one of three \$5,000 gift cards. For full details, visit redcrossblood.org/treat.

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JIMMY TOMLIN PAXTON MEDIA GROUP, 'Blood supply dwindles in wake of Hurricane Helene', *Times-News* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C44DD8A1D6C010



Asheville church jury-rigs shower system

October 14, 2024 | Times-News (Burlington, NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson PAXTON MEDIA GROUP | Section: News | 357 Words OpenURL Link

A church on the front line of the recovery effort in Asheville in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene is asking for help in its effort to establish some minimal water supplies for people who have no clean water available.

Asheville's water system was wrecked by the flooding and will take major work to repair, which could take months. Brad Andrews, 35, and other volunteers at Grace Baptist Church are concentrating on upfitting homes with a tankand-pump system to get some minimal amount of running water to them.

"Our local church has found that a small reservoir system, a 300-gallon tank and pump connected to a building's existing water system, is the only water solution for many of our members who live in the city," Andrews said. "Our goal is to install reservoirs and pumps on our especially needy homes who are without water indefinitely."

The church is on high ground in west Asheville and escaped damage, so church members have used the building as a site to collect and distribute donated supplies.

For the water project, the church is asking for donations so that children and adults can at least take baths and showers until the city's water system is restored. The cost is about \$800 for each system.

Donations can be sent to subsplash.com/u/gracebaptistwestashevill/give.

Andrews said that the emergency response from Helene has evolved. Two weeks ago in the immediate aftermath, the emphasis was on reaching people with life-sustaining supplies, especially people in remote areas.

Now the response is shifting to find ways that will allow people to cope until more normalcy can be established.

"We want people to be able to have running water," Andrews said. "We want to be that resource."

Andrews said that the response to the flooding in Asheville and the vicinity has ranged from tragedy to heroism during the past two weeks.

"We've seen people come together like never before," he said. "Neighbors that were consumed by their own busyness have banded together and helped each other out."

Churches and nonprofits have rallied in difficult daily circumstances to assist people in need.

"The outpouring of love and support from around the country, and even other countries, has been tremendous," Andrews said.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Paul B. Johnson PAXTON MEDIA GROUP, 'Asheville church jury-rigs shower system', *Times-News* (online), 14 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C364FF5BF20998



WNC college schedule update 2 weeks after Helene

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Iris Seaton; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 796 Words Page: A5 OpenURL Link

Power and water have slowly begun to return to Western North Carolina two weeks after Tropical Storm Helene tore through the area Sept. 27, and many colleges across the region have been issuing regular updates on the process of reopening to students and staff.

Here's what to know about WNC college operations two weeks post-Helene.

When will classes resume

at UNC Asheville?

On Oct. 9, UNCA announced that all classes would be moving online for the rest of the fall 2024 semester. Online coursework will begin Oct. 28.

Faculty and staff will be allowed to return to campus once the campus has drinkable water.

For information, visit new.unca.edu/bulldogalert/.

When will classes resume at Appalachian State University?

Classes at App State will resume Wednesday, Oct. 16 at 5 p.m. with Adverse Weather Condition 1 in effect until further notice.

Students should check their email and monitor ASULearn and course webpages. If in-person and/or remote learning is not possible, students are encouraged to reach out to their faculty or department chairs. Faculty can use Zoom for synchronous class meetings and AsULearn communication tools for announcements and asynchronous discussions.

For information, visit appstatealert.com.

When will classes resume at Western Carolina University?

WCU's most recent update suspended all classes, including distance learning, through Friday, Oct. 11. Fall break Oct. 14-18 will continue as planned, allowing faculty and staff to recover, revise syllabi and prepare to resume normal operations.

Classes are set to resume in Cullowhee, Biltmore Park and online on Monday, Oct. 21. Students will be notified as soon as possible if class suspensions are extended.

Administration, university public safety, dining, health services, counseling and psychological services, residential services, the recreation center and the university center will remain operational in a limited capacity.

Extended closures will not affect course credits, with fall commencement still on schedule for Saturday, Dec. 14 this year.

For information, visit wcu.edu.

When will classes resume at Asheville-Buncombe

Technical Community College?

Previously, A-B Tech had set an estimated reopening date for Oct. 14. Now, the school is set to remain closed until at least Oct. 28 due to a lack of running potable water.

Unless otherwise directed by supervisors, employees will return on Oct. 28. Emergency Services, Allied Health and Nursing student cohorts will resume sooner - students and employees will be notified by supervisors and instructors. Updated curriculum plans will be available soon.

Sign up for alerts.

When will classes resume

at Mars Hill University?

According to an Oct. 7 announcement, classes will resume Monday, Oct. 14, following Fall Break Oct. 10-11. Students should check their MHU email for a Helene needs survey. Students may also reach out to MHUHeleneAssistance@mhu.edu.

Residence halls were open for the week of Oct. 7.

When will classes resume

at Montreat College?

According to an Oct. 10 update, water service at Montreat is improving daily, and the college is aiming for a full reopening date of Oct. 21. Virtual classes resume Monday, Oct. 14.

Residence hall buildings will be open on Friday, Oct. 11 between 1-4 p.m. for students who want to retrieve course materials or personal belongings.

For information, visit montreat.edu/2024/09/helene-impact/.

When will classes resume

at Warren Wilson College?

Classes will resume Oct. 21 online at WWC. In-person classes are planned to resume on Oct. 28, if water service is restored. Students should return to campus the weekend of Oct. 26 if this estimate is correct, though the college suggested anyone flying should purchase a refundable ticket.

WWC promised at least five days of advance notice for faculty, staff and students to finalize travel arrangements.

For information visit warren-wilson.edu/weather/.

When will classes resume

at Brevard College?

The campus continues to have power, water and internet service. Classes resumed Monday, Oct. 7.

Homecoming 2024 athletic events and student activities on campus will commence, but alumni events and activities have been canceled. The college is requesting alumni not travel to Brevard and Transylvania County at this time.

For information, visit instagram.com/p/DAyj649R6vX/.

When will classes resume

at Lees-McRae College?

Main campus classes resumed with online classes on Monday, Oct. 7. In-person classes are scheduled to resume Nov. 4. Administrative offices are closed at this time.

For information, visit Imc.edu/campus-life/campus-safety/safety-operation-updates.htm.

When will classes resume at

Blue Ridge Community College?

Blue Ridge Community College is set to resume on all campuses Monday, Oct. 14. Until Oct. 14, all in-person classes, online classes and events are paused, and students and community members are asked to refrain from visiting campuses.

For information, visit blueridge.edu/alert/.

When will classes resume

at Southwestern

Community College?

All locations reopened Monday, Oct. 7.

For information, visit facebook.com/sccnc1.

When will classes resume at Haywood Community College?

It is anticipated that employees will return Monday, Oct. 14, and students will return Wednesday, Oct. 16. For information, visit haywood.edu/helene/.

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

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Why it rained so much in WNC when Helene hit

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Joyce Orlando; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 746 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene is now in the records of one of the most deadly storms to hit the United States in the last 50 years and the majority of the death toll so far comes from flooding and the resulting devastation caused by it in Western North Carolina.

The storm has claimed more than 230 lives, with about half reportedly coming from communities across Western North Carolina. And that number keeps rising as the search continues for those still missing.

Helene hit Western North Carolina as a tropical storm on Friday, Sept. 27, bringing inches of rain to an already saturated area causing rivers to burst from their banks, flooding communities and in some cases sweeping them downriver to become hazardous debris.

The question is, why was flooding so bad in this area?

There are several scientific theories on why this area saw double digits of rain in a four day stretch, one being the orographic effect.

What is the orographic effect?

The orographic effect occurs when air masses are forced to flow over high topography, aka the mountains, according to Penn State.

As these air masses rise over mountains, they cool and water vapor condenses. When this happens precipitation forms and is commonly concentrated on the windward side of mountains, this rainfall increases with elevation in the direction of storm tracks. When it continues to cool past the dewpoint, the amount of water vapor in the air can't exceed the point of saturation, so it comes down as condensation and precipitation.

Helene was a fast-moving storm, but when it hit the mountains this orographic effect took place, according to University of South Carolina Geography Professor Cary Mock, who studies hurricane history as a geographer and climatologist.

"Normally, fast-moving storms are less of a rain hazard, but Helene was a big exception. In the southern Blue Ridge Mountains, Helene's rain was enhanced by the terrain and what's known as orographic uplift. When a storm is forced to rise up a mountainside, the air cools and condenses, dropping more precipitation," Mock wrote in a recent piece for the school.

"In the mountains, that rainfall quickly funnels into streams and rivers. Asheville, North Carolina, a fast-growing city of about 95,000 residents, is located in a bowl in mountainous terrain. That left it and other nearby cities highly susceptible to high river runoff and extreme flooding. To make matters worse, the area was already saturated from a storm just ahead of Helene."

Rainfall stalling over Western

NC mountains ahead of Helene

Rainfall from Helene was already predicted to cause flooding in places no matter what, but in Western North

Carolina a weather front stalled at the Appalachians ahead of Tropical Storm Helene which exacerbated the flooding, David Easterling, a rain expert with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Centers for Environmental Information in Asheville, said to USA TODAY.

How much rain fell in

Western North Carolina due

to Tropical Storm Helene?

While Helene dumped rain on the western portion of the Carolinas, the area had already been drenched the week before by storms. Here's how many inches of rain communities saw between Tuesday, Sept. 24 and Saturday, Sept. 28, according to the National Weather Service.

Busick in Yancey County had the most recorded rain in the period of time at 30.78 inches

Spruce Pine: 24.12 inches

Hendersonville: 21.96 inches

Mountain Home: 17.09 inches

Candler: 16.18 inches

Tryon: 15.78 inches

Grandfather Mountain: 15.42 inches

Highlands: 14.86 inches

Banner Elk: 14.85 inches

Mills River: 13.26 inches

Swannanoa: 13.21 inches

How high did rivers in

Western NC get during Helene?

Rivers across the region still remain swollen a week after Helene first hit down on the region. On Sept. 27, rivers burst from their banks surpassing major flood stages by more than 10 feet in some areas. Rivers overtook communities across Western North Carolina, almost swallowing whole communities leaving nothing behind but mud and debris.

At its peak, the French Broad River in Fletcher crested at 30.31 feet on Sept. 27 as Helene moved through the area, according to the North Carolina State Climate Office out of North Carolina State University. In Asheville, the French Broad hit 24.67 feet, 1.5 feet above its previous highest crest. Further downstream at Blantyre, the river surpassed its 1916 crest of 27.1 feet to hit 27.38 feet before the gauge stopped reporting on Friday afternoon.

The Swannanoa River at Biltmore crested at 26.1 feet, more than five feet above what it did at its maximum in 1916 and slightly above the apparent 26-foot crest in April 1791, noted the climate office.

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Disaster assistance after Helene

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Isabel Hughes; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 720 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

Western North Carolina residents who are out of work in the wake of Tropical Storm Helene may qualify for Disaster Unemployment Assistance, a federal program that expands unemployment eligibility beyond traditional aid provided by the state.

Earlier this month, the North Carolina Division of Employment Security announced that residents in more than twodozen WNC counties, as well as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, may qualify for the federal program. It provides up to six months worth of payments for those who are unable to work as a direct result of a disaster.

North Carolina's state unemployment benefits max out at 12 weeks.

As of Oct. 10, at least 14,000 WNC residents have applied for disaster unemployment assistance, though state officials say the number of people out of work due to the storm likely is much higher.

Here's what to know:

What is Disaster Unemployment Assistance?

According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the assistance is for those who are unemployed as a direct result of a federally declared disaster, such as Helene.

To qualify, you must meet at least one of the following criteria:

You no longer have the job that provided your primary source of income.

You're unable to reach your place of unemployment.

You cannot work because of an injury caused by the storm.

You were unable to begin employment or self-employment due to the storm.

You have become the major supplier of household income due to a storm-related death of the previous major supplier of household income.

The Division of Employment Security will review a person's eligibility for benefits. Residents may need to

provide proof that they meet one of these conditions.

How do I apply for unemployment help?

The fastest way to file a claim is online at des.nc.gov. Those needing assistance also can file over the phone by calling the unemployment assistance hotline at 919-629-3857.

Once on the website, create a MyNCUIBenefits account. Then, sign in to file a claim.

Residents must file for state unemployment benefits during the same process. They will be asked for a reason for the application, one of which is "disaster."

Importantly, those eligible for state benefits must exhaust such benefits before receiving disaster unemployment assistance. However, those deemed ineligible for state benefits will receive automatic consideration for disaster benefits.

What do I need to apply?

Name and address of all employers you worked with within the last 24 months.

County of residence.

County of employment.

Mailing address and ZIP code.

Valid telephone number.

Your Social Security number or Alien Registration number; and

Proof of employment and income if you're self-employed, a farmer, or a commercial fisher.

To receive payments, residents must complete a weekly certification for each week they are filing for unemployment. Any earned wages during that time also must be reported.

In what counties are residents eligible?

Residents in the following counties are eligible to apply for disaster unemployment assistance:

Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yancey and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

When is the deadline to apply, and

how long can I receive assistance?

The deadline to apply is Dec. 2, 2024.

Disaster unemployment assistance may last for up to 26 weeks, from Sept. 29 through March 29, 2025. Applicants who have not yet applied but subsequently do so are eligible to receive funds from their first date of unemployment or Sept. 29, whichever came first.

How much money will I receive?

While it's a federal program, disaster unemployment assistance is directly tied to a state's unemployment regulations, meaning the maximum weekly benefit a North Carolinian can receive is \$350.

The weekly amount is calculated by dividing total wages earned in the last two quarters by 52 then rounding down to the nearest dollar — and capped at \$350. North Carolina's minimum weekly benefit is \$15.

What if I don't have internet or phone service?

Those without internet at home can visit NCWorks' Asheville Career Center, which has computers available.

The center has temporarily moved to 339 New Leicester Highway, Suite 140. This is in the offices of the Land of Sky Regional Council. The NCWorks Mobile Unit is also on site to provide assistance.

In the coming weeks, the mobile unit will travel across the region, though those details aren't yet ironed out.

Isabel Hughes is a Delaware-based public safety reporter aiding the Asheville Citizen Times in post-Helene coverage. She can be reached at ihughes@delawareonline.com. For all things breaking news, follow her on X at @izzihughes_

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Warren Wilson students rescue school farm's pigs

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Karrigan Monk; Black Mountain News| Section: News| 969 Words Page: A7 OpenURL Link

SWANNANOA – Humans weren't the only ones looking for higher ground when Tropical Storm Helene hit Buncombe County the morning of Sept. 27. The pigs at Warren Wilson College's on-campus farm were looking for it too.

That's the scene senior business major Sof Smith walked encountered as she started her duties that morning.

"All the pigs were totally freaked out," Smith said. "Totally out of it."

Smith, who leads the crew of student workers taking care of the pigs, said she canceled the shift that morning and went out herself to feed them. When she arrived, Smith found that while the upper field was fine so far, the middle field was starting to flood.

She said her first course of action was to try to bring in hay to keep everything dry, but the water just kept rising.

Smith said as she was trying to keep everything dry, she looked up and saw pigs from the lower fields swimming to higher ground. It was then she decided to start evacuating the pigs.

Evacuation efforts included Smith and other student workers swimming out into a field where at least one pig was stuck in a tree and moving to evacuate more pigs as able.

Smith said there was supposed to be a meeting for farm staff an hour after she started and she had planned to come back to help the pigs after that.

"The water was rising so far in Upper Field where all of the pigs that we had evacuated were in," Smith said. "It was rising so quickly that they did not have an hour."

Eventually, there were too many pigs to bring to one place.

"We didn't have any space, so we just released," Smith said. "There were pigs everywhere."

Smith said she and the rest of the farm crew have spent the days since trying to find the pigs and bring them back to to Warren Wilson College, about 10 miles east of Asheville. She said the farthest a pig was found was in East Asheville. As of Oct. 9, 10 pigs are still unaccounted for.

She said there are still "a lot of question marks" when it comes to what the future holds for the pigs and the farm. Some pigs are going to different farms while others are being kept.

"A lot of downsizing, stabilizing and hopefully regrowth next year," Smith said.

Smith is one of 10 students that are still on Warren Wilson College's campus, working to keep the college operating and helping rebuild.

College President Damián Fernández said 30% of campus buildings sustained damage, mostly campus housing for faculty and staff. He said the school is working to assess the damages and make repairs as needed.

Fernández said Warren Wilson College's first response was to care for the students.

"Our first response was self-reliance." Fernández said. "To keep our students safe, feed them, hydrate them and keep them on campus until it's safer to leave. That was our immediate response."

He said the college was prepared for the storm with bottled water, food delivery and portable restrooms. Fernández said he did not want Warren Wilson College taking resources away from others that may have needed it more.

"We did not want to channel any resources away from those most in need," Fernández said. "We thought about taking care of our own, inside the college ... At the same time, we were cognizant that we have always been part of this community and have always served our community ... Any excess resources we had we shared with others."

While all students were still on campus, a meeting was held each morning at 9:30 a.m. outside Gladfelter Hall where Fernández would give updates.

Once conditions improved, all but the 10 students left, though Fernández said many didn't want to leave.

"Students wanted to stay ... We thought it was better at this point just to have them go back, restore and return to us refreshed as we continue the assessment and recovery process," Fernández said.

Elena Wheeler, a sophomore social work and global studies major with a minor in Spanish, also stayed to work on the facilities crew. She said she was "grateful" to be one of the 10 able to stay.

"I care a lot about a lot of things and that's important to me," Wheeler said. "What's right to me is to stay and help when something hits, when the disaster hits. It's the person I want to be."

Wheeler said she does not think there is anything wrong with those who needed to or decided to evacuate, but she wants to "take some weight off other people's shoulders" in any way she can.

Smith said she felt she needed to be at Warren Wilson College.

"That farm is very therapeutic, a healing place," Smith said. "Going through the experience of a hurricane and being as involved as I made myself, in my brain I need to be here. I need to finish out what I started, make sure everything gets done."

Wheeler said finding the hope is important in situations like Helene. She said she knows there are "struggles and beauty" in the world, but finding hope and helping each other makes things a little easier.

"My perspective is to always find hope," Wheeler said. "That's something that keeps me going. Hope is something that I choose to cultivate."

According to Fernández, Warren Wilson classes are set to resume online Oct. 21. Pending water coming back to campus, in-person classes will resume Oct. 28.

Karrigan Monk is the Swannanoa Valley communities reporter for Black Mountain News, part of the USA TODAY Network. Reach her at kmonk@blackmountainnews.com.

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'The loss of anyone diminishes us' - 2 of 4 Buncombe students identified; 21 unaccounted for

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Isabel Hughes; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 1352 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE — Nine-year-old Felix Wisely loved all things magical. The supernatural, folklore and creatures that most don't believe in. He "loved to talk about the unknown," his family said.

Felix's younger brother, 7-year-old Lucas, had a special affinity for superheroes. He'd attend school dressed as one character or another, earning a smile from teachers and staff. He also really loved cows.

The boys, second and third graders at North Buncombe Elementary School, are two of at least four Buncombe County Schools students killed by Tropical Storm Helene. Their father, Lance Wisely, confirmed their attendance to the USA Today Network Oct. 12.

The district announced the four student deaths on Oct. 11 without providing names, ages or the schools students attended. Superintendent Rob Jackson said the district is "continuing to search" for an additional 21 pupils.

BCS did not respond to USA Today Network inquiries as to what attempts have been made to reach the missing students' families or if law enforcement is involved. It's also unclear what disaster plan the district had in place prior to Helene.

"The loss of anyone diminishes us," Jackson said at an emergency board of education meeting held Oct. 11. "Our school system is diminished by this loss."

On Oct. 3, Buncombe County officials confirmed 72 deaths, making up about 60% of Western North Carolina's at least 120 confirmed deaths, according to previous USA Today reporting. On Oct. 12, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Service has verified 42 deaths in Buncombe were Helene related, based on completed autopsies

Officials expect the death toll to rise as search and rescue crews continue their recovery efforts. The state department of health is also expected to verify more storm-related deaths as autopsies are completed.

'It was evident how

loved those boys felt'

Felix and Lucas died on Sept. 27 as they, their mother – Alison "Aly" Wisely – and her fiancé, Knox Petrucci, attempted to evacuate their home in Green Mountain, a small town in Yancey County to the south of Burnsville.

Around noon, the group piled into their car to escape rising water from the overflowing Toe River, Petrucci's sister, Briana Petrucci Yarbrough, wrote in a news release shared with the USA Today Network.

Yarbrough said a man witnessed the family's attempted escape and relayed the story to surviving family.

According to Yarbrough and the boys' father, the quartet tried to drive away but their car began to float. They exited the vehicle and tried to return home when "a big wave came and swept them all into the Toe River," Lance wrote on Facebook.

The family's home ultimately flooded, too, with water reaching within 2 inches of the ceiling in some rooms, Lance wrote. Lance, a Buncombe County resident, questioned whether the family would have fared any better if they'd

stayed put.

On Oct. 2, five days after the group was swept away, Lance wrote that they were all presumed dead.

A day later, he wrote that first responders found Alison's body in Tennessee. On Oct. 4, he updated the post, saying recovery crews had found Felix and Lucas.

When first responders entered the family's home, they found their dog, Reishi, alive. She was floating on a mattress in a bedroom with a closed door. It had to be opened with an ax because it was so water-logged, Yarbrough said.

Felix's spotted leopard gecko, Sheila, also survived and was found by neighbors. A week later, the family cat, Mowgli, was also located.

Still missing is Moonpie, the family's "sweet, sensitive hound," Yarbrough said.

In an Oct. 3 Facebook post, Lance said he has replayed the many "what-ifs" that could have played out on Sept. 27.

What if they had stayed in their home? Could remaining in a bedroom have saved them, as it did their pup? Or perhaps, Lance wrote, the family would have climbed onto their kitchen table and pretended they were pirates "or otherwise at sea to try to help the children be less afraid."

"This is what I imagined when I first realized that their house had likely taken (in) some flooding," the Facebook post said. "That would have gone badly too."

Yarbrough said as the surviving families, including the boys' grandparents, grapple with their loved ones' deaths, they're also remembering them fondly.

She called Aly "the most loving mother," saying the woman "encouraged her children to stretch their imaginations and nurtured their creative, loving, funny spirits."

Aly, 31, worked as sanctuary operations manager at Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, where she "gently guided others through their times of grief," Yarbrough said.

Meanwhile, Knox, 41, was a local beekeeper, manager and community educator at Honey & the Hive in Weaverville. He was also an aspiring blacksmith, musician and artist.

"Along with being an advocate for the Earth and bees, Knox was always there for friends who were like family and inspired others in the way he moved through life with authenticity and boundless love and acceptance," Yarbrough said.

And Yarbrough called the boys "beloved, curious, precocious" and "sweet."

She added she was "so impressed" with how Lance, his partner Sarah, Aly and Knox co-parented.

"It was evident how loved those boys felt, and how free they felt to be their colorful, vividly imaginative selves," Yarbrough said.

BCS disaster plans unknown

WNC school districts have reported that their staff has been conducting welfare checks in the wake of Helene, but Buncombe County Schools is one of the first districts to provide student death tolls.

BCS is the largest district in the region, comprising 45 schools in six districts. It has thousands of students and hundreds of staff.

Of its more than 22,200 students, the district has made direct contact with all but 21, officials said Oct 11. All staff have been reached.

While BCS officials said at the meeting they had "communication plans" leading up to Helene — including with local, state and national first responders — officials did not provide detail on the district's disaster plan.

A district web page titled "Safe Schools" provides some details on procedures surrounding school violence, crisis management and emergency response, but the page doesn't appear to have been recently updated.

A document titled "BCS Safe Schools Plan" is available online, though it was last revised in 2013.

And, despite its table of contents showing a section called "Severe Weather/Natural Disasters Protocols," those practices have been removed from the public document.

The district did not respond to USA Today Network questions regarding the district's disaster protocol, how well it worked and what challenges were encountered.

BCS' next regular board meeting is scheduled for Nov. 14. The district doesn't yet have a reopening date, but said Oct. 11 that 44 of 45 schools have power, 13 have water, and 39 have internet.

A GoFundMe fundraiser has been created to support the surviving families of Felix, Lucas, Aly and Knox gofundme.com/f/honoring-alison-knox-felix-and-lucas.

North Buncombe Elementary School is also urging residents to honor the family by participating in "Wisely Wednesday" on Oct. 16. The school wrote on Facebook that those who participate should volunteer "like Aly would," read something "magical" for Felix or dress like a superhero in honor of Lucas.

Families are encouraged to take photos of their participation and email them to nbesphotos@gmail.com. They will be posted on the school's Facebook page as a tribute to the Wisely family.

Isabel Hughes is a Delaware-based public safety reporter aiding the Asheville Citizen Times in post-Helene coverage. She can be reached at ihughes@delawareonline.com. For all things breaking news, follow her on X at @izzihughes

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.

More coverage

What to know about disaster

unemployment assistance after Helene. 2A

Unemployed worker: \$257 check

each week 'doesn't do much.' 2A

Helene damage, recovery

efforts in photos. 3A

Why did it rain so much in WNC when

Helene hit? What some scientists think. 4A

WNC college schedule

update 2 weeks after Helene. 5A

Spectrum details internet

restoration progress, obstacles. 6A

Some in Woodfin won't get

water until Asheville makes repairs. 6A

Warren Wilson students rescue

school farm's pigs after Helene. 7A

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high school football West Henderson 27, Pisgah 24 - Game rallies healing communities - Falcons top Bears as high school football returns amid Helene recovery

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Zachary Huber; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: Sports | 464 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

WAYNESVILLE -- Pisgah football had one last chance to get the ball back while trailing by three points with a little more than one minute left in the fourth quarter. West Henderson faced a fourth-and-seven from Pisgah's 29-yard line.

Running back Zane McCraw took the handoff from quarterback Cade Young and ran right. McCraw then pitched the ball to wide receiver Neil Robinson, who pivoted toward the backfield for the reverse. Nobody on Pisgah's defense stayed home, which allowed Robinson to pick up the easy first down to secure the 27-24 win at Bethel Middle School.

But the score was insignificant on Friday night.

Friday night was the first time Pisgah (4-2, 1-1 Mountain 7) or West Henderson (4-2, 2-0) had played a game since Tropical Storm Helene ravaged Western North Carolina on Sept. 27. The storm devastated the Canton community, as Pisgah Memorial Stadium flooded for the second time since 2021.

The damage to the stadium will force Pisgah to play the rest of its home games, except for the Tuscola game, at Bethel Middle School. The Bears hope they can repair Pisgah Memorial Stadium by Nov. 8, so it can host the Haywood County championship. If not, the game will be held at Western Carolina University.

The game between West Henderson and Pisgah on Friday helped their communities regain some normalcy and heal as they recover from Helene.

Pisgah coach Ricky Brindley told his team before the game that they weren't just playing for themselves.

"They're playing for each other," Brindley said. "They're playing for that 'P' on the side of their helmet, and they're playing for this community and this town."

Pisgah running back Landon Pope said the turnout among Pisgah fans on Friday impressed him, even though many members of his community, including some teammates, lost their homes due to Helene.

"Most people lost about everything they have, but they're so committed," Pope said. "The community is so committed to giving love to their sports."

McCraw said he was sat at home in the days after Helene struck, hoping he would have a chance to play one more time this season.

"I was waiting the whole couple of weeks that we were out to come back," McCraw said. "We just came out here and did it for Mills River."

Even though it wasn't a home game for the Falcons, there was a strong contingent of fans on the visitors side.

West Henderson coach Paul Whitaker said the game was important for Canton and Mills River.

"It's just great for two communities to get out and see a good high school football game," Whitaker said.

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

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Planned Parenthood closed until water returns

October 14, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Rebecca Heliot; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 514 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE — Tropical Storm Helene has forced hundreds of Planned Parenthood patients in Western North Carolina to reschedule appointments outside of the region, adding significant costs for in and out-of-state residents seeking abortions, gender-affirming care and other reproductive care services.

Road closures on Interstate 40 made a substantial impact on out-of-state patients seeking abortion-related services, who were redirected to Eastern North Carolina or other states, often at a higher price.

"The barriers are much higher for people to have to navigate to get the care they need, so I'm just thinking a lot about them," said President and CEO of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic Jenny Black.

Planned Parenthood's Asheville clinic closed before the storm and will not operate again until it restores running water, Black said. As a clinic with a high rate of out-of-state abortion services, up to 200 patients were forced to reschedule appointments, often at locations outside of WNC. It is the organization's only clinic in Asheville and many patients came from other states with more restrictions on the procedure.

Like many residents, Asheville Planned Parenthood clinic staff evacuated the city during the storm. Black said she does not expect them to return to work until full utilities are restored.

"The devastation in North Carolina is hard to see," Black said. "I can only imagine how hard it is to live through, and many of our staff have really worked through devastating things in the last two weeks."

Patients from other states affected by closure, too

Tropical Storm Helene forced Planned Parenthood to cancel in-person-only services, like abortion, pregnancy testing and planning, and vaccines, at the Asheville clinic. However, Telehealth remains available for most services, including birth control, emergency contraceptives, sexually transmitted disease testing and treatment, HIV testing, and wellness and preventative care. Planned Parenthood also offers gender-affirming care, the fastest-growing service for the organization.

Asheville's location also offers vasectomy services.

"We try to offer every birth control option on the market," Black said. "We try to really quickly make that available We can also help patients with some of their primary care services."

Though Planned Parenthood doesn't operate as a primary care facility, many patients rely on the organization as a main source of healthcare, Black said, adding that the clinic tries to accommodate those needs. Although prenatal care isn't offered, the organization works with an extensive network of health providers and helps patients access resources.

North Carolina enacted greater restrictions on abortion in 2023 after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade the prior year. However, clinics in the state still offer abortion services that other nearby state don't. But Tropical Storm Helene further complicated the organization's efforts to provide care to patients.

"Quite frankly, Dobbs had already severely constrained the entire abortion ecosystem," Black said. "Many patients had been coming into North Carolina from other states, like Virginia, and the ecosystem had already been

constrained. And, now I think with WNC, with the ecosystem, we're absorbing it, but obviously, it's a severe strain on the system. And when you're dealing with these limits, it added days or even weeks for when a person can access care."

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Spectrum details internet restoration progress, obstacles

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Author: Iris Seaton; Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK, Section: News | 425 Words
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When Tropical Storm Helene tore through Western North Carolina on Sept. 27, not only did it leave behind loss of life and widespread destruction, it also knocked out essential services such as water, electricity and phone connectivity.

Helene also knocked out internet service, essential for school remote learning an people who work from home, among other things.

Spectrum, the largest internet provider in the region, offered a statement to the Citizen Times regarding the many outages still affecting residents of WNC.

Scott Pryzwansky, a spokesperson for Spectrum, first linked local issues with internet access to loss of power in many areas.

"We have over 3,000 field leaders, technicians and engineers actively working around the clock to access and repair any damage to our network as a result of Helene and its aftermath," Pryzwansky said in an email. "Much of the customer impact remains loss of commercial power. Once power is restored to homes, streets and neighborhoods, Spectrum customers are seeing their services come back online."

He added that teams are gaining more access as harder hit areas area cleared, and said that Spectrum teams are given authority to work in areas by "power companies and local authorities" when it is deemed safe.

Why is my internet still out

with the power back on?

There are a few reasons why customers may have power but not service - or vice versa - according to Spectrum. Network hubs require power to deliver service to nearby areas, meaning that even if an area has power, the same area may still be without service if outages are still active in the area where the hub is located.

Additionally, the Spectrum network in WNC sustained over 227 miles of "considerable damage," meaning that even with power restored to areas where hubs are located, many of these hubs may have been damaged or destroyed in the storm. Some of the repairs involve tasks such as boring underneath river and bridge locations to make repairs.

When will my service start working again?

Unfortunately, even Spectrum officials couldn't give a firm answer due to the many variables and areas of WNC where work must be done.

Emergency restoration procedures do dictate that cable service can be repaired as soon as power companies have restored power and ensured the safety of the area. However, with substantial damage to Spectrum's physical infrastructure needed for internet services to work, power may not be all that's needed for restoration in many areas in and around Asheville.

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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Weather watchers eyeing system in Atlantic Ocean - Potential storm would be called Nadine

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As west-central Florida assesses the aftermath of Hurricane Milton – and the Southeast continues its recovery from Helene – the National Hurricane Center keeps watch for the next potential storm, which would be called Nadine.

Forecasters had been watching a developing system off the east coast of Florida, but it had dissipated before becoming Tropical Storm Nadine.

Now being watched: a system in the east tropical Atlantic Ocean. It is a couple of hundred miles west of the Cabo Verde Islands, which lie off the west coast of Africa. It is moving westward and could develop into a tropical depression. Additional development is not expected until at least the middle of next week, with the system having 40% chance of formation over the next seven days, the NHC said.

Still, the tropics near the U.S. could be quiet for most of next week, AccuWeather forecasters say. But they forecast a medium risk of tropical development Thursday to Saturday in the western Caribbean, the region where Helene and Milton formed.

A gyre, an area of spinning air currents, is expected to form over Central America next week.

"From this large, slowly spinning area of low pressure, a more distinct area of showers and thunderstorms may form, and from that, a tropical depression or tropical storm may evolve," AccuWeather lead hurricane expert Alex DaSilva said in the forecast.

Where is Tropical Storm Leslie?

Designated as a tropical storm on Oct. 2, Leslie strengthened into Hurricane Leslie then weakened again Thursday into a tropical storm. On Saturday, the National Hurricane Center said Leslie – about 975 miles west-southwest of the Azores – had degenerated into a trough and posed no threat to the U.S.

The storm is producing maximum sustained winds near 50 mph, with higher gusts, and is expected to gradually weaken during the next couple of days, the NHC said.

When does hurricane season end?

There remains more than seven weeks in the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, which typically runs from June 1 through Nov. 30. So far this season, there have been 13 named storms. The next storms to form will be named Nadine and Oscar.

After a relatively quiet five weeks or so, the 2024 season – especially with the arrival of Helene and Milton – became an above-average hurricane season, according to Colorado State University meteorologist Phil Klotzbach.

Having generated 127 on the Accumulated Cyclone Energy index, a metric that includes storm frequency, intensity and duration, the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season ranks as "officially meeting NOAA's definition of an above-normal season," Klotzbach said Wednesday on X.

Contributing: Natalie Neysa Alund, Max Hauptman, Laura Lordi, Samantha Neely, Doyle Rice and Jennifer Sangalang, USA TODAY NETWORK

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