

# McDonald's, Wendy's among restaurants closed by storm

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: MIKE CONLEY nconley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: News| 94 Words OpenURL Link

McDowell County has several restaurants that are closed after Hurricane Helene hit North Carolina as a tropical storm. Some owners are looking at expensive repairs and remodeling before reopening.

Patrick and Heather Joyner of Hickory own the two McDonald's restaurants in Marion. The one on U.S. Highway 70 East closed due to the extensive damage caused when the entire business was flooded.

Patrick Joyner said when the flood was at its worst, the water caused a dumpster used by that McDonald's to float away. It ended up at the far end of the shopping center.

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# Early voting in McDowell County starts Thursday

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 164 Words OpenURL Link

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

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

Early voting starts Thursday and ends Saturday, Nov. 2. Early voting hours on weekdays are 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday voting (Oct. 19, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2) hours are from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The early voting site in Mc-

Dowell County is the McDowell County Board of Elections, located at 2458 N.C. 226 S., Marion. There will be no early voting in Old Fort due to damage from Hurricane Helene. Don't forget to take a photo ID with you to vote. Election Day is Nov. 5. To check your voter registration, visit www.vt.ncsbe.gov/ RegLkup.

For more information on registering to vote or about this year's election, call the McDowell County Board of Elections at 828-659-0834 or 828-652-7121, ext. 1355 or email elections@mcdowellgov.com.

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### **SEASON RESUMES**

October 15, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: Season Resumes | 652 Words OpenURL Link

#### H.S. FOOTBALL

The Mountain 4A Conference has finalized its plans to return to action in football following a four-week, Hurricane Helene-caused hiatus, and McDowell High School has a particularly important part to play in the process.

Not only will the Titans host Asheville in Marion at 7 p.m. this coming Friday, but MHS' football stadium also will serve as a home venue for other teams in the conference whose facilities were damaged during the storm, particularly hard-hit Buncombe County.

"A revised football schedule for the Mountain Athletic Conference has been created," the school announced on Saturday. "Due to current utility outages, McDowell High School and T.C. Roberson will serve as host sites for football at least the next two weeks. Updates on other fall sports will be provided as soon as they become official."

In addition to hosting the Cougars this Friday in Week 9 action, which will be McDowell's first contest since its MAC-opening 60-26 loss at T.C. Roberson on Sept. 20, the Titans (1-4, 0-1 MAC) will host Erwin for a normal 7:30 p.m. kickoff on Oct. 25 before welcoming Enka for another 7 p.m. kickoff on Nov. 1.

Details regarding McDowell's remaining two games against A.C. Reynolds and North Buncombe have not yet been announced, but the NCHSAA recently amended the fall calendar to add one week to the football season and is allowing teams to play games as close together as 72 hours apart, freeing up the Titans to potentially play those remaining two contests in the bonus Week 12.

The remainder of the Week 9 MAC football schedule announced on Saturday includes Enka versus A.C. Reynolds (5 p.m.) and Erwin at T.C. Roberson (7:30 p.m.), both at T.C. Roberson, this Friday.

In Week 10, McDowell High School will be the site of an Asheville-North Buncombe contest at 5 p.m. on Oct. 25 and T.C. Roberson will host A.C. Reynolds (7 p.m.).

And in Week 11, the A.C. Reynolds-Asheville and Erwin-North Buncombe games will be played on Nov. 1, though times and sites were not announced.

Here are additional changes made by the NCHSAA as they apply to other fall sports:

Boys soccer

The weekly contest limit has been extended to four to allow teams to make up multiple post-poned games.

The reporting deadline has been moved from Oct. 31 to 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 6. Seeding will take place on Nov. 7.

The revised playoff schedule includes the first round on Nov. 9, second round on Nov. 12, third round on Nov. 14, regional semifinals on Nov. 16, regional finals on Nov. 19 and state championships from Nov. 22-23.

Cross country

The reporting deadline has been moved from Saturday to 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 22.

Regionals now will be held on Oct. 26 and state championships are scheduled for Nov. 2.

Girls golf

The minimum number of matches to qualify for regionals has been reduced from five to three.

Girls Tennis

The individual reporting deadline was moved from 3 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. on Monday to allow for another day of competition. Individual regionals will be held this Friday through Saturday. Individual state championships will be held from Oct. 25-26.

The dual-team reporting deadline was moved from Oct. 10 to 11:59 p.m. this Thursday. Seeding will take place this Friday. The first round will be held Oct. 21, followed by the second round on Oct. 23, third round on Oct. 28, regional semifinals on Oct. 30, regional finals on Nov. 5 and state championships on Nov. 9.

Volleyball

The weekly contest limit has been extended to eight to allow teams to make up multiple post-poned matches.

The reporting deadline has been moved from this Wednesday to 11:59 p.m. this Saturday, with seeding to take place after 1 p.m. on Sunday. The revised playoff schedule starts with the first round on Oct. 22, followed by the second round on Oct. 24, third round on Oct. 26, regional semifinals on Oct. 29, regional finals on Oct. 31 and state championships on Nov. 2.

Justin Epley can be reached at jepley@morganton.com or sports@ mcdowellnews.com.

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# Devastation from Hurricane compelled musician with ties to High Country to spring into action

October 15, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: DEREK HALSEY | Section: Mountaintimes | 1728 Words OpenURL Link

The connection to the mountains of Western North Carolina came roaring back for some, when the early reports of the damage done by Hurricane Helene began to come in from the storm zone.

For people that have gone to college in the High Country, skied or worked these slopes, hiked or rock climbed in these mountains, hunted or fished in these creeks, rivers or lakes, or played music in this area, the news of the high winds and historic flooding tugged at their hearts.

Chris Lovejoy, who lived in the High Country two decades ago, was one of the many who were glued to the news stories and first-hand social media accounts that appeared after Hurricane Helene dumped 40 trillion gallons of water on much of Western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and South Virginia.

When Lovejoy was a younger man in the early 2000s, he lived in Boone and spent a lot of time in Asheville. Now, he and his wife, Jamie, and their son live in Randolph County, W.Va., in the small town of Beverly, near Elkins. On the Wednesday after the storm hit, Chris and Jamie knew they could not watch from afar any longer.

"By Wednesday morning, after days of getting the information about how hard North Carolina got hit and seeing videos of the destruction, we thought, 'Hey, this happened in Appalachia, which is our home, and this could have easily happened up here in north-central West Virginia,'" Chris said. "Because I had lived in Boone and spent a lot of time in Asheville, and because I still have about eight friends of mine who grew up with me in Hurricane, W. Va., that moved to Western North Carolina, all of that pulled at me. At that time, I had only heard from three of the guys there that I had grown up with. That was the day when my wife Jamie said 'I feel like we've got to go. I am feeling called to go down there.' I said, 'I am, too. Let's do it.'"

Chris owns an electrical business and Jamie's employer said if she signed up with a non-profit organization, she could days off as well and head south. Some of Jamie's co-workers donated some of their paid time off.

The Lovejoys contacted Samaritan's Purse, which told them they had a place for them to volunteer in Asheville — one of the hardest hit areas. With Samaritan's Purse, you have to be at least 14 years old to volunteer, so they dropped their 11-year old son off at Grandma's house.

When the Lovejoys' church in Beverly heard the news of their impending trip to the disaster zone, the Elkins Family Worship Center filled their vehicle with supplies and gave them gas money for the journey.

After work on Wednesday, the Lovejoys headed south and got a hotel room in Bristol so as to not drive into the swath of hard-hit areas at night in the dark. To their amazement, there were hundreds of electric line workers as far as the eye can see, who had filled up nearly every hotel room in town.

By the next sunrise, they were in the town of Marshall, and the light of the morning is when they began to see the extent of the storm damage in person.

I met Chris Lovejoy in 2011 at the Appalachian String Band Festival in the New River Gorge area of West Virginia. At the "Clifftop" we ended up in a band that was formed on the spot at the Festival. Our band also included Mark Burhans on fiddle from Athens, Ohio, Sue Manester on accordion from Toronto, RD Dean on bass from Lincoln County, W. Va., and myself on guitar, traveling in from Cincinnati. Known as the Festival Relations Band, we amazingly made the Finals of the world-famous Neo-Traditional Band Contest — the video is on Youtube.

A year and a half later, in October of 2012, I moved to Banner Elk. I promptly started writing articles about music, the arts and the outdoors for the Mountain Times, which focuses on Watauga and its bordering counties. Soon after I moved to the area, I heard Chris Lovejoy's name come up.

"I moved to Boone around 2002 or 2003," Lovejoy said. "Fairly soon, I found myself in one of the first versions of the Boone-based band Boss Hawg with myself on the guitar along with Jon Jon Davis, John Hill on the mandolin, Josh Williams on bass and Brian Swenk on the banjo. I was also in the band The Crookneck Squashers with Mark Freed, now running the Jones House, Robert Evans, Ryan Crider and Darin Gentry. For a while, I lived in that musician's hangout above the store in Sugar Grove where other pickers like Mark Schimick, Brett Morris and many others used to jam. Brett now runs the Junior Appalachian Musicians program.

"I also lived on Oak Street in Boone with Ben McPherron, Tim Marsh and Brian Swenk, and spent a lot of time playing music in Ben Smith's downtown basement room," continued Lovejoy. "The last place I lived at while in WNC was on Wildcat Road in Deep Gap. As for Asheville, I spent a lot of weekends there playing music with my long-time friend Bryan Clendenin, who went on to be in the band Dehlia Low. Bryan and I learned how to play bluegrass music together, and we would busk in the morning on the street in Pack Square, playing for enough money to get lunch and dinner, and then we'd jam at the Jack of the Woods pub at night. Those were some of the best times of my life."

Those experiences contributed to Lovejoy's heartfelt desire to help so many of those suffering in North Carolina.

Once they reached post-Helene Asheville, Chris and Jamie went through an hour-long orientation meeting at the Samaritan's Purse headquarters before setting out to help folks in need.

"When we got in the conference room for orientation, people were just getting to the mountains for the first time and our team had about 30 people in it and we were one of nine teams," said Lovejoy. "Our team featured people who had travelled in from Atlanta, Memphis, Chicago, Florida, and us from West Virginia. In the parking lot, I saw license plates from all over the region as well as from Missouri, Michigan and more places."

Soon, the Lovejoys and their Samaritan's Purse volunteer teammates went to the first home on their list. They hiked for about a half mile on the tree-blocked driveway with provisions.

"A big oak tree, about four feet in diameter, had uprooted and fallen through the top of the house and basically split the home in half," said Lovejoy. "A 15-year old son lived in the house with his parents and all three of them told us the story of what happened that night. The teenage son was out on the porch listening to the intensity of the storm and he heard tree after tree starting to fall. So, he went straight into his Mom and Dad's bedroom and woke them up and said, 'Hey, we have to go downstairs to the basement because the trees are falling everywhere.' Just 20 minutes or so later, they heard the tree hit their house, which sliced through the roof and landed literally on the master bedroom bed where his parents were sleeping just a little bit earlier. They narrowly escaped."

Lovejoy's team then set about "drying in" the house, which now had an oak tree inside of it — with a 20-by-8-foot gash in their roof above.

"When I got up on top to begin tarping the roof, you could look down and see their whole house," said Lovejoy. "I think our work on their home gave them a sense of not being alone, because a bunch of us worked together to do a job that may have taken them a month to do by themselves. The damage was there, but the tarps were up and their house was at least cleaned up and dry now. When we were done, they were in tears, and they were so grateful.

"Before we left, the Team Leader gathered everyone in a circle with the family and a prayer was said, and then he gave them a Bible that was signed by every worker that was there that day. Then, we found our way into Swannanoa next, and it truly looked like a war zone, with massive flood damage and helicopters everywhere and sirens going off all over the place."

By the following Saturday, after hundreds of volunteers had shown up to the Samaritan's Purse headquarters, the Lovejoys decided to go help a friend who had a business in the area.

"We decided to go and help my buddy Casey Conner, who had a pizza place that he opened up just six weeks earlier with his brother in Swannanoa called Good Company Pizza," said Lovejoy. "Luckily, most of his equipment was sitting up off the ground, even though they got about four inches of flood water in the restaurant. You could see where the flood water line was, and yet, his commercial equipment was high enough off the ground that none of the internal components got wet. Still, there was a lot of mud that we cleaned out of the place."

The Lovejoys also took the time to look up other friends in Asheville before they drove home to West Virginia on Sunday. They were especially appreciative of friend Jask Carrier and his family who put them up in an Air B and B while in town. And the previously-mentioned Bryan Clendenin, helped them safely navigate the disaster zone; he gave them some fresh, home-roasted coffee to sip on as they drove home to Beverly, W. Va., back to the serenity of home.

"On the way out, we finally saw the town of Erwin, Tenn., in the daylight," said Lovejoy. "It looked like a war zone there as well, with the Nolichucky River taking out the interstate highway and making the whole valley look like a river bottom filled with big debris burns. You could also see where huge landslides happened as well. We got home later that day and were happy to have our running water, which is something we all take for granted at times."

Chris said they felt guilty about leaving with so much work still to be done, "so we are going to try and go back in November."

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3B0CFB4F622D0>



# MHM cancels Oct. 18 show, will focus on next month's benefit concert

October 15, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: JERRY SNOW| Section: Mountaintimes | 201 Words OpenURL Link

Mountain Home Music (MHM), Carolina Ramble Productions and Kattagast will present "Wake of the Flood: A Benefit for and by Appalachian Musicians" on Nov. 15 in downtown Boone.

MHM had a show scheduled for Oct. 18, "An Evening of Appalachian Murder Ballads," but instead the non-profit will focus on producing "Wake of the Flood: A Benefit for and by Appalachian Musicians."

Proceeds from the concert will support the community's recovery from the damage left by Hurricane Helene; it will be contributed to the N.C. Arts Disaster Relief Fund.

The Nov. 15 show will start at 7:30 p.m. in the Appalachian Theatre of the High Country (559 W King St.). Tickets prices for the Nov. 15 show range from \$15 to \$29.

Anyone can contribution to the recovery. Donations will go directly to support North Carolina Artists of all mediums, who have been affected by Hurricane Helene, according to mountainhomemusic.org. Donations can be made to the North Carolina Arts Disaster Relief Fund.

App Theatre's online ticketing system is accessible 24 hours, seven days a week. The Theatre's Box Office is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and two hours prior to showtime.

Tickets for App Theatre events can be purchased online at apptheatre.org

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# Long's Chapel serving as flood relief hub and home base for outside relief organizations

October 15, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Religion | 202 Words OpenURL Link

Long's Chapel Methodist Church is one of many churches in Haywood County serving as a hub for Hurricane Helene relief, from supply drop off and pickup to community meals.

Long's Chapel is also serving as a home base for Eight Days of Hope — a national faith-based rapid response mission that rolled in to Haywood County shortly after the storm. Eight Days of Hope has brought hundreds of volunteers into the county to offer debris removal, mucking out of homes, tree work, mold prevention and more.

"We have been wonderfully overwhelmed with the tremendous response from not only folks in our community, but from several states," said Pastor Chris Westmoreland.

Meals at Long's Chapel have been scaled back as recovery progresses to once a week from 5-7 p.m. on Wednesday, with 450 in attendance last week. All are welcome.

"Much of the community meal emphasis hasn't been on the food but building community and support for those that gather," Westmoreland said.

Supply distribution is 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Wednesday. Anyone impacted by Helene is welcome to come pick up items such as clothing, bedding and daily essentials.

Eight Days of Hope will be in Haywood County through Oct. 26. To apply for assistance, email rapidresponse@eightdaysofhope.com or call 662-255-7565.

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# Power and internet status in Haywood

October 15, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Briefs | 82 Words OpenURL Link

As of Monday, there were still 1,400 Spectrum customers without internet in Haywood County. Spectrum pledged to have all service restored from Helene damaged by Oct. 19.

There were still 37,000 Spectrum customers in Buncombe County without internet.

Meanwhile, Haywood had only 12 power customers without electricity as of Tuesday's while Buncombe had 2,600 customers still without power.

Public water systems were fully restored in Haywood within a week of the storm. More than 55,000 households in the Asheville area still don't have water.

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Staff Writer, 'Power and internet status in Haywood', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EA0A23DFD298">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EA0A23DFD298</a>



# Apple Harvest Festival rolls in to downtown Waynesville this Saturday

October 15, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Arts Entertainment | 220 Words OpenURL Link

The Apple Harvest Festival will be held in downtown Waynesville from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 19.

After discussions and consulting with the town of Waynesville and partner organizations, the Haywood County Chamber of Commerce decided to go forward with the 36th annual event.

"The staggering loss of lives and property from Hurricane Helene to our county and Western North Carolina is still unimaginable three weeks later. Our county will be healing from this for years," acknowledged Chamber President David Francis.

However, county officials supported the Chamber's move to keep the festival on the calendar due in part to the importance of the fall tourism season to the economy.

"We have received support and encouragement to move forward with the Apple Harvest Festival from business owners and local leaders. I hope this is a sign recovery is beginning," Francis said.

Unfortunately, the Apple Harvest Festival has lost over 35% of its vendors who were impacted by the storm. The festival will have a scaled back footprint along Main Street from town hall to the courthouse, with a food court in the Wells Funeral Home parking lot.

Volunteers are greatly needed, as some volunteers are no longer able to assist. If you're interested in volunteering to make the festival a success, contact tkfoxworth@haywoodchamber.com.

A limited number of booth spaces have opened up. If interested, email info@haywoodchamber.com.

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### Canton Fire Department goes homeless, then mobile

October 15, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Vicki Hyatt vhyatt@themountaineer.com| Section: News| 248 Words OpenURL Link

Several months ago, U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-NC, announced he'd secured \$5.8 million to help relocate the Canton Fire Department outside the flood plain. Before that money could be used, the department was flooded once again, this time so severely that there's no going back.

Canton Fire Chief Kevin Wheeler said Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene's flood damage to the fire department was much worse than in previous storms.

"As far as using it as a fire department, there's no way we can do that anymore," Wheeler said of the site. "There was so much water in there. It got into the generator, all the electrical system, the heaters. Using it again is out of the question."

There is no estimate on how much replacing the building will cost because a location must first be found. Both Wheeler and Mayor Zeb Smathers have searched every section of town looking for a site but so far have come up short.

Meanwhile, the department initially operated under a tent in the Central Methodist Church parking lot. This week, a set of temporary trailers will be located in the First Baptist Church parking lot.

Two fire trucks are out for repair, and the rest of the equipment and gear will be in church parking lots for now.

"We are a mobile fire department right now," Wheeler said. "Currently we have rooms at the hotel on Champion Drive, and will be there until we get the bunk trailer set up. The plumbing is in, but we're waiting on power."

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

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# Temporary housing database launched for families displaced by Hurricane Helene

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chantal Allam; Staff Writer | Section: Business | 410 Words

Page: 11B OpenURL Link

Local real estate groups have launched a website aimed at helping people displaced by Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina to find temporary housing.

HurricaneHomes.org - built by Cary-based doorify Multiple Listing Service (MLS) in collaboration with Canopy Realtor Association and Solid Earth - offers a curated list of active rental properties around the state.

It also shows additional listings from other states for those seeking housing outside the region.

"We wanted to leverage the thousands of active rental listings we already have in the MLS," said Matt Fowler, CEO of doorify MLS, in a release. "By making these listings visible, we [hope] to create a resource that simplifies the process of locating housing."

doorify MLS covers 16 counties - including Wake, Durham, Johnston and Orange - and is the operating system for over 15,000 real estate brokers and agents in five Realtor associations in the greater Triangle.

The database's launch comes as the group seeks to rebrand as more "consumer facing and transparent" amid sweeping industry changes to Realtors' compensation.

HurricaneHomes.org has around 45,000 listings. They range from one- to four-bedrooms, in metros like Charlotte, Durham and Raleigh, as well as in outskirt towns like Knightdale.

Rentals starts as low as \$995 per month, depending on location and type.

doorify MLS is also encouraging its listing brokers to identify properties that could be temporarily offered as rentals, Fowler said. "This is a small way we can help those displaced by Hurricane Helene," he said.

Separately, FEMA is accepting housing assistance applications throughout areas affected by Helene.

Shelter numbers continue to decline, with 17 shelters housing just more than 700 occupants, FEMA said on Oct. 9.

Over 2,600 people who cannot return home are staying in lodging through FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance program.

FEMA said residents in counties covered by the federal emergency declaration who have applied for disaster assistance may be eligible to stay temporarily in a hotel or motel paid for by FEMA while they work on their long-term housing plan.

People do not need to request this assistance, FEMA said. FEMA will notify them of their eligibility through an automated phone call, text message or email, depending upon the method they selected in their application.

For current application timelines, visit disasterassistance.gov or FEMA's state-specific Helene disaster site for North Carolina.

Chantal Allam: 919-829-4522, @chantalallam

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Chantal Allam, Staff Writer, 'Temporary housing database launched for families displaced by Hurricane Helene', *News & Observer, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 11B <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3C697ABEEB440>



### Green River Gorge woman hiked through Helene to safety

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1746 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

SALUDA When the house across the street exploded, Susan Figetakis knew it was time to run from the rising Green River.

Figetakis stowed her three cats in the top floor of her three-story home, put her birth certificate and a few key belongings in a knapsack and started to climb the mountain that rises behind her home on Green River Cove Road. This scenic part of Polk County is nestled into a valley between several mountains, with the river that gives the road its name running through a gorge at the bottom.

But on Sept. 27, that river frothed as Helene's heavy rainfalls raised it. And the mountains that surround the road boomed with the sound of landslides from above and riverfront homes smashing below, Figetakis said.

Figetakis knew Helene was going to be bad. The area had flooded in 2018, damaging large portions of Green River Cove Road and flooding cars and property. Still, the water hadn't crossed the road onto Figetakis' property then.

Helene was different.

Days before the storm, the local fire department had come through to evacuate everyone on the northern edge of Green River Cove Road, which runs along the river. They didn't say anything to Figetakis or the other people living on the southern side of the road.

'One way out'

In the early hours of Friday morning, Figetakis watched as the water started to creep up the driveway to her house.

As the water was rising, Figetakis was making her escape plan. She didn't know who else was on the road or how high the water would go. She thought about trying to stay, trying to retreat higher and higher in the three-story home.

The water spilled across Green River Cove Road and steadily crossed her yard.

About an hour later, the water was inside her walk-out basement, Figetakis said. The clock that had been in the basement was stopped at 9:30. Then, she said, the water was "just boiling up the stairs."

It would end up reaching the second-highest stair to the home's second floor.

"There's only one way (out)," Figetakis said - the mountain.

Around 10 a.m., she saw a house on stilts across the street explode, something Figetakis believes happened due to a propane tank. She stowed the cats, then threw her birth certificate, a change of clothes, a spare pair of shoes and her cell phone charger into a knapsack.

Clad in a rain suit, Figetakis went out a back window and started to climb.

As she walked uphill, Figetakis tried to stay away from large trees, afraid of what would happen if the ground beneath them gave way in a landslide. Still, the ground underneath her feet was squishy, saturated from all of the

rain that had fallen even before the storm arrived.

Figetakis described paying close attention to the ground, trying to walk where leaves from previous seasons seemed to still be clustered, because those were places where mudslides hadn't yet disturbed the ground. The storm was just passing overhead at that point, and Figetakis remembered the rain picking up.

Around her, waterfalls were forming where there hadn't been any before as the rain sought a path off the mountain she was trying to climb.

"It was actually quite beautiful," Figetakis said.

Even though she didn't have cell service, she texted her partner, Ernie Planck, who was driving home after a shift working as a helicopter pilot in Louisiana, evacuating workers from oil rigs as the storm churned through the Gulf of Mexico. Figetakis described what she was wearing and where she was walking, hoping he would be able to help someone find her or, in the worst case, her body.

"It was bad. I was just like, 'Don't give up. Keep going up, keep going up,'" Figetakis said.

As she told the story outside of her waterlogged home Monday afternoon, Figetakis stared into space, her gaze pointed in the direction of the debris-littered river but not focused on anything. Occasionally, Figetakis fidgeted with the N95 mask she was wearing, leaving smears of dark mud across the white mask.

She recalled how she felt like Bilbo Baggins walking through The Shire in "The Lord of the Rings." She marveled at the fact that she had been able to walk up the mountain. And she said she had felt a strange sense of calm throughout the ordeal.

Eventually, as Figetakis climbed, she flipped to Facebook on her phone and saw that a friend was marked as online. She sent a message describing where she was.

Then she stumbled across an orange marker on a tree, a sign that she was on a trail. Figetakis described generally following the trail for a while, trying to stay above it when it dipped downward.

After walking for about two hours, Figetakis came to what she described as a small shed, and a friend was able to find her there after a neighbor told him where the trailhead was located. By about 2 p.m., Figetakis was off of the mountain.

Days later, Figetakis seemed almost surprised at her escape.

"I just did it," she said. "I had to."

Landslides on Green River Cove Road

The descent to Green River Cove is tricky even in the best of times. There are 17 switchbacks on two miles of Green River Cove Road, with the steep grade earning a profile on DangerousRoads.org.

On a map, part of the road from Saluda into the valley looks like an EKG reading, with five remarkably consistent peaks, each with a switchback at the top and at the base.

Monday afternoon reddish dirt clearly marked where several landslides had occurred throughout the descent from Holbert Cove Road. In some places, metal guardrails hung in thin air, the dirt their posts had been driven into washed onto the road below.

About halfway down the mountain the face above had given way, leaving a hill of dirt the size of a large house gradually descending off of the cliff. It was possible to walk up and over the hill or to take a jolting ride on an off-

road vehicle, but the one-lane road had only recently become accessible to the bravest car drivers after the National Guard used a bulldozer to smooth out the dirt.

Helene's floodwaters destroyed 37 homes on Green River Cove Road, said Christina Hallingse, an acting spokeswoman for Polk County.

"They were essentially washed away. Those houses do not exist," Hallingse said Tuesday.

Monday, small clutches of supplies sat in front of the houses that remained. Donations of bottled water, plastic bags, Nabs and a spare set of shoes neatly gathered on plastic folding tables like offerings to whichever passerby needed them right that instant.

Cleaning up, trying to stay

Before Helene, the banks of the Green River were 250 feet away from Figetakis' house.

On a Google Streetview image taken in front of the home last December, it's impossible to see through the thick clumps of trees to the river. Several buildings are clearly visible.

Helene changed all that.

The buildings were nowhere to be seen, and even large areas of debris from fallen structures seemed to be mostly absent. The trees had gathered in clumps throughout the riverbed. A new southern branch of the river seemed to be flowing where there had been dry land a little more than a week before.

"It's just gone and now it's like there's a little Grand Canyon there," Figetakis said, pointing to a new cliff on the river's northern edge. "It's really weird."

Figetakis and Planck returned to their home shortly after the storm to retrieve the cats. They also started cleaning up the mess that Helene left behind.

The river had almost entirely flooded the home's finished basement and nearly reached the second floor. A twostory garage that had sat behind their house was toppled onto its front, its roof facing the jagged remains of the street on Monday.

Just west of the house, an ATV trail had been formed out of still-slushy mud. East of the house, what remained of the road was so muddy that it was difficult to discern that the narrow strip that was being traveled was the shoulder and a small bit of the eastbound lane.

Clad in a white hazmat suit that had turned brown from the shoulders down, Figetakis made trip after trip into the basement, pulling out the items that she and Planck had collected over decades.

Mud-splattered items from the basement were piled outside, books and a drum set and mirrors and a lamp still wet.

As she carried the books out, Figetakis said she was thinking, "Oh my God, I wish I'd never gotten these."

Two cars sat at odd angles in the front yard, where the river the had deposited them. An SUV sat askew, a mud splashed couch wedged up against it. A brand new ATV sat next to it - Figetakis and Planck's current transportation.

The smell of mildew reached from the basement almost to the road, more than 50 feet away. Inside, an ankle-deep layer of mud still laid across the floor. The roar of a generator made it impossible to talk inside.

Back outside, Figetakis described the physical challenges of cleaning up, of lifting the heavy mud and moving all of her belongings.

But there's also a monetary side to recovery, and like so many in Western North Carolina, Figetakis and Planck did not carry flood insurance.

"We really felt like we didn't need it because of how high up we are. ... If we thought we had needed it or were even remotely close ...," Figetakis said, trailing off.

Still, she has been drawn to the natural beauty of Western North Carolina since moving to the region in 1989. She'd like to find a way to keep living in the area, maybe even in the same house on Green River Cove Road. But for now, she's not sure if it's inhabitable and is staying at a nearby inn.

"I'd like to stay here but we'll see what happens," Figetakis said.

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Adam Wagner: 919-829-4669, @byadamwagner

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# Wake County firefighter rescued dog in Western NC, then couldn't let her go

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Lexi Solomon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 594 Words Page: 4A OpenURL Link

Korey Floyd went to Western North Carolina to help save lives after Hurricane Helene. He didn't expect to bring home a companion.

Floyd, 23, has worked for the Wake Forest Fire Department for four years. His latest mission took him to Mitchell County as part of a swift water rescue team.

Deployed two days before Helene hit, Floyd spent 10 days in some of the hardest-hit parts of the state with 11 other firefighters, helping to cut trees, do welfare checks and more.

Several days in, Floyd's team drove down a road near Bakersville, a town of about 700 people between Boone and Asheville, where they found a group of sheriff's deputies cutting up a fallen tree - and a deputy's wife holding a dog.

The black and white pitbull mix had been wandering on the road, the woman told Floyd. She'd tried to find the owner, but no one in the community recognized the dog.

"So we went up and said, 'We'll take it for you, look around for you, try to find the owner,'" Floyd recalled.

After traveling a couple of miles up the road and back, asking anyone in sight if they recognized the dog, Floyd and his colleagues realized the pit mix would likely go to the pound if no one took her in.

"We went and got her scanned; she has no microchip," he said. "So we ended up taking her home and trying to give her a better life than she would have had."

They named the dog Lulu and got the Mitchell County animal shelter to ask its Facebook followers if anyone recognized her. As the firefighters waited for responses, they took Lulu back to the Bakersville station, giving her food and water and enjoying time with her in between tasks.

"Whenever we went back to the station, we'd go say hi to her, play with her a little bit," Floyd said. "It brought everybody's mood up."

Floyd laughed with colleagues about taking Lulu home, but when the time came to return to Wake Forest on Sunday and the dog still didn't have an owner, he realized it was no longer a joke.

Already the owner of a 3-year-old beagle mix, Winston, and a gaggle of chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys, Floyd decided he'd bring Lulu home with him.

"She's great with the other dog and with the birds and everything," he said. "She loves them all. She doesn't try to attack [Winston] or anything."

Capt. Kyle Mangum, Floyd's supervisor, said Floyd's decision to rescue Lulu is an example of his generous spirit.

"He wanted to give her a home to be loved in," Mangum said. "He has contacts with the community that he found her in and is still trying to locate the owners. Korey is just that kindhearted of a person."

A veterinarian estimated Lulu is 2 or 3 years old, Floyd said. She's been given all her shots and is being treated for

two tick-borne diseases and a bout of worms - but overall, she's healthy, he said.

"She helps a lot," Floyd said. "She's always just there, ready to hang out and chill with us."

The calm, playful pup is an example of how Floyd and first responders like him can save human lives and animal lives, he said.

"We try to do what we can for both," he said. "You can help an animal out just like a human."

Lexi Solomon: @solomonlexib

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### Support Western NC artisans, Helene storm victims at State Fair

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 394 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Communities across the Carolinas are stepping up to support those impacted by Hurricane Helene with donation drives, storm relief t-shirts from local businesses and even benefit concerts from big stars.

As relief efforts ramp up, you'll also be able to support storm victims at this year's N.C. State Fair.

The state's largest annual event returns to the capital Oct. 17-27.

Here's how you can show your support while there.

N.C. State Fair Cares fundraiser

One week before the fairgrounds officially open for the 11-day event, the state fair team has launched the "N.C. State Fair Cares" donation tab in support of those in Western North Carolina..

"Many people have asked about doing something for Western North Carolina and this will give those who would like to donate an easy way to do that when they purchase their advance ticket," Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler said in a statement. "The need is great in Western North Carolina and MANNA FoodBank will continue to work to meet those needs despite the setback."

Similar to a fundraiser following Hurricane Florence, all proceeds will be distributed to the MANNA FoodBank of Asheville. The food bank, which was also a former recipient of the Mountain State Fair's annual canned food drive, lost its distribution warehouse after Helene swept through the region as a tropical storm.

Donations can be contributed online for those buying tickets on the state fair's website with the option to give to the fundraiser link before you check out with the option to give \$5-\$25.

The donation drive isn't the only way to support those affected by the storm at the state fair this year.

Support for Western NC artists

One of the most popular attractions, the Village of Yesteryear, will return with dozens of artists and craftsmen creating handmade goods and crafts at the fairgrounds.

Of the more than 75 artisans coming out for fairgoers to see them in action, many are from Western North Carolina, and the State Fair has confirmed that they will still be able to attend.

Here's a list of some of the member crafters you can support as the cleanup continues in their communities:

The Village of Yesteryear will be open at the N.C. State Fair from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. On opening day, Oct. 17, it'll be open at noon. You can find more information online at ncstatefair.org.

Chyna Blackmon: @chynablackmon

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Chyna Blackmon, Staff Writer, 'Support Western NC artisans, Helene storm victims at State Fair', *News & Observer, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 2A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3C697963B8740">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3C697963B8740</a>



### 'You've got to fight for everything': Canton carries - on after floods, mill closure

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Ryan Oehrli; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1016 Words Page: 3A

OpenURL Link

CANTON When the Pisgah Black Bears returned to football practice Oct. 7, one of Jody Mathis' junior varsity players was a no-show.

The school had checked on its students the week before and kept a tally of how many lost their homes to Helene: 22. Mathis got a new tally and an explanation for his missing player the next day.

"I just found out they lost their house," the coach said in an interview with The Charlotte Observer that day. "That's why he wasn't here yesterday. It makes sense now."

Three football players lost their homes, Mathis said. Floodwater in Pisgah Memorial Stadium covered all the visitors' bleachers save for three rows. The football field is damaged and much of the fence around it is destroyed.

Seniors have likely played their last game on the field. Mathis hopes juniors will get to play there again.

The Pigeon River crested at nearly 26 feet - a new record.

People dragged wet trash to the curb: family furniture, clothes, toys that children couldn't play with anymore. Some older women slept in a storage shed. Others left town at night, coming back each morning to rebuild.

The town is used to struggle.

In September 2004, Hurricane Frances hit Haywood County. Nine days later, as the ground dried, Ivan paid a visit. Mathis thought he'd never see anything like it again.

But in 2021, he watched from a distance as Hurricane Fred filled his football stadium. At the same spot, he watched it when Helene hit.

"God dang, I've seen it twice - and twice in the last three years," the 21-year coach said.

On top of it all, Canton lost about 1,000 jobs last year when a company closed the doors to its historic paper mill.

'Fight for everything'

About 20 minutes from touristy Asheville, Canton is an old-school, blue-collar town.

For more than a century, it made paper. Smoke would billow out of the mill downtown. People across Western North Carolina remember the smell of wood chips pulping, sometimes even fondly.

More than being a major employer, the mill symbolized Canton. A mural, local businesses and even a bluegrass song by the North Carolina band Balsam Range pay homage to it.

Mathis, 51, is a fourth-generation mill worker. His great-grandfather worked at Sunburst, a logging community whose wood helped build the mill where his grandfather worked as a foreman and his father had a salaried job.

The youngest Mathis went in as a salaried employee, too. By 2023, he managed inventory, logistics and a

warehouse.

The running joke: In 1908, the mill opened on Tuesday. By Friday, it was shutting down. As soon as it opened, it was at risk of closing. Its workers were always struggling against something, like prior floods that filled its basements or environmental concerns, Mathis said.

"That's where you get this mentality. You've got to fight for everything," he said.

Pactiv Evergreen, the last company that ran the mill, shuttered it in May 2023. About 1,200 people worked there. Four thousand people live in Canton.

The company cited expenses, like upgrading the century-old mill, and an unfavorable market.

When the news of closure broke, Gov. Roy Cooper warned Pactiv Evergreen in a March 2023 letter that closing would violate a state incentives agreement and could cost the company \$12 million.

"The Canton mill has been in operation for more than a century and has been the lifeblood of that town and region," the governor wrote. "I am deeply concerned about the impact of the mill's closure, which will have a devastating effect on the livelihoods of thousands of people in Canton and western North Carolina, as well as the region's economy and social fabric."

Attorney General Josh Stein followed up with a lawsuit. Last week, a Wake County judge ruled the suit can move forward.

Speaking at Pisgah Memorial Stadium Oct. 4, Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers said Spiritas Worldwide, a potential buyer, is still interested in buying the property, to his knowledge. It's unclear what the company would do with it.

"But again, it's one of those things," Smathers said. "The world looks much different now than it did literally a week ago. If we were in this stadium a week ago, we'd all be underwater."

For now, the mill remains idle.

"Milltown Mentality" - the branding on Mathis' shirt Tuesday and a sort of slogan among townspeople - doesn't.

The Bears, for example, have been helping their neighbors. After COVID-19, two floods in three years and Canton's economic and cultural heart stalling, Mathis has seen his kids get their hands dirty.

Ten were asked to help clean up a house damaged by Helene. Twenty showed up, and that grew to 25.

Knee-deep in mud, they got to work. That's the way it's always been, Mathis said: People have each other's backs.

When the whistle blows

Waiting in a long line to get gas at a BP station in neighboring Clyde days after Helene tore through Western North Carolina, Bobby Thompson offered what was on his mind: Pisgah Memorial Stadium.

Some normalcy would be nice, but the field had been wrecked, he said.

"This town needs it," Mathis said of football.

It's unclear how long it will take to repair the field and host games there. It fared better after Helene than it did in 2021 when Fred hit. The turf stayed put this time.

"When we get on the field - win or lose - it's gonna be great," Mathis said. "Because at that point, we know we can

start moving forward."

Canton has survived adversity before, and Mathis looks forward to the eventual return. In the meantime, the Bears will play at a temporary home field.

On a typical home game night, the Bears line up and two rows of people numbering in the hundreds watch as they walk to the stadium. The dormant mill, still the heart of the town's identity, sits downhill.

The stadium's whistle from the old paper mill survived the storm.

Latched onto a scoreboard, it bellows when it's time for kickoff or when the Bears score a touchdown.

Whenever they play at home again and the whistle shrieks, Mathis said, Canton will go wild.

### Ryan Oehrli: @oehrli

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### NCDOT still working to connect Bat Cave with outside world

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Richard Stradling; Staff Writer | Section: News | 859 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

BAT CAVE When Chelsea Atkins and her husband came down from the cabin where they had taken refuge during Hurricane Helene, they were shocked by what was left of their community.

The Rocky Broad River, normally knee-deep, had ripped away homes and businesses and the land on which they stood. Their own house was still standing, though the back deck was gone along with part of the wall closest to the river.

The roads in and out of Bat Cave were blocked by landslides, washouts and downed trees. Just beyond the Bat Cave post office toward Chimney Rock, U.S. 64 disappeared, pavement either washed away or covered by several feet of mud and debris. The bridge that carried the highway over the river was still standing, but with a wide gap on one side where water had washed out earth and riprap.

Atkins said they thought it might be months before anyone made it in to Bat Cave.

"I really didn't think anybody was coming for us," she said Thursday, two weeks after the storm. "The fact that people are here and care is just wild to me."

Among the people in Bat Cave now are contractors for the N.C. Department of Transportation, which is working to fill that gap between the U.S. 64 bridge and the river bank. Restoring use of the bridge is the best hope NCDOT has for rebuilding U.S. 64 and other roads into the community, said Michael Patton, resident engineer on the project.

"This bridge is very, very vital to getting men, equipment, materials, supplies, electricity, you name it, back into Bat Cave and then other areas beyond Bat Cave, including Chimney Rock," said Patton, standing a few feet from the gap that workers have begun to fill with dirt and fine gravel.

From Hendersonville, U.S. 64 crosses the Eastern Continental Divide, then follows Reedy Patch Creek down toward Bat Cave and Chimney Rock. When the wind and rain stopped on Sept. 27, the winding two-lane road was blocked by downed trees and power poles, mud from landslides and places where the creek had washed out the pavement.

From the cabin up the hill, Atkins said she watched the Rocky Broad gradually overwhelm buildings.

"We could see them falling in. It sounded like thunder crackling," she said. "We saw our neighbor's motor home. It was huge; I don't know how many feet. And it looked like a little kid's toy in a bathtub. It just swam away."

First step: Get equipment to Rocky Broad bridge

On Thursday, NCDOT engineers took reporters down U.S. 64 from the continental divide to show what they had accomplished and how much work still lay ahead.

The road along Reedy Patch Creek is passable again and was lined with tree crews from Alabama and utility contractors from Canada and Indiana. The mudslides are clear and washouts filled, though guardrails hang down like spaghetti where the creek washed away the shoulder.

The road is good enough to bring in the earth-moving equipment and dump trucks needed to fix the bridge, which is as far as the NCDOT vans could go. Ben Williams, an NCDOT maintenance engineer based in nearby Fletcher who

drove one of them, said he'd cleaned up after many storms in his 25 years with the department.

"I've never dreamed of anything like this," Williams said, walking past the shattered buildings hanging over the river. "I can't wrap my head around what I'm looking at."

The concrete span over the Rocky Broad River was built in 1958. The deluge from Helene pressed trees, pieces of buildings and a shipping container, now flattened by the force of the water, up against the steel pilings. Partly blocked by the debris, the rampaging water began scouring the riverbanks at either end of the bridge, creating the gap workers are now trying to fill.

The bridge is tilted slightly downstream. Early on, NCDOT wouldn't let anyone go underneath it for fear it would topple over. Concrete poured around the piles has helped stabilize it.

"We monitor it every day," Patton said. "It's found its happy spot right now."

When NCDOT crews first got to Bat Cave, they found that residents had jerry rigged a rickety walking bridge over the river. Thinking they could do better, NCDOT engineers found four pieces of scaffolding and bolted them together, creating something stable enough to roll a wheelbarrow over.

As of Friday, NCDOT still listed more than 700 roads in Western North Carolina as either closed or partially closed as a result of Helene. NCDOT's strategy has been to fix the roads just enough to restore connections, particularly to isolated communities like Bat Cave, and worry about long-term reconstruction later.

The bridge over the Rocky Broad River will need to be replaced. But Patton said contractors should be able to fill the gap and get it open to truck traffic in a week or two, allowing crews to begin rebuilding roads and power lines in the valley.

"We've gotten to here," he said. "Now we got to get across the river and we can do more."

Richard Stradling: 919-829-4739, @RStradling

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### Here's every step in - NC's absentee process, from requesting your ballot to counting votes

October 15, 2024  $\mid$  News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Kyle Ingram; Staff Writer Section: News  $\mid$  953 Words

Page: 3A OpenURL Link

RALEIGH Absentee voting has been a feature of North Carolina elections for decades. This year, however, it may be even more important as voters displaced or otherwise affected by Hurricane Helene seek to cast their ballot amid the destruction.

In recent years (and especially in the last few weeks since Helene hit), misinformation has spread about the safety and integrity of absentee voting.

To get a closer look at the process, The News & Observer watched the absentee ballot mailing and receipt process at the Wake County Board of Elections office on Oct. 8.

While processes can vary slightly between counties, state law broadly requires that all absentee ballots be dealt with the same way throughout the state.

Here's every step of the absentee process, from requesting the ballot, to having your vote counted on Election Day.

### 1. Voter requests an absentee ballot

Absentee ballots are only sent to registered voters in North Carolina who request them.

Some states, like California, automatically send absentee ballots in the mail to all registered voters. Here, however, voters must request an absentee ballot through the state's online request form or by filling out an official paper request form.

Voters requesting an absentee ballot must sign their request and include their date of birth and either a driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number.

Election workers will check and validate a voter's registration before mailing them an absentee ballot.

A voter's near relative or legal guardian may also submit the request on the voter's behalf.

### 2. Poll workers pack and mail envelope

Poll workers pack envelopes to send to voters containing their ballot and instructions on how to fill it out.

Using a voter's address, poll workers determine which of the over 2,300 ballot styles they will use to vote.

Each packet includes a container envelope which voters will use to include their ballot and a photocopy of their ID. If voters don't have an ID, they can fill out an ID exception form, which is also included in the packet.

The completed packets are then mailed to voters across the state.

### 3. Voter fills out absentee ballot

Once they receive their absentee ballot in the mail, a voter marks their preferences just as they would if they were voting in-person.

However, state law requires absentee voters to have two witnesses or a notary present when they fill out their ballot. Those witnesses will also need to sign the envelope.

As mentioned earlier, voters will also need to include a photocopy of an acceptable form of voter ID in their ballot envelope or fill out an ID exception form.

4. Voter delivers absentee ballot to county elections board

Voters using an absentee ballot can either deliver it by mail or in-person at their county board of elections office.

All absentee ballots must be received by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 5. State election officials recommend sending absentee ballots at least a week before the deadline to ensure the postal service delivers them in time.

Voters from the 25 counties in the federally declared disaster area from Hurricane Helene can deliver their absentee ballots to any county board of election office in the state - not just the one in their home county.

All voters who vote absentee can track their ballot using an online service called BallotTrax.

5. Election workers conduct initial audit of absentee ballots

Once ballots are received, election workers check for any immediate deficiencies in the envelope. If there are any rips, signs of tampering or loose or unsealed ballots in the envelope, staff can present the packet to the county board for inspection.

Correctly returned envelopes are then checked for ID documentation. If none is provided, staff will reach out to the voter to request more information.

Staff also check that voters have signed their container envelope and included two witnesses or a notary. If any of that information is missing or filled out in the wrong section, it would be presented to the board.

If the voter's signature is the only thing missing, staff can send a cure certification letter to the voter and present that ballot to the board once they receive the completed letter.

6. Bipartisan county board members check and approve absentee ballots

After the staff audit, bipartisan county board of election members check and approve absentee ballots at weekly public meetings.

County boards of elections are currently structured to have three Democrats and two Republicans.

Individual board members check once again that each ballot includes an ID, signature and witnesses. Any special cases must be considered by the full board before they're approved.

For example, any voter who completed an ID exception form will have their ballot considered by the full board. Those ballots can only be rejected if the board unanimously decides that the voter provided false information on the form.

7. Election workers open envelopes and prepare ballots for processing

The approved ballots are taken to election workers, who unseal the container envelopes and straighten the ballots so they can be

entered into the counting machine.

### 8. Bipartisan board members deliver ballots to counting machine

Board members from each party then deliver the ballots to a high-speed counter, where they are scanned.

However, votes are not actually tabulated until Election Day.

#### 9. Ballots are sealed in boxes

The voted ballots are sealed in boxes, with seals signed by each board member. Those boxes are then stored in a ballot cage, which is under 24-hour video surveillance and requires employee badge access and an alarm code.

# 10. Reports are tabulated and reported on Election Day

The county board will meet at 5 p.m. on Election Day, where it will tabulate the absentee votes. Those results will then be uploaded at 7:30 p.m. on the State Board of Elections' website.

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Kyle Ingram, Staff Writer, 'Here's every step in NC's absentee process, from requesting your ballot to counting votes', *News & Observer, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 3A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3C69791F10C50>



### Harris blasts Trump, lays out plans at Greenville rally

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)

Author: Tammy Grubb and Avi Bajpai; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1630 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

GREENVILLE Kamala Harris attacked her Republican opponent Sunday in Greenville in ways that echoed Donald Trump's own past criticism of her and Joe Biden.

A roar went up from the crowd as the vice president and Democratic presidential nominee entered the Williams Arena at East Carolina University's Minges Coliseum. Many had waited hours to hear her roughly 25-minute speech.

Harris opened her remarks by reflecting on the damage from Hurricane Helene, noting, "in times like this, we stand together as one nation. That is who we are."

She then launched into the differences between what she called Trump's focus on the past and her vision for the future, and questioned why the former president has not released his medical records, appeared for a "60 Minutes" interview or agreed to a second debate. Harris appeared last week on the CBS news show and released her medical records over the weekend.

"Why does his staff want him to hide away?" Harris asked. "Are they afraid that people will see he is too weak and unstable to lead America?"

Trump and others attacked President Biden's mental fitness when he was the Democratic candidate, then criticized Harris for ducking media interviews once she replaced Biden.

"It is time to turn the page, because America is ready to chart a new way forward, ready for a new and optimistic generation of leadership, which is why Democrats, Independents and Republicans are supporting our campaign, because they and we know we need a president who works for all the American people," Harris said Sunday.

Harris' rally at ECU followed visits earlier Sunday with a local church congregation and Black farmers.

Harris lays out plan, Trump fears

Harris told the Greenville crowd she has a plan, in comparison to Trump's "concept of a plan," a reference to his remarks at their Sept. 11 debate.

She would pass a middle-class tax cut, help first-time homebuyers and entrepreneurs, expand the federal child tax credit and add home health care coverage to Medicare, Harris said, and address other key issues, from abortion and a woman's right to choose to gun violence, voting rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

"So much is on the line in this election," Harris said, reminding the crowd that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled a president is in many cases immune from criminal prosecution for acts committed while in office.

"I do believe Donald Trump is an unserious man, but the effects of him being back in the White House would be brutally serious. Just imagine Donald Trump with no guard rails," she said.

He would "weaponize" the U.S. Department of Justice against his political enemies, she added, as some of her supporters in the crowd broke into chants of "lock him up," replicating the chant that was common at Trump rallies when he ran against Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Harris turned to the section of the crowd that was leading the chant and interrupted them, saying with a chuckle, "Hold on, here's the thing, let's let the courts handle that, and let's handle November."

Democrat in tossup race throws support behind Harris

U.S. Rep. Don Davis threw his full support behind Harris at the beginning of Sunday's rally, to booming cheers from the crowd. State Sens. Kandie Smith and Rachel Hunt, who is running for lieutenant governor, also appeared at the rally.

As a son of Eastern North Carolina, Davis said, "the path to stop Project 2025 and the path to the White House comes through Eastern North Carolina." Trump has been tied to the conservative plan for the next Republican president, despite denying his involvement.

"The stakes are high," said Davis, a Snow Hill Democrat running for reelection in a swing district in the northeastern part of the state. "This election is the most consequential in our lifetimes. ... Vice President Harris and Gov. (Tim) Walz are fighting for families right here in Eastern North Carolina. They are fighting for lower costs, to protect our freedoms, and they will serve all Americans ... regardless of party."

"But on the other hand, some who are pretty extreme running in support of a pretty extreme agenda, a manifesto called Project 2025," he said.

Earlier, Davis greeted Harris at Pitt-Greenville Airport Sunday morning. Harris shook hands with Davis and they spoke for a few minutes after he met her at the bottom of the stairs as she got off the plane. They high-fived, and Harris got in the motorcade for the ride to a Greenville church.

Davis first gave Harris his support for the presidency in July, but not before voting with House Republicans and five other Democratic members to pass a resolution condemning Harris as a failed "border czar."

Immigration is a key policy issue in the 2024 race, with Republicans attacking Harris on her work at the southern U.S. border, and Democrats pointing to Trump's pressure on Republican lawmakers as the reason a bipartisan border bill wasn't approved this year.

Day starts with church service in Greenville

Ahead of the rally, Harris extolled members and visitors at a Greenville church on Sunday to keep their faith and help others in need.

The congregation at Koinonia Christian Center Church stood and cheered as Harris took the stage. The vice president, recounting her conversation with the pastor prior to Sunday's noon service, said "It does my heart and soul good" to be with the congregation.

"In times of crisis - and we're looking at the images of the aftermath of the hurricane - it is easy in these moments of crisis to question our faith, to sometimes lose our faith for a moment, because what we see is so hard to see that we lose faith," Harris said.

She also addressed rumors rampant on social media after the remnants of Hurricane Helene battered Western North Carolina, saying the people behind those rumors are "trying to gain some advantage for themselves."

"The problem with this, beyond the obvious, is it's making it harder to get people life-saving information if they're led to believe they cannot trust" those trying to help, Harris said.

Former U.S. Rep. Eva Clayton, the first Black woman in Congress from North Carolina and a longtime advocate for Eastern North Carolina, attended the service.

Rally at ECU draw support, critics

Supporters of the vice president began lining up outside the 7,100-capacity arena early on Sunday morning.

Jordyn Strupp, a senior studying political science and business management at ECU who is active with College Democrats on campus and at the state and national levels, said this year's presidential race feels like the "closest it's ever been in North Carolina."

Strupp, 21, who has been knocking on doors around Greenville since last month for N.C. House candidate Claire Kempner, said she believes Harris has a "really good shot" of winning the state.

She said that on campus, very few students - next to none - were still undecided about who they were voting for.

U.S. Rep. Greg Murphy, a Republican from Greenville, called attention to rising inflation, illegal immigration and "two major wars" abroad in a statement issued before Harris arrived. Harris is "tied to the hip of President Biden," he said.

"Her appearance is a reminder that we need to return President Trump to the White House. Eastern North Carolina knows Kamala Harris is not fit for the job and will vote accordingly," Murphy said.

Koinonia Senior Pastor Rosie O'neal noted in introducing Harris that everyone may not have the same political opinions.

"There are things on all sides that we don't agree with, but what I've asked you to do over the years is listen to the issues, then try to get a sense of the direction that the person would take our country in. Then, look at their service history, pray and ask the Lord," O'neal said.

Election Day is 23 days away

Harris warned the crowd before wrapping up Sunday that she is "running as the underdog" in North Carolina at this point. The latest polls show Trump still has a slight lead in North Carolina, which he won in 2016 and 2020.

"Remember always that your vote is your voice, and your voice is your power," Harris said.

The visit to Greenville is part of a sweep this week in Eastern North Carolina that will also include former President Bill Clinton. On Saturday, Harris met with Black faith leaders, politicians and supporters for a private event at The Pit Authentic Barbecue in downtown Raleigh, helping to pack several aid-relief boxes for storm-ravaged Western North Carolina.

North Carolina is one of seven major battleground states that Harris and former President Donald Trump have been crisscrossing in recent weeks. Early voting starts Thursday in North Carolina and runs through Nov. 2. Harris' Greenville visit came 23 days before the Nov. 5 election.

Trump held a town hall in Fayetteville on Oct. 4, where he blasted the Biden administration's response to the storm.

Harris and Trump, and their vice presidential picks - Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Republican Ohio Sen. JD Vance - have included the Tar Heel State in multiple campaign stops this year.

Those visits have been ramping up in the last few weeks, with Vance holding a town hall Thursday with voters in Greensboro, and attending the Bank of America ROVAL 400 race at the Charlotte Motor Speedway on Sunday.

On Saturday, the Trump campaign announced that Vance will hold a rally in Wilmington on Wednesday.

And on Sunday, the Harris campaign announced that Walz will make stops in Durham and Winston-Salem on

Thursday as early voting begins, The News & Observer's media partner, ABC-11, reported.

As of Friday, the RealClearPolitics polling average showed that Trump has a very slim lead over Harris in North Carolina. The state has only supported Democratic presidential candidates twice in the last 50 years - former President Jimmy Carter in 1976 and former President Barack Obama in 2008.

Tammy Grubb: 919-829-8926, @TammyGrubb

Avi Bajpai: 919-346-4817, @avibajpai\_

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# How many people has Tropical Storm Helene killed in NC? How many remain missing?

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 491 Words OpenURL Link

This story has been updated to reflect numbers reported by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services as of Monday, Oct. 21, 2024.

Tropical Storm Helene has caused 95 confirmed deaths in North Carolina, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services said Friday. And 26 remain missing.

Buncombe County has had the most Helene-related deaths, with 42. Yancey County has had 11 confirmed deaths; Henderson County has had seven; and Haywood County has had five, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday.

"The vast majority of these are directly related to flooding leading to landslides, blunt force, flooded cars, etc. We are still going through the detailed review of death records on other specific causes and elements," DHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley said.

Drowning is the leading cause of death, with 32. Twenty people were killed in landslides and 18 died from blunt force injuries, according to DHHS. The ages of those who died range from a 4-year-old girl killed in a vehicle crash in Catawba County to an 89-year-old Henderson County woman who was found among the pieces of her home after floodwaters swept it away. Some were found more than a week after the storm passed.

Friday, Christina Esmay, a spokeswoman for the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office, said that earlier reports of more than 70 people dying there from Helene-related causes were inflated.

In Helene's "early aftermath," Esmay wrote, anyone who died was classified as dying from storm-related causes and anyone who died from the hurricane was described as coming from Buncombe County.

"As the days progressed BCSO was able to identify who had passed away due to the hurricane, who was in fact from Buncombe County, and who passed away from other causes," Esmay wrote.

The state has established a task force that is working with local law enforcement officials to investigate cases of people who are still unaccounted for.

As part of that effort, the N.C. Department of Public Safety is working to consolidate reports about missing people that may have come into a number of state, local or nonprofit agencies.

Working with local agencies, state officials are following up with people who reported a missing person to see if that person has been located.

Gov. Roy Cooper warned earlier this week that the number of people missing is likely to fluctuate, with people being both added and removed as more cases are uncovered or resolved.

Staff reporter Virginia Bridges contributed this report.

Hurricane helene deaths by county map embed

This story was produced with financial support from the Hartfield Foundation and Green South Foundation, in partnership with Journalism Funding Partners, as part of an independent journalism fellowship program. The N&O

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Missing after Helene: Torn apart by landslides and floods, families frantic for news

Helene North Carolina death toll is rising, but incomplete. What we know so far.

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### 15 stories of hope, resilience and community after Helene's fury in Western North Carolina

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC)
Author: Stories by News & Observer and Charlotte Observer team, with Al summarization, News & Observer Section: north carolina | 921 Words
OpenURL Link

Stories of hope, help and community have emerged in the weeks since Hurricane Helene devastated western North

Hard-hit residents have showed remarkable resilience, such as the couple who adapted their wedding plans amid the chaos; the community that got creative to find water; the small town whose residents are feeding one another; and the woman whose only escape route was over the mountain.

Public figures such as YouTuber Cleetus McFarland, who rescued victims via helicopter, and organizations like World Central Kitchen, led by Chef José Andrés, have played pivotal roles in relief efforts. Pilots delivered supplies one trip at a time.

Residents who experienced no damage left their homes to lessen the burden on rescue workers.

As recovery progresses, the communities continue to rely on faith, local volunteers and external support to rebuild and restore normalcy.

The summary above was drafted with the help of AI tools and edited by journalists in our News division. All stories below were reported, written and edited by McClatchy journalists.

image.jpeg

# NO. 1: HELENE'S DEVASTATION CHANGED EVERYTHING ABOUT THEIR WEDDING, EXCEPT THE IMPORTANT PART

The wedding in Lake Lure was both a demonstration of the kind of flexibility marriage requires and a desperately needed bit of joy in the face of a natural disaster. | Published September 29, 2024 | Read Full Story by Martha Quillin

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### NO. 2: WHEN HELENE HIT NC'S GREEN RIVER GORGE, WOMAN'S ONLY ESCAPE ROUTE WAS OVER THE MOUNTAIN

Helene destroyed 37 homes on Green River Cove Road, along an iconic whitewater kayaking stretch. Here's how one woman escaped the flood. | Published October 11, 2024 | Read Full Story by Adam Wagner

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#### NO. 3: BAPTISTS ON MISSION AMONG HELPERS AT WORK IN WESTERN NC AFTER HELENE DEVASTATION

The needs are great, for clean drinking water, food and the muscle and skill required to safely remove fallen trees from homes. | Published September 30, 2024 | Read Full Story by Martha Quillin

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#### NO. 4: HELENE DEVASTATED THIS SMALL ASHE COUNTY TOWN. NOW ITS RESIDENTS ARE FEEDING ONE ANOTHER

The larger world is now beginning to see the extent of ruin in North Carolina's northwest corner. | Published

September 30, 2024 | Read Full Story by Josh Shaffer

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NO. 5: HE JUMPED INTO A RIVER TO SURVIVE HELENE. SHELTERING NEAR CHARLOTTE, HE LOOKS FORWARD.

As Helene's floodwaters crumbled his Black Mountain home, he jumped into a river, hiked down a mountain and hitchhiked to town. Now he's hoping for a new start. | Published October 9, 2024 | Read Full Story by Gavin Off

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NO. 6: PILOTS GET NEEDED SUPPLIES TO BATTERED WESTERN NC AND BEYOND, ONE DELIVERY AT A TIME

With thousands left in need after Hurricane Helene, Charlotte-area volunteer pilots are keeping hope aloft. | Published October 1, 2024 | Read Full Story by Rebecca Noel

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NO. 7: THEIR WESTERN NC HOME SURVIVED HELENE. WHY THEY STILL LEFT FOR CHARLOTTE SEEKING HOUSING

People from around Asheville and nearby areas lit out for Hickory, Charlotte and other destinations seeking temporary housing options. | Published October 4, 2024 | Read Full Story by Desiree Mathurin

image.jpeg

NO. 8: PHOTOS: VOLUNTEERS TAKE ON THE TASK OF RECOVERY IN FLOODED NC MOUNTAIN TOWN

The Appalachian Trail runs down the main street in Hot Springs. During Helene, the French Broad River raged down the same path. | Published October 4, 2024 | Read Full Story by Robert Willett

image.jpeg

NO. 9: CHEF JOSÉ ANDRÉS AND WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN DISTRIBUTE THOUSANDS OF MEALS IN WESTERN NC

"There's this sense of gratitude that World Central Kitchen brings, but also...I don't want you here because I know what that means. It means mass devastation." | Published October 2, 2024 | Read Full Story by Drew Jackson

image.jpeg

NO. 10: THERE WILL BE SO MANY HELENE STORIES TO COME IN NC. WE'RE COMMITTED TO TELLING THEM

Journalists from The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer are providing coverage of Helene's aftermath from across North Carolina. We don't want this area to be forgotten. | Published October 4, 2024 | Read Full Story by Thad Ogburn

image.jpeg

NO. 11: WHAT'S IT REALLY LIKE WHEN THE ARMY ARRIVES TO HELP WESTERN NC POST-HELENE? WE TAGGED ALONG

Fort Liberty soldiers share personal stories while helping to rebuild and provide relief to those affected by the hurricane. | Published October 15, 2024 | Read Full Story by Catherine Muccigrosso

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#### NO. 12: PHOTOS: WESTERN NC FLOOD VICTIMS TURN TO FAITH AND CHURCH IN THE FACE OF DISASTER

People in the mountains of NC impacted by the flooding from Helene gathered in churches and parking lots for prayer and support on the weekend following the the disastrous storm. | Published October 6, 2024 | Read Full Story by Travis Long

image.jpeg

NO. 13: IN NC'S TINY 'DOGTOWN.' HURRICANE HELENE'S FURY LEFT THESE CLOSE COUSINS WORLDS APART

After the storm, Jeannette Bledsoe, 72, and Jo Anne Biser, 70, were left stranded and isolated in their Avery County houses, anxious about each other's well-being. Then Penny Turner came looking for them. | Published October 1, 2024 | Read Full Story by Théoden Janes

image.jpeg

NO. 14: WATCH: POPULAR YOUTUBER USES CHOPPER TO RESCUE HURRICANE HELENE VICTIMS IN WESTERN NC.

The video has nearly 1.8 million views. | Published October 3, 2024 | Read Full Story by Evan Moore

image.jpeg

NO. 15: POOLS, BOTTLES, CREEKS: HOW ONE WESTERN NC COMMUNITY IS FINDING WATER AFTER HELENE DAMAGE

"You don't really, really recognize how lucky we were before," said Lashonda Lytle. "You're not able to live your normal life." | Published October 4, 2024 | Read Full Story by Tracy Kimball

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Stories by News & Observer and Charlotte Observer team, with Al summarization, News & Observer, '15 stories of hope, resilience and community after Helene's fury in Western North Carolina', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 15 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8AE736E0094B0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8AE736E0094B0</a>



### NC DMV reopening after Helene, but not yet in Western North Carolina's largest city

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Richard Stradling, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 463 Words OpenURL Link

The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles driver's license office in Marion will open Wednesday for the first time since Hurricane Helene slammed Western North Carolina with historic wind and rain.

That leaves three DMV driver's license offices still shuttered as a result of the storm. They include Burnsville, Spruce Pine and the region's largest in Asheville.

The DMV does not know when those will reopen.

One license plate agency office, run by a private contractor, is also still closed, in Marshall.

Across Western North Carolina, 25 driver's license offices and 28 license plate agencies were closed on Sept. 27, the day Helene moved through the region.

Many remained closed because of damage or lack of access, power or water, said DMV Commissioner Wayne Goodwin. Getting them back on line has been a priority for the agency and those who provide access and utilities, Goodwin said.

"Everyone's had their shoulder to the wheel," he said in an interview Tuesday. "Driver's licenses are an essential service, and we have approached it as such."

The Asheville driver's license office on Patton Avenue was the only one open in Buncombe County before the storm. A smaller express office on Tunnel Road across town was already closed while the building's roof and HVAC system are replaced.

Like much of the city, the DMV office lacks water, Goodwin said. The agency is looking into some sort of portable water and bathroom system for the office, he said. In the meantime, employees from that office are working in other open offices in the area to increase their capacity.

The offices closest to the county of 275,000 are in Clyde, Hendersonville, Marshall and, starting Wednesday, Marion.

DMV adjusts in other ways

The DMV has asked for the authorization to waive late fees and provide no-cost duplicate licenses and IDs for people who lost theirs in the storm, said spokesman Marty Homan. The agency is waiting for Gov. Roy Cooper to issue an executive order to make that possible, Homan said.

Helene has also disrupted the delivery of driver's licenses and state IDs to people who order them online or visit a DMV office. The agency has developed alternatives for people who don't have mail delivery.

People who ordered their license or ID before Oct. 7 and have not received it by mail within 21 days can visit ncdot.gov/WNCcredentialPickup to find out where it can be picked up.

People who live in one of the 45 ZIP codes listed on that website and who ordered their license after Oct. 7 at a DMV office must return to that office after 21 days to pick up their card if it can't be delivered by mail.

Those who ordered their credential online and can't get it by mail must pick it up after 21 days at the office that corresponds with their ZIP code on the website.

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