

Trump calls federal response to Helene 'terrible' during Fayetteville town hall

October 4, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC)
Author: Avi Bajpai and Mary Helen Moore, News & Observer Section: politics government | 1288 Words
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Former President Donald Trump, in his first trip to North Carolina since it was hit by Hurricane Helene, said the federal government's response to the devastating storm had been "terrible."

During a town hall with supporters in Fayetteville on Friday night, Trump also praised billionaire Elon Musk, a major supporter of his campaign, for providing Starlink satellite systems to Western North Carolina.

He reiterated his campaign promise to launch the "largest domestic deportation operation in American history," and he vowed to change the name of Fort Liberty back to Fort Bragg, if elected again.

The town hall came as rescue and recovery efforts continue around the clock in Western North Carolina. A total of 115 deaths had been reported by state and local officials as of Friday.

President Joe Biden surveyed the damage by air Wednesday and promised additional federal resources, including 1,000 active-duty U.S. Army soldiers from Fort Liberty, and 22 aircraft. Vice President Kamala Harris will visit affected areas Saturday, but her office hasn't yet said where she'll be traveling in particular.

On Thursday, Trump said in a social-media post that he plans to visit Western North Carolina next week, but said he hasn't set the date because he doesn't "want to do anything that's going to interrupt their rescue efforts."

Federal response to Helene 'terrible,' Trump says

Trump said the federal government had done a "rotten" and "terrible job" of responding to the hurricane.

U.S. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, who moderated the event, also repeated a claim Trump made earlier this week without providing any evidence, that Republican-leaning areas of the state impacted by Helene had been deliberately neglected.

"I do believe that they have intentionally, and this is my opinion, not helped out those residents, because it's red communities that are impacted," Luna said, adding over the roaring crowd: "Let's call a spade a spade. Do your job and do better."

Trump made a similar claim on Monday about North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper and President Joe Biden. Later that day, Biden told reporters that Trump was lying, and said that it was "simply not true" and "irresponsible."

Trump also praised Musk at length for providing his company's Starlink systems to restore some internet and cellular access to the western part of the state, where connectivity has been severely limited, if not nearly nonexistent, since the storm swept through the region a week ago.

Federal officials were quick to state on Monday that dozens of Starlink systems had already been or were in the process of being shipped to Western North Carolina, and a White House spokesperson pointed out on social media that the systems had "already" been made available.

Vows to change Fort Liberty back to Fort Bragg

Trump promised to change the name of Fort Liberty back to Fort Bragg if he is elected, which received a massive roar from the crowd.

He then answered questions from the audience about illegal immigration and the since-rescinded COVID-19 vaccine mandate for the military.

He repeated the vow he's made several times to launch the "largest domestic deportation operation in American history."

He referenced new data that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement gave Congress last month that showed over 13,000 immigrants convicted of homicide were living in the country outside of the agency's detention, according to NBC News.

USATSI_24401355.jpgThe Crown Arena fills up Friday, Oct. 4, 2024, ahead of Donald Trump's town hall in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

What Trump supporters said at the town hall

Joan and Dave Carlson, a military family from Fayetteville, hoped Trump would say something about the devastation in Western North Carolina.

"I want him to acknowledge there are people there dying and they're not getting the help they need," Joan Carlson said before the town hall began.

Both said their top issues are immigration and the economy, in that order.

"I think it's ridiculous that we have to compete with the current administration at all because they're complete failures," said Dave Carlson.

The Carlsons said they're only recently starting to be vocal about their support for Trump. She still won't wear a Trump shirt in public. He tried it at a hardware store recently and got some looks.

"We shouldn't be divided over politics. We're all people," she said.

Ronald Rodriguez, who drove from nearby Clinton with his wife and their two daughters. also wanted Trump to talk "about the hurricane and the way it's being handled."

He said the country has been headed in the wrong direction under Biden.

"It was a whole lot easier four years ago. Groceries were cheaper, fuel, pretty much everything," he said.

"Everything has gone up," his wife Chasity Rodriguez said.

Ronald Rodriguez said high interest rates are killing his car dealership.

"People can't afford to buy," he said. "Last two years, we've had to do more repos than ever. It's never been like that."

Brendon Core also drove in from Clinton, wearing a red Trump-Vance hat, a blazer and blue jeans.

"I'll tell you the real reason I vote Republican," he said. "It's because I'm a Christian."

He said abortion and the border are two of the biggest issues for him. At 21, this will be his first time voting in a presidential election. He's planning to cast his ballot in person on Nov. 5.

"I will be there," he said.

NC Republican warns of 'conspiracy theory junk'

As first responders, volunteers, national guardsmen, and others continue rescue efforts and deliver supplies to the region, there has been increased scrutiny of the emergency response in the immediate aftermath of the storm, and of the federal government's response in subsequent days.

At the same time, local officials and lawmakers have said they've been inundated by people calling about conspiracy theories that have spread across social media.

The situation prompted N.C. Sen. Kevin Corbin, a Republican from Franklin who represents several counties in the western end of the state, to urge people to help stop "this conspiracy theory junk that is floating all over Facebook and the internet about the floods in WNC," calling it "a distraction to people trying to do their job."

"Folks, this is a catastrophic event of which this country has never known," Corbin wrote in a Facebook post. "It is the largest crisis event in the history of N.C. The state is working non-stop. DOT has deployed workers from all over the state. Duke power has 10,000 workers on this. FEMA is here. The National Guard is here in large numbers."

Trump's campaign also launched a GoFundMe fundraiser for victims of the hurricane throughout the Southeast, which had raised more than \$5.3 million as of Friday.

The campaign said it had selected Samaritan's Purse, Water Mission, Clinch Foundation and Mtn2Sea Ministries as recipients for the funds, and had "made an initial disbursement and will continue providing more funds as support continues to come in."

Democrats slam Trump's 'extreme agenda for NC'

The presidential race in North Carolina was already tightening in recent weeks. Averages of recent polls maintained by 538 and RealClearPolitics show Trump leading Harris in the state by 0.9 and 0.6 percentage points, respectively, both of which are well within the margins of error of most polls.

Trump has won North Carolina twice, but by only 1.3 percentage points in 2020. His regular visits to the state have underscored how seriously his campaign has taken the state, as Harris has attempted to put it back in the Democratic column.

Ahead of Trump's visit, Democrats held a press conference in Fayetteville on Friday morning slamming what they said was the GOP nominee's "extreme agenda for North Carolina."

State Sen. Val Applewhite, a Fayetteville Democrat, said Trump was "coming here to spread more of his dangerous lies, just like his running mate J.D. Vance who this week refused to admit Trump lost in 2020."

Fayetteville Mayor Mitch Colvin, meanwhile, said people won't be able to afford four more years of Trump's economic policy, equating his proposed tariffs on other countries to tax increases on working families.

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Photos: Trump calls federal response to Helene 'terrible' at NC town hall

October 4, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Scott Sharpe, News & Observer | Section: election | 280 Words OpenURL Link

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump held a town hall style rally at Fayetteville, N.C.'s Crown Arena, Friday night, Oct. 4, 2024.

Trump was visiting the state for the first time since the remnants of Hurricane Helene devastated Western North Carolina.

Trump, who called the federal response to Helene "terrible" during the town hall, says he plans to visit the impacted areas in the mountains soon.

Photos from the event are here:

USATSI_24402829.jpgRepublican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at a town hall event at the Crown Arena on Friday, October. 4, 2024.

USATSI_24402896.jpgRepublican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at a town hall event at the Crown Arena on Friday, October. 4, 2024.

USATSI_24402913.jpgVeteran Dwight Francisco looks up at Republican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump as he speaks at a town hall event at the Crown Arena on Friday, October. 4, 2024.

USATSI_24402863.jpgRepublican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump does a little dance as he gets on stage at a town hall event at the Crown Arena on Friday, October. 4, 2024.

USATSI_24402945.jpgRepublican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump walks to the stage at a town hall event at the Crown Arena on Friday, October. 4, 2024.

USATSI_24401355.jpgThe Crown Arena fills up Friday, Oct. 4, 2024, ahead of Donald Trump's town hall in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

USATSI_24400256.jpgA crowd waits to get into the Crown Arena on Friday, Oct. 4, 2024, to see former President Donald Trump.

USATSI_24400301.jpgJohnny Locklear yells ,ÄúLumbees for Trump,Äù outside a Trump campaign rally at the Crown Arena on Friday, Oct. 4, 2024, in Fayetteville, N.C.

USATSI_24400294.jpgSupporters outside a Trump campaign rally at the Crown Arena on Friday, Oct. 4, 2024, in Fayetteville, N.C.

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Under the Dome: Helene creates a flood of 'conspiracy theory junk'

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Good morning and welcome to the Under the Dome newsletter. I'm Emily Vespa.

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson has repeatedly attacked the state and federal governments over their response to Tropical Storm Helene, in widely viewed posts on the social media site X. Some officials are pushing back.

"An online disinformation campaign by the LG during an unprecedented crisis is unhelpful, causes confusion in areas with limited communications and potentially puts lives at risk," Gov. Roy Cooper's spokesperson Jordan Monaghan posted Wednesday in response to Robinson's claim that the governor neglected to "care about preparing for the storm."

Robinson posted Tuesday that Florida would rebuild the roads in North Carolina. Ardis Watkins, the executive director of the State Employees' Association of North Carolina, said that's not true.

"Our folks at DOT will appreciate the help from neighbors but how dare you want to lead them as a cabinet agency and say something like this!" Watkins wrote in part.

Robinson's comment about the roads was a response to a post by Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida about sending staff and equipment to North Carolina.

Another post from Robinson on Tuesday gave the false impression that the state hadn't run any air missions to Western North Carolina. "Virtually every single aircraft currently running missions are privately owned," he said. "The few that aren't are owned by states other than North Carolina."

In fact, the North Carolina National Guard had by then conducted 57 air missions and rescued over 400 people by air, it posted earlier that day. It has been using a combination of its own aircraft and those of other states.

Helene misinformation

Misinformation about the government's Helene response has mounted. State Sen. Kevin Corbin, a Republican from Macon County, asked the public on Thursday "to help STOP this conspiracy theory junk that is floating all over Facebook and the internet about the floods in WNC."

"I've been working on this 12 hours a day since it started and I'm growing a bit weary of intentional distractions from the main job which is to help our citizens in need," Corbin wrote on Facebook.

We wrote this week about posts with fake or misleading images circulating after Helene, and we've seen a number of posts with false or suspicious information, too. We'll keep collecting online misinformation, and we'll tell you about claims to watch out for in future editions of this newsletter.

What else we've been working on

It's a name you've seen if you've been following North Carolina politics lately: Scott Lassiter. He sued House Speaker Tim Moore, ran for state Senate, won a tough primary race, and most recently, spoke out against Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson. Now, weeks before the election, he's been suspended with pay from his job as a middle school assistant principal. Read Luciana Perez Uribe Guinassi's story to find out more.

What else we're reading

Prosecutors in Georgia told the U.S. Supreme Court in a brief why they oppose Mark Meadows' attempt to move their case against him to federal court, CNN reported.

Poll watch

Another poll shows a tied presidential race in North Carolina and a big lead for Attorney General Josh Stein in the governor's race.

This time it's the High Point University Poll, which has Stein up 51% to 34% among likely voters over Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson.

The poll also says more North Carolina voters plan to support a Republican for U.S. House than a Democrat, by a 48% to 44% margin. But in asking about the state House and state Senate, pollsters found the parties are tied.

VOTER GUIDE

In the latest candidate questionnaires from our 2024 NC Voter Guide, see what candidates for lieutenant governor have to say about the issues, and learn more about their biographies. Three candidates answered our questions:

Rachel Hunt, Democrat

Wayne Jones, Constitution Party

Hal Weatherman, Republican

Today's newsletter was by Emily Vespa with contributions from Michael Wilner and Jordan Schrader. Check your inbox on Sunday for our governor's race edition of Under the Dome.

You can sign up to receive the Under the Dome newsletter at newsobserver.com/newsletters. Want your friends to get our email, too? Forward them this newsletter so they can sign up. We want to know what you would like to see in the Under the Dome newsletter. Do you like highlights from the legislature? Political analysis? Do you have a question you'd like The News & Observer team to answer? Tell us here. You can also email us at dome@newsobserver.comDon't forget to follow our tweets and listen to our Under the Dome podcast for more developments.

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In Western NC, a lack of flood insurance deepens the damage - Opinion

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For western North Carolina, Hurricane Helene brought a flooding disasterNext comes an insurance disaster.Residents in North Carolina's mountains have felt secure from the flooding that increasingly swamps the state's low-lying coastal plain. But when Hurricane Helene - along with a rainstorm that preceded it - dropped more than 40 trillion gallons of water on the region, that security was washed away. Now, homeowners in the state's mountain counties are learning that their homeowner's insurance doesn't cover flooding, landslides or anything else caused by moving water. Many will wish they had paid for policies through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). State Sen. Natasha Marcus, the Democratic nominee for state insurance commissioner, said there are less than 6,000 NFIP policies in the western North Carolina disaster area. In Buncombe County, home of hardhit Asheville, she said, less than 1% of the county's 137,000 housing units have flood insurance. Marcus said the hurricane's destruction "really drives home what is happening with the changes in our climate. It's just a startling reminder that it is real and how exposed we are. Of course, now it's too late to get flood insurance. So I'm very worried about how we are going to rebuild western North Carolina."It's understandable that homeowners in high elevations didn't regard massive flooding as a likely threat. The last event to approach Helene's magnitude in western North Carolina was more than 100 years ago - the great flood of 1916.But climate change is making flooding more frequent as storms developing over warming seas carry more moisture inland. The North Carolina State Climate Office blog said the rainfall during Helene and a preceding storm dwarfed historic standards: "In Asheville, the three-day total of almost 14 inches goes well beyond the 1-in-1,000 year total for a 72-hour period. ... Likewise, the 24.41 inches over three days at Mount Mitchell is off the charts compared to the 1-in-1,000 year amount of 16.5 inches."Lack of flood insurance is a problem even where floods are common. State Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey told me that when Hurricane Florence engulfed parts of eastern North Carolina in 2018, only 2 percent of the damaged homes were covered by flood insurance. "It is a huge problem," Causey said. "We had flood education classes around the state in 2019. That education effort increased the number of flood policies by 25 percent, but we are still just scratching the surface."Hurricane Helene has added intensity to the contest between Causey, a Republican, and Marcus in the insurance commissioner's race. Causey supports adopting a statewide version of a coastal program that serves as a market of last resort for vulnerable properties. He also wants to increase participation in the state fortified roof program Marcus says North Carolina's insurance commissioner should be a stronger advocate for adopting building code and infrastructure changes and making people more aware when they are buying in flood-prone areas by updating flood maps. "Unfortunately, efforts to modernize these maps have been stalled by political gridlock, leaving communities unprepared for the realities of our changing climate," she said. Days before Hurricane Helene made landfall, three beachfront houses fell into the ocean in Rodanthe. It's a far different place than Asheville, but it's the same phenomenon. The climate is changing. So are the risks. Yet at a time when climate hazards are rising, more people are moving into areas vulnerable to floods, winds and wildfires. That development drives up the cost - both in human life and in property - of natural disasters.It's time for sane development and construction laws that acknowledge the threat of climate change. It's past time to reduce the risks by barring development in flood-prone areas, improving building codes to better withstand storms and encouraging the purchase of flood insurance across the state.

Associate opinion editor Ned Barnett can be reached at 919-404-7583, or nbarnett@ newsobserver.com Copyright 2024 The News and Observer

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ACC Now: Helping Helene victims - Basketball season creeps in amid football's struggles

October 4, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Andrew Carter, News & Observer | Section: accnow nl | 1043 Words OpenURL Link

Hello, and thanks for spending part of your day with ACC Now, The News & Observer newsletter dedicated to all things ACC. And since it's now October, the newsletter that's likely to be soon dedicated to all things ACC basketball.

I'm Andrew Carter, N&O reporter of many an ill-fated ACC football season. Before we get to more on that, this is a time in North Carolina that continues to remind us of what's actually important in the real world, as accounts from Western North Carolina continue to be devastating in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

One of the few positives: How the relief effort has brought people together. There is no shortage of inspiring outreach, including that from N.C. State defensive end Davin Vann (and brother Rylan). The Vanns have been using their family's moving company to transport supplies to the mountains. We talk a lot about these teams and games and sometimes even joke about them, but it's stuff like this that's real and makes a real difference. You can read the latest coverage here from my colleagues at The N&O, along with The Charlotte Observer.

During this college football season, meanwhile, we can at least give the ACC an A for effort. The conference tried. And it wasn't all that long ago that there was real hope for ACC football - even around the Triangle. Remember that? Remember all the way back to ... early September? About a month ago?

A quick look back at the local questions of note then:

Would this be the season for a national breakthrough for N.C. State? And what about North Carolina? Could the overlooked Tar Heels surprise? And at Duke, what could we expect out of Manny Diaz's first season?

OK and now the answers, a month later:

Um, no - not a breakthrough year for the Wolfpack.Sure, UNC can surprise. But the thing about surprises: sometimes they're not good.And at Duke, how about a 5-0 start (just don't look at the schedule too closely).

So this is all a bit of a long way of saying: A month into football season, and it's essentially on life support in the Triangle. Only Duke has met or exceeded expectations (and, again, don't really take a close look at the Blue Devils' schedule, because all 5-0 starts are not created equally). N.C. State fell flat (to put it mildly) during its two marquee September games. And the Tar Heels? Well, things started off fine enough, at least, before consecutive losses against James Madison and Duke.

And did we mention the how of those losses? Giving up 70 against JMU, and then blowing a 20-0 third quarter lead against the Blue Devils? Well, now you can understand why your Tar Heel supporter friends have been in such a sour mood the past couple weeks.

The old joke is that college basketball season always comes early in North Carolina, given the state's almost-annual laborings in football and, well, it's seasons like this one that explain how that joke came to be. The only thing saving football season from turning into a total, complete dud - for now - is Duke first-year head coach Manny Diaz (and Blue Devils' running back Star Thomas, who has lived up to the name), along with N.C. State's ability to scrape by lower-conference opponents.

092824-DUKE-UNC-KLM-12.jpgDuke head coach Manny Diaz reacts as officials review a call during the second half of the Blue Devils' 21-20 win over North Carolina on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024, at Wallace Wade Stadium in Durham,

N.C.

Other than that, it pretty much would be time for basketball season, already. In Chapel Hill, it most surely is, pending the outcome of the Tar Heels' Saturday date with Pittsburgh.

All of which is to say: Basketball season is upon us.

A quick look at the local games this weekend, in order of intrigue:

Duke at Georgia Tech, Saturday at 8 p.m.

092824-DUKE-UNC-KLM-14.jpgDuke's Star Thomas runs the ball for a touchdown during the second half of the Blue Devils' 21-20 win over North Carolina on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024, at Wallace Wade Stadium in Durham, N.C.

Are the Blue Devils really for real? Like, really really for real? A victory here wouldn't prove it once and for all, necessarily, but it'd go a long way toward generating respect. Consider that Duke is 5-0 and yet earned not a single vote in the latest AP top 25 poll. A win in Atlanta likely won't vault the Blue Devils into that poll, but maybe they'll start to get noticed.

UNC vs. Pitt, Saturday at noon

092824-DUKE-UNC-KLM-17.jpgNorth Carolina's Omarion Hampton is brought down by Duke's Kendy Charles during the first half of the Tar Heels' 21-20 loss on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024, at Wallace Wade Stadium in Durham, N.C.

Pitt is sort of like Duke: undefeated and not all that respected, despite a couple of solid wins against Cincinnati and West Virginia and some big blowouts of Kent State and Youngstown State. At least the Panthers, though, are just outside of the top 25. The ACC's Coastal Division may be gone, but this is a Coastal reprise game in Chapel Hill. UNC has dominated the series (8-2) since Pitt became an ACC member but, well, the Tar Heels are a mess. Can they make a stand?

N.C. State vs. Wake Forest, Saturday at noon

STATENI14-092824-EDH.jpgN.C. State's DK Kaufman (5) celebrates after causing a fumble and picking it up for a touchdown in the first half of the Wolfpack's victory over Northern Illinois at Carter-Finley Stadium in Raleigh, N.C., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024.

It wasn't that long ago when these teams met with ACC championship game implications. Now? This is basically the Stave Off Basketball Season Bowl, with the loser forced to admit that football season is pretty much over, despite half of it to go. If N.C. State really is going to make a case that its program is still on solid footing, this is a game it has to have. As for Wake, the Demon Deacons are turning into a case study of how a very good program can be ripped apart by the forces reshaping college athletics. Before NIL and the transfer portal, Wake had it going. Now?

Enjoy the competition this weekend. Next week, there really will be some basketball to discuss, with the ACC's annual preseason media days happening in Charlotte. Until then.

Andrew Carter

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Open Source: In Asheville, the business at hand isn't business. But it's still important.

October 4, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Brian Gordon, News & Observer | Section: business | 1104 Words OpenURL Link

I'm Brian Gordon, tech reporter for The News & Observer, and this is Open Source, a weekly newsletter on business, labor and technology in North Carolina.

The French Broad River was back in its regular place Wednesday, but much of surrounding Asheville wasn't. The parts of the city that appear structurally sound, like downtown, still lack running water - and likely will for weeks. And the double wallop of heavy rains and then a tropical storm last Friday sent trees falling and waters rising.

Set along respective waterways, Biltmore Village and the River Arts District are two of Asheville's starkest Helene casualties. The latter faced 10-foot floods. The former, as I walked through the area days after, displayed boarded up businesses, wayward metal detritus and crumpled storefronts.

Biltmore Village had been home to the fanciest McDonald's I had ever seen, fitted with a baby grand piano, red oak tables and chandelier - all nodding to the opulence of the nearby Vanderbilt estate. The restaurant is now gutted. A major local tourism draw, the Biltmore Estate announced it will remain closed through Oct. 15, but any date within the next month feels like an ambitious guess given the area's current condition.

Screenshot 2024-10-03 at 9.59.31 «PM.pngThe Moe's Southwest Grill in Asheville's Biltmore Village endured extensive damage from the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

Asheville runs on tourism but when and how to bring visitors back is a question for another week. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, residents are working out how they'll flush toilets, shower, cook, bring groceries to neighbors and relatives, find the right dog food and shelter stray pets. Electricity is coming back to more of the city each day, but without water, the restaurants, breweries and hotels can't open. What will that mean for their employees?

Asheville's River Arts District satellite imagery of flooding from Helene

Manufacturing operations interrupted

Broadening out through a business lens, Helene has disrupted a handful of Western North Carolina manufacturing operations with significant supply chain implications. Top of the list are the Spruce Pine mines. The small mountain town in Mitchell County is where the purest quartz on the planet is found. When it comes to making semiconductor wafers that get cut into chips, even the smallest impurities can decrease performance. Spruce Pine quartz doesn't have this problem. Few, if any, other places on Earth can make that claim.

On Monday, the two local mine operators announced they had halted operations as much of Spruce Pine was washed away. "Everything civilization is pretty much gone," one local resident told my colleague Josh Shaffer. On Friday, the largest mine operator Sibelco said an initial assessment showed its facilities "only sustained minor damage."

"Our final product stock has not been impacted," the private Belgian company said in a statement. "We are working closely with our customers to assess their needs and plan the restart of product shipments as soon as we can."

Another paused plant is in McDowell County, where Baxter International has the largest U.S. dialysis solutions facility.

"Baxter's North Cove site was affected by flooding due to the storm and is currently closed for production," the

company said in a statement Sunday, adding it is working "as quickly as possible to help mitigate supply disruption to patients."

Other Western North Carolina manufacturing plants are still operating, including the Cummins facility in Hendersonville and the Pratt & Whitney factory in Asheville.

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-07.JPGA scene from Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

Clearing my cache

Who is more determined? Google and Apple are in one corner, neither appearing content to cede the market dominance their respective app stores hold. In the other corner is Tim Sweeney, founder and CEO of Epic Games, who has for four years battled the two tech giants over their alleged - and at times proven - unlawful app store polices. This week, Epic (which is based in Cary and created Fortnite) sued Google again - and this time Samsung, too. Wilson, North Carolina, is having a good two weeks. In late September, the Eastern North Carolina city celebrated plans for a future 280-worker Mucinex manufacturing facility. And on Tuesday, Wilson landed another pharmaceutical project, as a Johnson & Johnson subsidiary committed to building a 420-worker factory in the community. News I missed when on vacation: On Sept. 16, AT&T workers across the Southeast ended their 30-day strike after the telecommunications provider reached an agreement with the Communications Workers of America. Sliding doors. Hyundai looked at North Carolina's Chatham County to build a massive EV factory but ultimately picked a site in Georgia. VinFast looked at that same Georgia site for its own massive EV factory but eventually settled on Chatham County. The two projects from the two very different car companies have contrasted sharply since. On a sweet note: Morinaga, the maker of HI-CHEW candy, has broken ground on its second candy factory in Mebane. Starlink satellites have reconnected emergency responders and residents (and journalists) in stormbattered Western North Carolina. Who should get credit - Elon Musk, Donald Trump, the Biden administration, FEMA, Ivanka Trump or, perhaps, everyone or no one - became a political issue this week. Speaking of post-storm communications, the Federal Communication Commission chair will travel to Asheville and Charlotte today to hear direct accounts of internet and cell restoration efforts.

RAL_PENSACOLA-NE-100324-RTW_3 (1).JPGHenri McGowan, who lives in the village of Pensacola, in Yancey County, N.C. holds his daughter Violet McGowan as he calls loved ones using the Starlink Internet service at the community fire department on Thursday, October 3, 2024 in Pensacola, N.C.

National Tech Happenings

Close to 50,000 members of the International Longshoremen's Association have suspended their strike, which would impact shipments up and down the East Coast. The Department of Justice has sued Visa for unlawfully maintaining a monopoly "over debit network markets." A monopoly in and of itself isn't illegal, but a monopoly that harms customers is. The DOJ says that's happened while Visa has called the case "meritless." The swoosh is slumping. Nike is switching CEOs as the athletic brand seeks to rebound from a rough year on the stock market - and a dip in the less quantifiable concept of "cool." On Sunday, California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed the nation's most extensive AI regulations to date. The state legislature had by a wide margin passed the guidelines, which included making companies liable for any harm their artificial intelligence models caused and requiring them to insert a "kill switch" in case their AI goes rogue.

In nixing the bill, Newsom called the rules "well-intentioned" but "stringent."

Thanks for reading!

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Burke County events postponed and canceled by Hurricane Helene aftermath

October 4, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Miya Banks mbanks@hickoryrecord.com| Section: Events | 525 Words OpenURL Link

The Burke County Chamber of Commerce released a list of postponed or canceled events on Thursday morning.

Events are being postponed or canceled due to the devastation from Hurricane Helene, the chamber said.

Postponed events include:

Burke County Chamber of Commerce's Business ShowcaseWCI—Solutions for the WorkplaceMeet & Greet with UNC Health Blue Ridge Gary Paxon

Canceled events include:

NCSD Foundation Golf TournamentFall Tractor Show at Catawba Meadows ParkJR's RodeoUNC Health Blue Ridge Dragon Boat Races

These lists are not comprehensive and reflect what the Burke County Chamber of Commerce is currently aware of. The chamber said it will keep the public updated as best it can.

Below is a non-comprehensive list of more cancellations and postponements.

Burke County

Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton canceled fire college, according to a Facebook post from Western Piedmont Community College Regional Fire & Rescue Training.

"In observing the wide area of destruction throughout (western N.C.) and compromised infrastructure to our region and the safety of our students, we have decided to cancel the 2024 Burke County Regional Fire College so our responders can fulfill their obligations at home and begin to recover form last week's tragedy," the post said.

The Give Cheese a Chance grilled cheese competition in Morganton has also been postponed, according to a Facebook post. The post said more information is to come.

The 80s MTV Experience at CoMMA in Morganton has been rescheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 7:30 p.m., according to an email. The email said all tickets purchased for the original date will be honored for the new date.

"A Wolf's Mother" at CoMMA has been rescheduled to Nov. 21-23, the email said. Tickets bought for the original date will be honored for the new date, the email said.

Deana Carter's concert has been rescheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 6, at 7:30 p.m., the email said. Tickets bought for the original date will be honored for the new date, the email said.

"If you cannot attend the rescheduled dates, please reach out to the box office at 828-433-7469," the email said.

Spooky Meadows in Morganton has been canceled, according to an email.

McDowell County

The Mountain Glory Festival in Marion has been canceled, according to a Facebook post on the Mountain Glory Festival page.

"The recovery from the catastrophic weather event to our county and those counties surrounding us will be underway for quite some time," the post said. "Our resources are simply too limited at this time to be in a position to host the thousands of visitors that attend this event."

The post said the event will return in 2025.

The post said vendors will be emailed as soon as possible with information regarding a refund of vendor fees.

An Evening with Western N.C. Writers in Marion has been canceled, according to an email from St. John's Episcopal Church.

The Mountain Gateway Museum and Heritage Center in Old Fort has canceled its Farms and Foliage event, said Brittany Bennett Joachim in an email.

"Sadly, due to the cleanup process needed and out of safety and concern, the event has been canceled," Joachim said, adding that the museum hopes to do the event next year.

Catawba County

The TJ Miller show at the Hickory Premier is canceled, according to a Facebook post from the Hickory Premier venue.

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Freedom football field muddy, flooded by Helene but equipment saved. Now Burke teams wait to reschedule.

October 4, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Justin Epley | Section: High School | 1325 Words OpenURL Link

All things considered, Burke County's high school athletic departments have emerged on the other side of Hurricane Helene better than might otherwise be expected.

Yes, Freedom High School's football stadium in Morganton was flooded and, yes, there is additional damage to some facilities at local schools caused by heavy rains and high winds, but Freedom, Draughn, East Burke, Patton and NCSSM-Morganton are more or less in a holding pattern while other harder-hit conference schools in surrounding counties sort through the devastation.

"It's a wait and see right now," Freedom athletic director Rob Scott said. "There are way more important things right now than playing a ballgame going on around us. Yeah, we all want to get back to some sort of normal, but we've got to get our community to normal first before we worry about ballgames."

For longtime Patriots like Scott, previous flooding from 2004's Hurricane Frances provided a blueprint for this time around.

"We were smart enough to evacuate," Scott said. "Equipment-wise, we could play a game tomorrow if we needed to. Not at home, though. It'll be a minute before we're back in the stadium. It's a muddy, flooded mess. Those buildings won't be useable for a while. But the plan is to build back better.

"It's unfortunate, but we evacuated the things we had to evacuate right then. We'll come out of it alright on the other side. What happened (in 2004) was huge for now because we knew to evacuate. That's the biggest thing. You can't move everything out of a building, but we knew what had to go and the things you have to have to play a game, we were able to get. I'm tickled the school system is working with us. They're going to put us back in good shape and take care of the facilities for us. We'll live to play games on the other side of this in the same stadium we've used for years."

Also of concern is the red rubber track around Freedom's football field, a new addition to the stadium in recent years.

"We had the folks come in and evaluate it," Scott said. "We've just got to get it washed off, is basically what they've told us. We've got to get it washed off and then, they can further evaluate it."

Whenever football is able to start back for this season, it is likely that the Patriots will have to play at Patton High School or another venue while repairs are being made.

"We're still in the talking stages for anything like that," Scott said. "We don't know where we're going to play 100% for sure, yet."

Freedom High School is holding out hope that Senior Night's game versus Alexander Central, originally scheduled for Nov. 1, can be played on campus.

"That's going to depend more on the electricity and things like that. I think the surface of the field will survive," Scott said.

What the schedule looks like going forward is something that is still under discussion with the Northwestern 3A/4A

Conference.

"We're meeting again (Friday) as a conference to iron through more of that," Scott said. "We're still hoping for guidance from the NCHSAA, too, whether they're going to extend the fall season like they have in the past. That would be nice."

In the meantime, however, teams are able to hold voluntary practices thanks to a recent decision by Burke County Public Schools.

"We're under workday rules right now, so we're having optional practices," Scott said. "Nothing mandatory, nothing critical for the kids one way or another, but the school system opened it up to optional practices based on the workday schedule. It's been on a case-by-case basis based on kids being able to get there and all those kinds of things."

In Valdese, Draughn High School, in particular the Wildcats' football team, has been hard at work to try to help out suffering neighbors in the mountains in the Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference, particularly Avery County. Draughn has taken supplies to Newland for donation and distribution and members of the coaching staff have worked to clear downed trees.

The path back to play for the Western Highlands Conference may be quite long.

"So far, everybody we've come in contact with has said it's going to be weeks, if not months, before they can get going again in our conference. We're the only ones back in our school right now, as far as I know. We could almost go back to school today," Draughn athletic director Eric Shehan said Thursday.

"We'd have to have limited bus runs, but a lot of our teams are coming in and practicing," Shehan said. "Most of our teams are taking advantage of it, volleyball, soccer and football. Football had a check-in day where they just brought everybody in and checked on their well-being and made sure they had everything they needed because most of the football staff is out cutting trees off of houses. (Head coach) Chris Powell has been nonstop helping people with the rest of the coaching staff."

"Maintenance came up here and a couple staff members and we've got all out advertising banners back up," Shehan said. "The homecoming banners are back up. We've got some plastic we used to cover the field with. If we get that off the ground, you wouldn't even know a storm's been here at the school."

The schedule may look vastly different when the Wildcats get back into action.

"We've got a bunch of teams calling us, offering to play us in football, volleyball and soccer because they know our conference probably isn't going to play anymore," Shehan said. "So, we've got options. We're just waiting on clearance to say, 'Yeah, we'll take on some games now."

North Carolina School of Science and Math in Morganton, which also fields teams in the WHC, doesn't have much information on the path forward, either.

"With the state (the conference) is in, I don't know what we're going to do," said Jonathan Browning, a member of the school's athletic administration.

The situation at Draughn is similar to that at Patton High School, which suffered minor damage but plays in a Mountain Foothills 7 1A/2A Conference that has many schools in western mountain counties.

"Facilities and equipment, we're doing really well," said Panthers athletic director Lee Crawford. "We had some damage to our fences at the football stadium and softball field, but everything else is OK. I checked it all through the weekend and checked it again (Thursday) when I got here for a workday. So, everything's in good shape so far.

"Currently, we have not been able to have a meeting with our conference," Crawford said. "All of our conference is to the west of us. Rutherford County is torn up, Polk County is torn up, Henderson County is torn up and Transylvania is torn up, so we've not been able to meet as a conference, yet, because our normal meeting place, you can't get to it. And to be able to get on Zoom would require WiFi from everybody, and that's not something that everybody has yet."

Crawford said the plan of voluntary practices while Burke schools operates on workday schedules is the limit to the current roadmap.

"Beyond that, we're still talking about it and trying to figure out where we go from there," Crawford said. "I know that Draughn and Freedom are a lot like us where their conference members have been hit really hard. Freedom has some conference members that are still able to play that are to the east of us, but us and Draughn have conferences that exist in the mountains and the west, so we don't know yet."

The situation is pretty solid at East Burke, whose facilities are in good shape. The Cavaliers also play in the Catawba Valley 2A Conference, whose more eastern geography limited damage to member schools. Some CVAC games already have been held since the hurricane blew through the region.

"We have an A.D. meeting (Friday) at 11 o'clock (a.m.) and should know (more) then," said East Burke High School athletic director Chip Watts.

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Catawba County deputies help with rescues in Yancey, McDowell and jails in Burke, Buncombe

October 4, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Sarah C. Johnson sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com| Section: Local | 532 Words OpenURL Link

The Catawba County Sheriff's Office sent deputies to help with rescue and recovery efforts in western North Carolina following the flooding caused by Hurricane Helene on Sept. 27.

A small group of Catawba County deputies were sent to Yancey County with a Bearcat armored vehicle on Sept. 27 during the storm, Maj. Aaron Turk said on Thursday.

As of Thursday, 15 deputies were still in Yancey County to assist with rescues, recoveries and cleanup. Turk said the largest number of deputies in Yancey County was 25 on Monday.

Catawba County Sheriff Don Brown also went to Yancey County to help, Turk said.

The deputies are scheduled to be in Yancey County until at least Oct. 9, Turk said.

Five Catawba County deputies are helping in McDowell County.

The Catawba County Detention Facility sent 11 staff members to Buncombe County to assist with the county jail there, Turk said.

Currently around 90 inmates from Burke County are being housed at the Catawba County Detention Facility due to the major flooding that hit Morganton, Turk said.

A helicopter pilot volunteering with Operation Airdrop at the Hickory Regional Airport helped fly some of the Catawba County Sheriff's Office staff to areas in Yancey County, Turk said.

Other responses from Catawba County

The town of Maiden has sent out police officers, electrical crews and public works crews to western North Carolina to assist in relief efforts, Maiden police Chief Tracy Ledford said on Thursday.

Ledford said Maiden crews have been working since Saturday to assist. The police officers were deployed to Marion and Asheville. Public works crews were sent to Morganton, he said.

Maiden is also accepting donations at the fire department, police department and town hall. Donations will be taking to Asheville by the fire department, Ledford said.

The Long View Police Department is focusing their efforts on helping local people in Catawba County and Burke County since the town is on the county line, Long View Public Information Officer Heather Minor said.

Long View police have been delivering meals to the Hickory Regional Airport for volunteers and first responders helping with Operation Airdrop, Minor said.

Long View police have also helped Christ United to deliver supplies to Hildebran. On Tuesday, officers will deliver supplies to Burke County, Minor said. Donations can be delivered to the Long View Town Hall.

Long View police officers are also delivering supplies to Long View resident without power. Minor said some areas of Long View were still without power on Thursday.

School resources officers with the Hickory Police Department went to Boone to help with traffic since Hickory City Schools did not have classes on Monday and Tuesday, Hickory Police Department Media & Community Services Coordinator Kristen Hart said. Other Hickory officers are part of the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve. Those officers have been deployed to serve, Hart said.

The city of Conover is coordinating with municipalities in Catawba County. Conover will send out public works crews to help with clean up as well as water and sewer restorations, Conover Public Information Officer Madeleine Epley said. Donations can be brought to the Conover Fire Station #3 on Village Square NW.

The Brookford Police Department is accepting donations at 1700 South Center St. in Hickory, according to a post on the department's Facebook page.

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Column: Helene's effects, and happier thoughts

October 4, 2024 | News Reporter, The (Whiteville, NC) Author: Billy Hammond, Fair Bluff Mayor | Section: Opinion | 260 Words OpenURL Link

I trust that everyone reading this column was able to survive last week's storm. Hurricane Helene was a disaster that was mostly impactful in the central and western portions of our state. Some of the news accounts that we have seen show a tremendous disaster has impacted our brother and sister North Carolinians. We keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

This is a strong reminder that hurricane season is not over. There are still several weeks remaining in the 2024 hurricane season. All of us here in Fair Bluff know firsthand just how devastating wind and water can be.

Here in Fair Bluff, Hurricane Helene caused damage to the Lumber River Riverwalk. It seems that just about every storm puts trees down on this tourist attraction. We will be contacting our insurance company and repairmen in the days ahead to start repairs. Until then, the Riverwalk remains mostly closed to the public.

On a happier note, I attended the grand opening of the bakery this past Saturday. It was great to see this business officially become a part of Uptown. All of us in Fair Bluff have waited with anticipation for several weeks to see this happen. We wish them much success in the future.

As the month of October approaches, our thoughts naturally turn toward autumn events and traditions. This is county fair month. Our neighbors over in Tabor City will have their Yam Festival. And we know our kids are anxious to get their Halloween candy! Indeed, there is so much to look forward to during the next few weeks.

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Prejudice, bias, passion and trust

October 4, 2024 | News Reporter, The (Whiteville, NC) Author: Franklin Davis franklindavis@nrcolumbus.com| Section: Game | 922 Words OpenURL Link

Have I ever told you how much sleep this job costs me? You wake up early in the morning to visit the bathroom and before you can get back to sleep, a column idea pops into your brain. You fight it, then formulate it, hope you won't forget it, and finally you write it at 4 a.m.

Prejudice vs. bias

Some consider that these two words have the same meaning. My opinion differs. For me, prejudice is a preconceived opinion not based on any reason or personal experience. Bias is an opinion built up over a period of time due to interactions and personal preferences.

I think it is possible to be biased but not prejudiced. You can have bias but still be fair. It is a fine line for a sports writer to walk. And anyone who doesn't believe they are biased about something is fooling themselves.

I'm positively biased towards coaches. I was one once. A great majority of people I consider friends are involved in the coaching field.

Family connections have allowed me to know Brett Harwood and Turner Brown since they were knee-high to a grasshopper. With Harwood, I could almost tell you what his quote would be before he said it. Brad Smith's father Gary was my catcher back in the day. Actually way back in the day.

LaMonte Williamson's late father Larry was a classmate, a baseball and football teammate and a friend.

I've known Megan Storms' dad and one set of her grandparents since I was in middle school. Of course, that was when I walked to and from school, uphill both ways. Our math problems were ciphered with a broken stick on the dirt floor of the classroom.

I always appreciated David Marlowe writing up his own volleyball match summaries, which, with a small amount of editing, were ready for print. Brett Burroughs and I share a love of sports cards, especially baseball cards. His collection is Hall of Fame worthy, while mine is minor league in comparison.

Jeff Axelberg doesn't coach, but he is such a fountain of information about West Columbus sports that it is easy to hope his hard work bears fruit.

I spend hours on the phone with Russell Dove and JP Price during the football season, and at least a third of that time is more personal than professional conversations.

I have always wanted these people to be successful. It's easy to hope for that when the competition is from outside Columbus County. It's impossible when the games involve intra-county rivals.

Do I dislike Fred Pedro at East or Connor Grainger at West or Corey Sykes at South or any other coach not named above? Absolutely not! I just have not established a close personal relationship with them through a family connection or time spent interacting in our jobs.

I admit my biases. However, I will do my utmost not to let them get in the way of accurately reporting what occurs on the playing fields. And if you believe otherwise, no worries. A change is coming.

Passion

I believe all of our coaches are passionate about their jobs. Some quietly, and with others it's obvious. Take JP Price for example. There are times on the football sideline where he looks like a thermometer that is about to blow its top. He can also get passionate quickly on topics other than football.

One such recent topic is the devastation that Hurricane Helene caused in western North Carolina.

"While playing a rivalry game against West Columbus this week is important, what the people in western N.C. are experiencing simply trying to put their lives back together puts the playing of a football game in its proper perspective," said Price. "My family has gone to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Coaches Camp in the summer at Black Mountain for years. It hurts my heart to see the devastating videos and pictures from that area."

Price is leading the Whiteville Fellowship of Christian Athletes' effort to collect essential items for the families affected by Hurricane Helene and the subsequent flooding in western North Carolina. Receptacles were set up at the gate for donations of goods at Whiteville's Wednesday home soccer match with South Columbus. They will be set up at Thursday's home volleyball match with East Columbus and Friday night's West Columbus at Whiteville football game. Donations may also be dropped off at the WHS weight room prior to school. Used clothing is not acceptable at this time.

You can tell how Price has been affected by how his voice cracks when he talks about what has been taken from those families. "We are all competitive and want to win Friday's game, but at the end of the day it is more important to do what we can do to help others in need."

Trust

I am fortunate that I've established enough credibility or trust with some coaches where they will share information with me that could be newsworthy, but that they prefer not publicizing.

Maybe it is a player injury or a disciplinary issue that the next opponent is unaware of. High schools are under no obligation to share player status as professional leagues and some college conferences now are. I believe keeping coaches' confidences pays off in the long run, as I sometimes am the first to receive information about a coaching change or other relevant information that does need publication.

Maybe someday a coach will give me a compliment similar to what Joey Price said about Dan Biser. "Dan may not have always quoted me exactly, but what he wrote never hurt me." That is a pretty good reputation to have.

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Fair board honors Canady, raises funds for western N.C.

October 4, 2024 \mid News Reporter, The (Whiteville, NC) Author: Diana Matthews dianamatthews@nrcolumbus.com \mid Section: Agriculture \mid 501 Words OpenURL Link

Columbus County Agriculture Fair supporters, at their annual dinner Thursday, named the fairgrounds' newest building in memory of someone Fair Board Member Brent Watts said "was a vital part of the Columbus County agriculture community his entire life."

Board members unveiled a new sign naming the educational tobacco curing barn for longtime Nakina farmer and businessman Ray Canady, who died last year at age 85. Three generations of Canady's family listened as Watts described him as "a true gentleman" who "was always willing to help in any way he could," whether offering growing advice to the next generation of farmers or sharing a smile and a Pepsi.

Watts, who is also a tobacco farmer and District 5 county commissioner, said Canady led by example and "did his best" for his faith, his family and his community.

Canady understood that, "It was the simplest things in life that would give you the greatest pleasures," Watts said. "Whether it was the smell of a newly disced field or tobacco curing in a barn, Ray Canady was thankful every day to live outside, enjoying God's creation."

Canady's family made the donation that secured naming rights for the barn completed last year. Watts also recognized the Featherson-Roseboro family and the Beasley Strickland family for their donations to sponsor tiers inside the barn.

Awards

Fair Manager and Board Member Tucker "Mack" Ward recognized two longtime fair volunteers during the dinner. He presented a sign naming the pass gate in honor of "tireless and courteous" gatekeeper William Sibbett. The fair manager extended "heartfelt gratitude" to Kathryn Faulk, citing "her selfless and meritorious service" organizing "the plethora of details, problems and personalities" entailed in the fair's stage entertainment.

Fair Board President Jess Hill then presented Ward with the 2024 Jimmy P. Ferguson Memorial Award, praising his "courage, patience, work ethic and commitment to community." He said Ward "has always held himself to the highest standards and expects no less of anyone else."

Board members also recognized longtime livestock show coordinator Ben Harrelson by dedicating the 2024 premium book in his honor. Flimsy the Clown, a.k.a. Bruce Lowery, will marshal the fair parade through downtown Whiteville Monday at 4 p.m.

See an upcoming story for more about how the honorees serve the fair and what they say about their jobs.

Crops, crafts, cakes and critters

An impromptu collection in support of Hurricane Helene's victims raised \$2,058 from those attending the dinner, and Hill promised that the fair "will donate a minimum of \$5,000" to the cause.

Associational Missions Strategist Dave Heller of Columbus Baptist Association urged everyone to continue to support the recovery efforts materially and register for a volunteer job suited to their abilities. A prayer gathering will take place Saturday at 4 p.m. on the grounds of the county government offices at 127 W. Webster St. in Whiteville, Heller said.

Volunteers began registering entries in competitive exhibits Friday and were to continue Saturday.

Gates open to the public Tuesday at 4 p.m. See The News Reporter's 2024 Fair Guide for an entertainment schedule, competitors' rules and information about special events.

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Caldwell County continues to assist neighbors, prepares for FEMA's arrival

October 4, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 571 Words OpenURL Link

The Caldwell County Board of Commissioners held an emergency meeting at 5:15 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 2. The meeting was held to authorize county personnel to enter a contract with Hickory Springs Manufacturing, HSM, to secure additional warehouse space that will be allotted to store materials and supplies for its own recovery and for mid to long-term recovery efforts in areas outside of Caldwell County which were hit worse by Helene.

At the meeting, it was noted that Caldwell County has fared comparatively well to other areas further out west and up in the mountains. In comparison to Avery, Mitchell, Yancy and McDowell Counties, which still have more than half their tracked energy customers without power, Caldwell has recovered fairly quickly, with fewer than 5,000 energy customers still without power as of 2 p.m. on the fourth according to statistics taken from FindEnergy.com. Duke Energy anticipates most of its Caldwell customers will have power restored by 11:45 p.m. on Oct. 4, as of time of writing.

Caldwell County has also received overwhelming generosity from neighboring regions in the form of cash and supply donations, volunteers, equipment and vehicles that have helped speed recovery in the county along. Likewise, the county has been extending the same generosity to neighboring counties, starting with police, fire and emergency medical personnel who were sent to assist with rescue efforts shortly after the storm hit. County manager Donald Duncan said he has also consulted with officials in these harder-hit areas.

Over the course of the past week, the needs of those areas have begun to shift. In the beginning responders were checking in on residents to see if they were okay, and working to ensure oxygen refills were available for those patients who did not have access to power. Now, as power is slowly restored and that need lessens, organizations like the Sheriff's office are using all and utility terrain vehicles to deliver essential supplies like food and water into the areas that are cut off, according to Caldwell Emergency Management coordinator Vic Misenheimer. These efforts will continue for as long as they are needed.

Over the course of the next couple of weeks the Federal Emergency Management Agency will be setting up a temporary base in Caldwell County to help administer aid further west, and will be at least in part using the storage space the county government has just contracted as one of many bases to move supplies into the zones where they are most needed, Duncan said.

The county entered into the contract with HSM in order to get some storage space for some of the donations that were coming in. Smaller donations were being handled by multiple churches in the county, but larger donations coming in on tractor trailers needed greater material handling capacity — personnel, forklifts, docks, etc. — that the county did not have immediate access to. As the county was looking for these spaces, FEMA got in touch and the organizations were able to secure the contract with HSM to get the needed space.

Duncan said that, in the coming weeks, we can expect debris removal to be the most notable change people see alongside the opening of the FEMA center. After that, appliances will be brought in, followed by continued efforts to rebuild the damaged power grid and roads.

In the mean time, residents can continue to fill out Hurricane Helene Damage Assessment Surveys and learn how to apply for FEMA relief at caldwellcountync.org/494/Helene.

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SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com, 'Caldwell County continues to assist neighbors, prepares for FEMA's arrival', *News-Topic, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
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Graystone Eye donates safety glasses to Samaritans Purse relief aid volunteers

October 4, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 193 Words OpenURL Link

HICKORY — Graystone Eye is supporting the ongoing relief efforts in the North Carolina high country following Hurricane Helene. To assist volunteers working tirelessly to clean up the damage, Graystone Eye has donated a supply of safety glasses to Samaritan's Purse, according to a press release from Graystone Eye.

Safety glasses are essential for protecting the eyes from debris, dust, and other hazards that can be prevalent during disaster relief operations. By providing these essential tools, Graystone Eye hopes to contribute to the safety and well-being of the volunteers on the ground, according to the press release.

"Our community means everything to us at Graystone Eye," said Andrew Tate, CEO of Graystone Eye. "We are deeply concerned about the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene, and we are honored to be able to assist in the recovery efforts. Our team of physicians and staff is committed to serving our community, and we believe it is our responsibility to help those in need during times of crisis."

Graystone Eye partnered with Samaritans Purse, a renowned humanitarian organization that provides aid and relief to those affected by disasters and conflict around the world, according to the press release.

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Caldwell County debris pick up to continue through Nov. 22

October 4, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 204 Words OpenURL Link

On Thursday, Caldwell County crews continued to bring aid across the County as power is being restored to more homes, according to a press release from the county.

Preparation continues for debris pick up for all of Caldwell County beginning on Oct. 7 until Nov. 22. Debris should be separated into three piles, vegetation, construction debris, and items like furniture, hot water heaters. Guidelines for debris pickup can be found at https://www.caldwellcountync.org/494/Helene, according to the press release.

For up to date road closures in Caldwell County and Western NC, visit https://drivenc.gov/

Local churches are distributing supplies collected back out into the community today and tomorrow including food, water, hygiene items, diapers, wipes, and other donated goods. For a list of churches providing resources and meals, visit https://caldwellcountync.info/Resources, according to the press release.

To help Caldwell County know the extent of damage, complete the county's damage assessment form at https://nc-caldwellcounty.civicplus.com/494/Helene, according to the press release.

A volunteer application form is on the County website to assist in responding to damaged areas https://caldwellcountync.org/497/Volunteer, according to the press release.

People who have suffered storm damage can apply for FEMA assistance online by visiting disasterassistance.gov, by calling 800-621-3362 or by downloading the FEMA app.

For more information, visit www.caldwellcountync.org/494/Helene, according to the press release.

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STAFF REPORTS, 'Caldwell County debris pick up to continue through Nov. 22', *News-Topic, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C00D6B726C9D78



500 plus workers restoring power for Blue Ridge Energy members

October 4, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 315 Words OpenURL Link

LENOIR — An army of over 500 line technician crews, along with tree and grading contractors, are working 24/7 restoring power to Blue Ridge Energy members after Hurricane Helene left behind historic damage to western North Carolina, according to the press release from Blue Ridge Energy.

"Over 80% of our 8,500 miles of line, power poles and substations were destroyed or severely damaged — it's a herculean effort to rebuild a system that originally took years to construct, said Renee Walker, director of public relations, according to the press release.

Crews are working to restore the remaining 20,309 members without power as of 5:30 p.m. Thursday, according to the press release.

General estimated restoration dates are provided at www.BlueRidgeEnergy.com. These are broad community descriptions and include other nearby areas. Restoration efforts underway are for all members in every area who remains without power. Crews will not stop until all power is restored, according to the press release.

Chief executive officer Doug Johnson released a video update to members today and can be found on the cooperative's website or at: https://youtu.be/qa79fL4dAZ0.

"We are working very hard to restore power to your home and businesses," said Johnson. "We care about you and we will not stop until every single member has their lights come back on. To help us achieve this goal, we've brought in significant resources from all across the state, states around us and up and down the east coast.

"I ask for continued thoughts for the people who are working in the field in very difficult conditions and for the people who are working in the office answering the phones, preparing food and all the many, many things that it takes to oversee an effort of this magnitude" Johnson continued. On a normal day, we would have 50 linemen in the field. Today we have over 500. We're not going to stop until your power is restored," Johnson said.

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STAFF REPORTS, '500 plus workers restoring power for Blue Ridge Energy members', *News-Topic, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C00D6B765EABB0



Local volunteers organize donation drive for Bernsville community

October 4, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 626 Words OpenURL Link

As Caldwell County recovers from the impact of Helene, and as a majority of the county has power and internet restored, many residents and organizations are taking steps to administer aid further west in the state that have suffered greater damages from the storm. One such group was organized by teacher Jamie Boggs and made up of a combination of other William Lenoir Middle School faculty and assorted community members, which collected a dozen truckloads of supplies to deliver to Burnsville on Thursday, Oct. 3.

The donation drive was organized over the course of two days, with community members bringing in donations to be stored at William Lenoir Middle School until they could be delivered. Boggs originally organized the drive for the Banner Elk community, where the plan was to collect donations from Caldwell residents and deliver them on Thursday, but on Wednesday night, Boggs was contacted by an organizer in the area who told her that the donations were more needed elsewhere.

Boggs was able to find the community of Swannanoa, near Asheville, and planned to deliver the supplies there. The water, diapers, food, medicine, cleaning supplies, pet food, blankets, bedding, air mattress and everything else were loaded into 11 trucks and one SUV and the makeshift convoy rolled out of the parking lot at 8:30 a.m., Boggs said. The group arrived in Swannanoa at 10 a.m., where they received the good news that the donation center had too many supplies to store the extra 12 truckloads.

The group collected extra supplies, mainly bottles of water, from the Swannanoa donation center and delivered them an extra hour north to Burnsville, which they were told needed them more.

"You could see homes on the way where homes were definitely destroyed," Boggs said, "You could see the debris from where the water was over the bridge. There was a ballpark that was totally gone. There was a school we drove by where you could see form the interstate where the playground was clearly underwater at one point."

The traffic thinned as they moved up the highway. Eventually, they came to a checkpoint at Burnsville. The group explained what they were delivering and were allowed to pass to the donation point at Burnsville's Rose's store parking lot.

The National Guard was present, as well at Cajun Navy relief volunteers. Residents entered the parking lot, told volunteers what supplies they needed and waited while their cars were loaded. Other volunteers prepared food for victims. A fuel truck dispensed gas to those who needed it. Boggs's group's volunteers served to load supplies and direct traffic into the busy lot.

"They needed it and they took it," Boggs said. "There is no sense of greediness at all. Even the people coming through wanted everybody to have something. Even with what they were going through they didn't want to take it all."

The area was still in rescue mode. Boggs said people came to collect supplies for neighbors stranded in their driveways. Some came in four wheelers as opposed to cars or trucks. Helicopters were everywhere and people worked to get each other what they needed. Boggs said that, after she left, she found out a house collapsed and National Guard members were drawn away to respond.

Boggs's group left at different times to ensure there were still volunteers to pass out supplies without crowding the lot too much, between 2 and 8 p.m. Boggs plans to return with additional volunteers and supplies on Sunday.

"We couldn't have done any of this without everybody coming together," Boggs said. "I wanted to start a drive and everybody jumped in. Everybody did this ... That was my goal, organizing this, I wanted to see it go into the hands of the people, to make sure they got it and that's exactly what happened."

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SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com, 'Local volunteers organize donation drive for Bernsville community', *News-Topic, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04CA136E4D370>



UNC Health Southeastern supports Western NC health systems impacted by Hurricane Helene - Food, supplies, volunteers bring relief in western North Caroina

October 4, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Author: The Robesonian | Section: developing-news news news-main top-stories | 979 Words OpenURL Link

LUMBERTON — UNC Health Southeastern was greatly impacted by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, with challenges including access to water supply, flooding, and availability of personnel who were impacted by the storms

Knowing some of the challenges that are facing the western North Carolina hospitals and health systems who are working around the clock to provide health care to residents of that region so devastated by Hurricane Helene makes lending support an easy decision, hospital officials said Wednesday.

Hundreds of UNC Health Southeastern teammates have expressed a willingness to travel to the region to provide care. So far, a number of professional team members including physicians, resident physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists have been deployed to sister UNC Health hospitals to provide care, with more to be deployed in the coming weeks.

UNC Health Southeastern President and CEO Chris Ellington said he was overwhelmed with the number of teammates immediately volunteering their availability to assist those in need.

"Dr. Vincent Ohaju, a second-year family medicine resident, and I have been deployed to UNC Health Blue Ridge in Morganton for a three-day assignment," said Dr. Joseph Roberts, UNC Health Southeastern chief medical officer. "Their hospital had lost power and water for two days but now have services returned. We are assigned the emergency department and have allowed their outpatient providers to return to their regular jobs. We will have more residents and faculty volunteering over the next several weeks. Our presence here is a way of giving back after our experience in Lumberton in 2016 with Hurricane Matthew. It is a great learning experience for our residents."

In addition to providing personnel, UNC Health Southeastern's teammates are donating items that will be transported to the region as part of a larger initiative by UNC Health. Items being donated include water, first aid and infant supplies.

"The organization's supply drive is providing an opportunity for all of our teammates to give back and help others," said UNC Health Southeastern Chief Operating Officer Lori Dove. "Many team members would like to volunteer, however, their circumstances will not allow them to be deployed away from home. The supply drive provides a mechanism to give back so that everyone has an opportunity to participate in helping our fellow North Carolinians."

With more and more images and news coming out about the devastation in the region, support will likely be needed for some time to come.

"This family that we call UNC Health Southeastern is always quick to respond to other people's needs and look for opportunities to provide care and compassion," added Dove. "We are blessed to work in an organization that truly embraces Here for You, Here for Good – despite where that location is or the circumstances in which we are providing the care. It is an honor to serve alongside these teammates."

Lumberton Answers Call

The City of Lumberton was more than happy to provide assistance to residents and local agencies flooded out in western North Carolina.

Waye Horne, Lumberton City manager, said the city sent a fire truck and an electrical utilities crew to Kings Mountain, one of the hardest hit areas from floods generated by Helene.

Horne said that when Hurricanes Matthew and Florence flooded Lumberton, mutual aid agreements activated emergency crews and other agenceies from around the state to help locally.

Horne described the mutual aid agreements as a blanket policy statewide, because while the devestation my have happened far away, it's in the best interest to pay it forward should aid may be required locally one day.

"Luckily they (Lumberton crews) were able to get into Kings Mountain," Horne said. "Chimney Rock lost most of its infrustrue. They couldn't get into Cherokee."

Lumber River United Way

Earlier in the week the Lumber River United Way implemented a Hurricane Helene assistance fund.

Donations allow different United Ways in the affected areas to respond to urgent requests and continue to meet needs as they unfold in the coming weeks.

"As a community, we know too well the aftermath of a major hurricane," said Tate Johnson, LRUW director. "These critical donations will support ongoing needs for families that will go weeks without internet and potable water."

"As North Carolinians come together during this disaster, Lumber River United Way is committed to assisting those in need," Johnson said.

Donations may be mailed to PO Box 2652, Lumberton, NC 28359, or online by visiting lumberriveruw.org.

Robeson County Sheriff

Sheriff Burnis Wilkins and Hoke County Sheriff Roderick Virgil partnered this week to collect supplies headed to western North Carolina.

With the assistance of Mountaire Farms, Wilkins and Virgil collected supplies most needed to assist displaced families.

In doing so, both agencies collected supplies at their respective sheriff's offices and planning to send multiple deputies to to assist in law enforcement functions.

Getting there

Helene brought historic amounts of rain and wind to the western part of the state late last week.

The ongoing focus of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has been to restore primary roads and access to isolated communities impacted by the destruction.

It has been a vital effort to keep the major roads and highways as clear as possible to provide swift rescue and repair by first responders, transportation and utility crews.

For continuous updates on road closures, you can visit drivenc.gov.

Crews head west

More than 1,600 NCDOT employees and contract crews from around the state have been deployed with tools and

supplies to help clear roads of debris and repair others where possible.

These crews are working around the clock to assess road damage and prioritize efforts to reopen interstates, along with U.S. and state highways first before opening secondary roads.

But recovery efforts will likely take many months as damage to many roads and bridges is catastrophic, NCDOT officials said Friday.

Volunteer Inquiries

If you would like to donate your time, money or resources to help with relief efforts in western North Carolina, visit ncdps.gov/Helene.

For more information about NCDOT Now, contact the NCDOT Communications Office at (919) 707-2660. Additional news stories from throughout the week can be found on NCDOT.gov.

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Hurricane Helene and Helping Hands

October 4, 2024 \mid Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Section: lifestyle-religion \mid 864 Words

OpenURL Link

Where to even begin, with a column like this...

Hurricane Helene. The impact has been pretty devastating and over a massive area. The mountains of Western North Carolina, just a short drive up the road from me, seem to have been the hardest hit. Chimney Rock Village, an iconic little town I have enjoyed since my childhood, is simply gone. Other areas are cut off entirely as I write this, accessible only by air. Our area was hit, but not nearly so hard. Trees are down everywhere, and power to my town, the church I pastor, and my house is expected to be out for more than a week.

There have been reasons to smile through it all. We live on the Broad River, which flooded to a historic level. It did not reach our house. It did put my barn halfway underwater. We parked our vehicles at the top of our road so we could hopefully get out if needed – a massive oak tree from way across the road decided to kamikaze it. Our driveway ended up under a six-foot deep, sixty-foot wide flood of water from what is normally a tiny creek running under it and into the river. We used kayaks to get back and forth across it. My son, the perfect dog dad, kayaked himself and his full-grown German Shepherd across the water. Seeing that dog sit in his lap as he paddled across is a sight I will not soon forget.

Our twenty-year-old generator has performed like a champ. We can't run much off of it, but we have been able to have a few lights, internet, periodically run the fridge and freezer to hopefully save what we can, and charge phones and flashlights.

Sunday, September 29, though, was a banner day. With no power at the church, we nonetheless met at 10:00 AM and, using propane-powered griddles, made a pancake breakfast for anyone who came, which included a lot of folks from the community who had not been able to get a decent meal for a while. Then we worshiped the Lord; that is always appropriate. From there, we divided up into several different teams and headed out into the community with chainsaws, cases of water, and other supplies. At least two other churches had sent people down to help with this effort, which we had announced only the night before. We went to eight different homes and started cutting and removing trees from roofs and driveways and bringing supplies to those who needed them.

I had not even thought of lunch; it simply never occurred to me. But our ladies had. By about 1:00, when the first wave of work was done, we started heading back to the church to regroup. When we arrived, we found lunch ready and waiting for us. Then it was back out to other locations. One group of us went to a Children's Home to deal with two massive downed trees. Another headed for Hendersonville for a similar task.

I had not thought of supper, either. How is it possible to miss things like that? Our ladies, though, were way, way ahead of me. Not only had they thought of it, they had also put out a notice on social media that they would be serving supper to anyone in the community who needed a meal. By the time we got back, they had served more than 250 meals to our town and those from neighboring communities.

I am blessed; I have incredibly good people.

As I write this, other churches are gathering supplies to send our way for us both to use here and to forward on to areas harder hit than our own. People we know, and even people we do not know, have been sending money for relief efforts. And please pay close attention to what I say next because it is one of the main things I want to convey: we are not the only ones doing things like this. Churches all over the place are doing things like this. Some, in fact, are dwarfing our best efforts.

And this is why I so deeply love God's people in local churches all over the place. They are the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. They give selflessly, love unconditionally, and do so without seeking fanfare or applause. In all of the work done yesterday, I never saw a single person take a selfie; they just worked like dogs for others, not caring about the fact that they themselves would be going home to darkened houses with no power.

So, to churches and pastors everywhere who are both holding the line on Biblical truth and ministering to the daily needs of people around you, I say thank you. Both sides of that coin are part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. James 1:27 put it this way, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Keep preaching the truth, keep spreading the gospel, keep doing right, keep serving and loving others, and know that I am for you, and I appreciate you.

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Now it is our turn to extend a hand

October 4, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC)

Section: opinion | 604 Words

OpenURL Link

I was at Ocean Isle Beach last weekend, living my best life, which these days includes golf with good friends, great eating, a few beers or perhaps a few too many, while checking two more golf courses off my never-played list, River's Edge and The Thistle.

Both, by the way, are great venues.

My only concerns were the shank, which has become my miss, the outcome of the UNC-Dook football game, and the selfish worry that Helene would slide eastward enough to wash out a weekend with fraternity brothers that I had looked forward to for months.

Someone recently quipped that my entire life was now a "golf trip," which is not true, but I am gaining on it.

I shanked it just once, UNC, predictably, not only lost but tortured me in the process, and Helene spared us, gifting blue skies, mild temperatures, and a half-club wind to keep the gnats away. Now, however, I wish that bitch had taken a different route and spread the pain more evenly.

When I broke from my bubble on Monday morning, it was only then that I began to realize the catastrophe that was emerging in Western North Carolina, causing suffering that I do not think is comprehensible for those of us who ducked it.

The worst, I fear, has yet to be calculated.

Many are dead, many more are missing, lives and entire communities have been washed away by flash flooding, the infrastructure devastated, and as I write this, there is an untold number of people dazed and confused, alone in the dark of the wilderness praying for rescue.

Our community suffered mightily from the wrath of Matthew in 2016 and Florence in 2018, but my belief is you could stack those on top of each other and they would not reach the rung of devastation wrought by Helene, which is not limited to Western North Carolina.

Having lived through that double punch, we in Robeson County know that as soon as the skies cleared following Florence and Matthew, help could be seen on the horizon, having been dispatched on all levels. It is now time for us to reciprocate.

It is an election year, so politics has once again distorted the view, and on this I suggest you do not depend on socia media for your news. It is a lie that FEMA will only provide \$750 in relief to victims. No, that was not Trump kneedeep in the floodwaters. And the little girl sobbing and clutching the puppy? Thankfully, it is AI generated – but the suffering it depicts is real.

Be smarter, folks, the truth is out there if you care to find it.

It is fair to say that the response has been scattered and incoherent, but I choose to believe that is because of the enormity of the challenge, not because our elected leaders are frozen by the way those suffering darken a ballot. I hope I never reach that level of cynicism.

As I am writing this, I am getting updates, most positive, about people I know who are now being marked safe from

Helene, although their new life will for a long time be unlike the one of just a week or so ago.

There does seem to be growing momentum in the relief effort, with heartwarming story upon heartwarming story of private people and businesses enlisting. Today's message, as disjointed as the recovery, is for you to do what you can. Write a check, donate toiletries, and if you are able, possess the skills and the time is right, head west and sweat it out.

The very kindness that we received following Matthew and Florence, we are now summoned to extend.

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