

Endurance runner, activist, author to speak at upcoming high school 5k event

October 4, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Jason Koon | Section: Track And Field | 1312 Words OpenURL Link

When John Hall contacted endurance runner Martin Parnell about speaking at the upcoming John F. Hall United Way Cross Country Invitational, he didn't even expect to get a reply.

Parnell emailed him back the next day and accepted Hall's offer. Even after Hall told him the budget for the event likely would only cover Parnell's travel, lodging and food expenses, Parnell still agreed to come. He said it was the community service aspect of the event that appealed to him.

"When John contacted me, it was a perfect fit," Parnell said. "What I loved about what John proposes, yeah, they have a big cross country event, but part of that is for them to do a project, to give back to the community."

Now in its 31st year, the cross country invitational brings hundreds of runners from dozens of area schools to Southside Park every October. This year, before Hurricane Helene hit, Hall, the event's founder, and race organizers were expecting between 600 and 700 runners from more than 25 schools. Hall said it's not yet clear how the impacts of the storm will affect these numbers, but he believes most schools will still be there.

In a unique twist, the event requires teams to complete a community service project and create a display documenting that project to be displayed at the event. It's the part of the event Parnell says most lines up with the way he approaches running and life.

"When John contacted me, it really resonated," Parnell said. "I'm at a point now where I want to give back."

The Secret Marathon

Hall reached out to Parnell after reading an article on his work with the "secret marathon" in Afghanistan in 2016. Parnell ran a marathon with a group of Afghan women for whom running or exercising in public could be dangerous due to widespread religious extremism in the country.

Parnell called it "the greatest adventure of his life" in the 2023 Rotary Magazine article Hall read. It's far from the only adventure he has had and was one of many times he has used his platform to give back.

Since he started distance running in 2003 at the age of 47, Parnell has been part of breaking five Guinness world records. They include the longest game of lacrosse and the largest game of ice hockey. The lacrosse game lasted 24 hours and the ice hockey game boasted 374 participants, half of whom were under the age of 12.

Parnell also ran the equivalent of more than 250 marathons in 2010. Most of those runs were not official marathons.

"Each week, I would go to a local school and run 100 times around their soccer field," he said.

Even those makeshift marathons turned into opportunities to give back.

"At lunchtime, (the children) would come out and do a couple of loops," he said. "I'd keep running until the end of the day and they'd come out and do the last two laps ... What I really loved was, at the end they'd give me their dollars and their change to help the other children who aren't as well off as they are."

He ended up doing this at 60 different schools during the year.

Parnell has also climbed Kilimanjaro in 21 hours. Most people take more than five days to complete the 60-plus-mile round-trip trek.

He has also run ultramarathons of up to 100 miles, participated in the Ironman Triathlon and bicycled across Africa. He attributes his success in endurance events to the mental toughness it takes to keep going.

"I am good at doing long, slow, boring things," he said. "For some reason, I can keep going and going."

When a sibling challenges you, you don't say no

Parnell's journey began at age 47 when his brother challenged him to run a marathon with him.

"The only reason I started was because my younger brother challenged me to a marathon," he said. "When a sibling challenges you, you don't say 'no.'"

After his first run, he found he liked it. He qualified for the Boston Marathon in his second. That was when he realized he was good at it.

"I love all kinds of sports, but I was one of those kids who never got picked for the team," Parnell said. "Then I tried this running thing at 47, ran a marathon. I found I enjoyed it and I wanted to do another one, so I joined a running club ... In Toronto, just six months later, I ran a Boston qualifier."

In addition to his work with Afghan women, Parnell has also raised more than \$1.3 million for Right to Play, a humanitarian program that educates and empowers children through sports. He also gave a TEDx Talk called "Life is a Relay" in 2017 and has written two books, "The Secret Marathon" and "The Ageless Athlete."

Two weeks before he was due in Catawba County, Parnell was working with a "Putting for Polio" event in his home province of Alberta, Canada.

As a Rotarian, Parnell says it's all about service above self for him.

"In life, you don't have to do a lot, but you do have to do something," he said. "So, what's the something you're going to do?"

Broadening your horizons

At the event on Oct. 9, Parnell will have a brief opportunity to speak to the students gathered for the race. He said he usually tailors his message to each individual audience so he won't know exactly what he will say until the afternoon of the event. He has some ideas of the type of message he will bring, though.

"I'll be talking about giving back," he said. "I'll be talking about broadening your horizons. I'll be talking about looking outside of your own community. Obviously, we do things for our own community, but maybe think on a little bit of a bigger scale."

His time on stage will be limited, but Parnell will have plenty of time to spend with the runners individually. He said, for him, that's the most effective way to encourage or inspire someone.

"I'm all about interaction," he said. "It's really about what they think and what they're going to do."

Making the most of his time in Hickory

Parnell won't be able to run in this year's race. Now 68, he hasn't been able to run since being diagnosed with a hernia in 2022. He had surgery over the summer, though, and expects to be able to run again in a few weeks. For the last two and a half years he has kept active swimming, biking and walking.

"Fingers crossed in another month, I can start back running," he said. "I tried to run with it, but it was just too painful."

Parnell will arrive in Hickory on Monday evening, Oct. 7. On Tuesday, he will give a presentation to a group of Afghan refugees enrolled at Lenoir-Rhyne University at a private luncheon. In the afternoon, he will present to the LR cross country and track and field athletes and coaches, and at 6 p.m., the university will show the documentary based on "The Secret Marathon" in Drendel Auditorium. Parnell will also be on hand for a question-and-answer session.

On Wednesday, Oct. 9, Parnell will present to the Hickory Rotary Club during a luncheon. He will then be on hand for the cross country invitational. The John F. Hall United Way Cross Country Invitational will take place at 3 p.m. at Southside Park in Newton.

Parnell also said he has done his homework on the Hickory area. He said some of the stories he has read and the local history he has learned has inspired him in return.

"What I read about was 'the miracle of Hickory' in 1944 when there was an outbreak of polio," Parnell said. "The community got together with the March of Dimes and they put together a facility to take care of the kids who were affected within 54 hours ... The Red Cross said it was one of the best examples of a community coming together to help."

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Local schools and businesses collecting items for hurricane relief

October 4, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Sharon Myers PAXTON MEDIA GROUP| Section: Thomasville Times | 535 Words OpenURL Link

DAVIDSON COUNTY — Several schools, churches and businesses in Davidson County are collecting items to help people in western North Carolina following the destruction caused by the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

South Davidson Middle and High School, Northwest Elementary School, Central Davidson Middle School, North Davidson Middle School, Southwood Elementary School and Tyro Middle School announced that they will be collecting items. Requested items include water, baby formula and diapers, non-perishable foods, blankets, towels, pillows, tarps, hygiene products, dog/cat food, batteries, flashlights, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer.

More information about specific drop-off locations and hours can be found on the schools' individual webpages or social media sites.

The United Way of Davidson County has two drop off locations at Richard Childress Racing at 425 Industrial Drive in Welcome and the Davidson County Sheriff's Department located at 2511 U.S. 64 east in Lexington. Residents also can make a donation at the state website at https://bit.ly/3XSJDrW.

Three bakeries in the county are also collecting disaster relief items, Fancy Pastry at 407 E. Center St. in Lexington; Sinfully Delicious at 28 W. Center St. in Lexington; and Cupcake Cuties at 8363 N.C. 109 west in Wallburg.

Three N.C. Farm Bureau locations in Davidson County also are taking donations. They are the North Davidson office located at 661 Friedberg Church Road; the Lexington office located at 2456 Old U.S. 64 east and the Thomasville office located at 23 Cedar Lodge Road in Thomasville.

Several local relators in Davidson County have also joined forces to collect items, Solid Rock Realty located at 2567 Johnson Town Road in Thomasville; Allred & Co. located at 4704 Archdale Road in Trinity and eXp Realty located at 307 N Main St. in Lexington.

There are also several churches throughout the county that have announced they will be collecting relief items. Most churches have information on drop-off locations on their web or social media sites.

High Rock Church located at located at 135 Lowes Blvd. in Lexington is taking donations, except clothing, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

There are also some statewide and national organizations collecting money to go towards helping Western North Carolina residents.

Donations can be made to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund at https://pay.payitgov.com/nc. All donations made will go to purchasing items for disaster relief.

The American Red Cross is collecting donations at www.redcross.org/donate/dr/hurricane-helene.html/ Other options for donating: Call 1-800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767) or Text HELENE to 90999.

Samaritan's Purse enlists thousands of volunteers to provide emergency aid to victims of tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters in the United States. Donations can be made at www.samaritanspurse.org/article/pray-for-those-in-helenes-path/

Donations to the Salvation Army of the Carolinas can be made at

give.helpsalvationarmy.org/give/166081/#!/donation/checkout or call 1-800-SAL-ARMY.

Baptists on Mission have set up feeding units at First Baptist Boone and Biltmore Baptist in Arden. In addition, they are setting up recovery sites in Boone, Spruce Pine, Hendersonville and Marion. Donations can be made at baptistsonmission.org/Mission-Projects/By-Mission-Type/Disaster-Relief/Hurricane-Helene/Donations

Operation Airdrop has set up operations at Concord Regional Airport. The organization is a Texas-based non-profit dedicated to deliver essential supplies to areas cut off from traditional aid routes impacted by natural disasters. To dontate go to www.operation-airdrop.com/hurricane-helene

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HP Christian rolls past S. Wake, 48-7

October 4, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: GREER SMITH SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE Section: Newsletters | 406 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH POINT — Playing for the first time in two weeks, High Point Christian's football team was rested and raring to go on Friday.

The Cougars scored touchdowns on their first four possessions, effectively deciding the outcome, and trounced South Wake 48-7 at Aderholt Field.

HPCA didn't play last week when its contest against Harrells was canceled because of Hurricane Helene. The Cougars also had an open date Sept. 13 then played on Sept. 20.

"We had two weeks of practice, so we were prepared," HPCA head coach Ryan Rocha said. "The kids executed and then we finished hard in the fourth quarter. So, it was definitely a great job by the team."

HPCA ran for 215 yards and quarterback Tyler Eley threw for 207 and three scores.

Jaylen Moore ran for 132 yards and caught Eley's touchdown throws of 15, 6 and 20 yards.

Danarius Gibson ran for 38 yards that included scoring rushes from 2 and 6 yards out. Leo Ruffert, an exchange student from Germany, rushed for 53 yards, all on the final scoring drive that ended with his 3-yard touchdown, which set off a big celebration.

Toot Clay returned a kickoff 78 yards for a touchdown that put the Cougars up 35-7 just before halftime. It came on the ensuing play after South Wake got its touchdown when Alex Panrell picked off Eley's pass into the flat inside the Lions 5 and returned it for a touchdown.

HPCA (6-0, 1-0) was originally scheduled to play Asheville Christian but ACA dropped out of HPCA's football conference and South Wake was found as a late replacement. The Cougars moved the ball with little trouble on its four drives before the Lions made adjustments, particularly getting pressure on Eley, who wound up with two interceptions.

The Cougars held the Lions to just under 100 yards total offense and kept them out of HPCA territory until the third quarter.

"We try to pride ourselves in tackles, turnovers and pursuit," Rocha said. "The last couple of games, we felt we were making mental mistakes and letting big plays occur. What was nice was not only seeing starters setting the tone, but also seeing the 2s and 3s come in and toe that line. It was great job, everybody played. I'm pretty satisfied."

HPCA will host Clear Dot Charter of Columbia, South Carolina, next week. Clear Dot replaces a contest at the Asheville School, which has been forced to cancel games because of the aftermath from Hurricane Helene.

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Storm victims need our faith, hope and love

October 4, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Life | 762 Words OpenURL Link

Most of you know that I am a weather fanatic. I am watching storms days before weathermen on TV mention them. I watch the long-term models and keep track of current developments. My parents thought that I might pursue becoming a meteorologist, but for me it is more of an obsession.

I was watching Helene when it was just a cluster of thunderstorms down in the Caribbean. I was amazed at how consistent models were with the path of the storm and how the storm followed the predicted path. Very few storms show such consistency between model runs and between the various models.

The suffering that people are enduring from this storm is unimaginable. They desperately need more than our prayers. People need physical assistance to help them recover. The recovery effort will take months. For some roads and many bridges it could take years. The mental and emotional anguish the victims are experiencing is incomprehensible.

The damage from this one storm runs through multiple states. Helene is not a name that many people will soon forget. Some of my readers have suffered from this storm, whether it was the loss of power or trees down in your yard. We all probably know people who are going through some very rough times right now.

I woke up Friday morning to the strongest winds and the heaviest rains. I watched out my windows as the storm raged. In the end, we had standing water in our yard and the cable and internet were out. We were among the lucky ones. The lack of news and internet kept us unaware of the devastation that others were enduring.

When our services returned, we were stunned by the pictures and videos of all the damage in the mountains, especially in the Asheville area. I reached out to family and friends and was relieved to know that while they may be struggling, they are OK. The images I have seen have kept me praying late at night and very early in the morning.

While those who suffered the huge losses need to be a priority in our prayers, we also need to remember to pray for the front line workers, utility workers, rescue workers, emergency and firefighter workers, and now the organizations who going in to offer aid and support. Pray for the supply chains to get resources into these hard-hit communities. People need the basics of life. They also need a loving and caring shoulder to cry on.

If you are planning to offer help, please research and make sure you are supporting reputable organizations. Sadly, there will be many scammers out there trying to take advantage of people who are already suffering. There are many ways you can help people you have never met through churches and other aid organizations who are on the ground helping in practical ways. Don't forget that there may be neighbors or people in your own community who are also suffering and in need of your help.

The people who are suffering right now need faith, hope, and love. Jesus is broken-hearted over the loss, pain and suffering of the people who have been affected by this storm. This is an opportunity for THE CHURCH to rise up and show those who have been affected that God cares deeply about what they are experiencing. We get to be His hands, feet and mouth to the broken and wounded. We need to bring the light of hope to their dark world. We need to let them know that they are loved by coming alongside them in their hour of need. They need an impartation of our faith that will help them endure and make it through this tragedy.

I want to encourage you to do your part, whether it is prayer, buying and sending supplies, donating money, or finding another way to help show the love of God to those in need. Helping a neighbor in need is just as important as sending aid to an unknown victim. Listening to someone's story and offering words of love, compassion and

encouragement can be just as valuable as sending aid. Both can change the life of another person and demonstrate to them that they are not alone in their hour of deepest need. Many people who are suffering wonder, "Where is God in the midst of my suffering?" The answer can be in the eyes of His people. We have the opportunity to demonstrate God's love by both our words and actions. Be light in the darkness. Show love through your deeds. Share your faith and hope. Be THE CHURCH. Pray!

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NC is red hot as election battleground state

October 4, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Paul B. Johnson ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER | Section: News | 637 Words OpenURL Link

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The storm hit traditionally Republican and Democratic communities," Lenoir said. "Watauga and Buncombe counties voted for Biden in 2020, while the neighboring counties went for Trump. The disaster did not pick sides."

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

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

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Anne Locklear named Wagram's town clerk

October 4, 2024 | Laurinburg Exchange, The (NC) Author: Tomeka Sinclair Editor| Section: news | 374 Words OpenURL Link

WAGRAM — The mayor of Wagram announced Thursday that Anne Locklear will take over the reins as the town's new clerk.

Locklear was present at the meeting and shadowed former town clerk Phyllis Lowery, who returned from retirement to serve in the interim role of clerk following Roosevelt Henegan's termination in June.

"I know that our interim clerk is glad to see you," Wagram Mayor Barbara Pierce told Locklear on Thursday.

The Lumber River Council of Governments assisted with the clerk search process. Pierce said that the interviews were conducted on Sept. 16. The interviewing team consisted of Pierce, Lowery and Commissioner Lori Reynolds.

"Checking her resume, she met the qualifications the interview team was looking for. We had a rating sheet. No one read anyone's rating sheet and we all came out with the same rating so that says something about her interview," Pierce said. "We're just glad to have you. Scotland County will hate to lose you."

Locklear most recently served as the lead library tech at the Scotland County Memorial Library.

"I would just like to say I'm excited for this opportunity and I'm looking forward to working with everyone," Locklear said.

Locklear will start on Oct. 14.

"At the appropriate time we will get you sworn in and get you trained," Pierce said.

In other business, the board of commissioners unanimously voted to allow Chief of Police James Laviner a leave of absence to assist with search and rescue efforts in Western North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Leviner will leave the week of Oct. 7-Oct. 12.

The board also voted to allow Laviner the use of his state vehicle.

Pierce called for the Wagram community to assist with providing three meals a day for Leviner while out west by making monetary donations.

"He didn't ask but I did check with [Scotland Public Safety director Robert] Sampson. They have to provide their own meals and their own water," Pierce said.

The death toll from Hurricane Helene soared to 215 people on Thursday as more victims were found, making Helene the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Katrina in 2005, according to the Associated Press. Roughly half the victims were in North Carolina, while dozens more were killed in South Carolina and Georgia. Hundreds of people remain unaccounted for.

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McDowell High School fields, courts safe after Hurricane Helene; conference fall sports season in limbo

October 4, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Dan Crawley | Section: Football | 576 Words OpenURL Link

One week after the remnants of Hurricane Helene ravaged McDowell County and the rest of western North Carolina, the 2024 high school fall sports season remains on pause for McDowell High School and the rest of the Mountain Athletic Conference with no immediate signs of a return.

Schools in McDowell, Burke and Buncombe counties, along with Asheville City Schools, have been out the entire week as these districts are some of the hardest-hit locations from Helene. School administrators from McDowell County Schools began to return on Thursday, and other employees started to roll in Friday as the school system begins to evaluate its campuses for a possible return to classes.

According to McDowell High School Athletic Director Joe Cash, no substantial damage has been observed to any of the athletic fields or to the gymnasium on the school campus. Sitting on the top of a ridge has allowed the school to escape any floodwaters from the Catawba River.

"No issues were found with any of our fields, the tennis courts and in both gyms," Cash said. "Our location keeps us generally safe from floodwaters. We closely monitor our facilities during impactful weather events. We really came out well compared to surrounding schools."

While the area of the McDowell High School's campus was spared from significant damage and utilities are being restored, the same cannot be said for the grounds at some of the Buncombe County schools.

"From what we have heard, its bad in Buncombe," added Cash. "Obviously, with what has happened over the last seven days, it's going to be a while before sports is being played again."

This week was the scheduled homecoming for McDowell High School as they were originally slated to play North Buncombe. The Titans (1-4, 0-1 MAC 4A/3A) played the last game on Sept. 20 at T.C. Roberson and was on its bye week when Helene moved through on Sept. 27. The team has five more conference games on its schedule to finish out the 2024 season.

Other fall sports like men's soccer, women's tennis, women's golf and volleyball were well into the league schedule with state playoffs slated to begin later this month. It may be hard for McDowell and all MAC schools to fit an additional two or three games into a schedule with multiple outings per week already on the schedule.

In the case of football, some teams could potentially play two or more times in a 10-day period should the current fall sports schedule remain in place.

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association said in a press release earlier this week that the board of directors will reach out to those in the impacted region this week to get information on conditions before coming up with a plan.

"I'm not sure one week would do it," said NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker earlier this week. "But that's a decision that has to be made by our board members. As a staff, we want to huddle up and look at what we have found and see what we can come up with to present to the board, but we want to make sure our board members (from the regions most affected) can be on the Zoom with us because they have boots-on-the-ground knowledge, and we need to get their perspective."

The NCHSAA playoffs are scheduled to begin in about two weeks, with girls' tennis (Oct. 14), volleyball (Oct. 19), girls' golf (Oct. 21) and cross-country (Oct. 26) up first. Football playoffs are scheduled to begin Nov. 8.

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Food Lion in Marion set to reopen Friday, one week after being flooded by Helene

October 4, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Mike Conley | Section: Business | 206 Words OpenURL Link

A week after it was under water due to Hurricane Helene, the Food Lion grocery store in Marion will reopen for business Friday afternoon.

Lisa Crawford, a spokesperson for the Food Lion chain, said the Marion store will reopen Friday, Oct. 4.

"In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Food Lion expresses our deepest sympathies and support to our neighbors affected in the towns and cities we serve," Crawford said. "We know our neighbors depend on us to provide fresh, affordable groceries.

"We thank our customers for their support while we work to ensure our neighbors have what they need to nourish their families. While the availability of some items in the store may be impacted, we remain committed to restocking our store shelves as quickly as we can."

Food Lion said the store, located at 1210 N.C. 70 West in Marion, can accept credit card or cash transactions. The store staff has tested the system and it's working, Crawford said.

She added that Friday's hours, 4-9 p.m., were considered a soft opening, and the store will resume regular hours as it moves forward. The store's regular hours are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Crawford said the company is bringing in merchandise to make sure that the store is stocked as before.

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100 more missing person reports in one day in McDowell County; Marion water supply still low

October 4, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Mike Conley| Section: Local | 525 Words OpenURL Link

As of Friday, McDowell County has received 440 missing person reports since Hurricane Helene hit, up from 330 people on Thursday.

As more people get power and cellphone service, more reports are coming in, McDowell County Emergency Management said in a release Friday. Of the 440 reported missing, 347 had been found safely as of Friday.

"Our dedicated teams are actively working to gain access to isolated communities, ensuring that no one is left behind, and that commodities continue to reach them until access is established," emergency services said.

On Friday, the county reported its first confirmed hurricane-related death. The county did not release the name of the victim. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Resources said a woman was found dead in a collapsed home on Thursday in McDowell County.

Emergency services said the significant increase in missing person reports highlights the importance of the search efforts.

"We recognize that there may be duplicate reports, but we are committed to treating each report individually until we can confirm the status of everyone involved," emergency services said. "The McDowell County Sheriff's Office, in collaboration with federal, state and local law enforcement teams, continues to work diligently on the remaining 93 reported cases, ensuring that every lead is thoroughly investigated."

Water in Marion

The water supply in Marion remains low after the remnants of Hurricane Helene impacted McDowell County.

Water usage still is restricted to essential needs such as cooking, drinking and bathing, the city of Marion said in a release Friday. A boil advisory is not in effect at this time. Nonessential uses, including outdoor cleaning, car washing and using washing machines are still prohibited, the city said.

The city is working to restore the water system, the release said.

Cleaning streets, picking up debris

City staff and multiple contractors are working to clear debris from Marion streets, the city said. As Duke Energy removes downed power lines, city crews will clean streets once streets are safe.

"Our teams remain committed to restoring full access to all streets as quickly and safely as possible, and we appreciate the public's patience during this process," the city said.

Brush and debris collection is expected to take several weeks, the city said.

"Some areas may be more difficult to reach, and the sheer amount of debris has significantly extended the timeline," the city said.

FEMA help centers

McDowell County has two FEMA recovery centers, emergency management said. The centers enable people to speak with FEMA representatives, register for disaster assistance, get claim updates and ask questions.

The centers are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

McDowell Senior Center, upper level, 100 Spaulding Road, Marion.Glenwood Baptist Church, 155 Glenwood Baptist Church Road, Marion.

McDowell County Schools update

McDowell County Schools asked all employees to report to schools with power on Friday if it was safe to do so. All but four McDowell County schools had power as of Thursday, the school system said in a Facebook post.

Old Fort Elementary, Pleasant Gardens Elementary, North Cove Elementary and Marion Elementary were without power.

The school system said it would announce a plan for students by Sunday at 4 p.m.

N.C. Highway 226 closed

As of Friday, N.C. Highway 226 is closed at Maces Park, according to N.C. State Highway Patrol.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Conley, '100 more missing person reports in one day in McDowell County; Marion water supply still low', *McDowell News, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04C2EEA013838>



Blue Ridge Parkway closed in Virginia and North Carolina as crews assess damage from Helene

October 4, 2024 | Montgomery Herald (NC) Author: National Park Service | Section: News | 207 Words OpenURL Link

The National Park Service has released that the entire length of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia is closed as crews continue their assessment of the damage from Hurricane Helene.

The National Park Service has deployed its Eastern Incident Management Team, which brings specialized skills and resources to support the parkway with employee emergency needs, emergency stabilization of affected park resources, and damage assessments. As of Thursday afternoon, 250 National Park Service employees from 32 states and the District of Columbia are working with Blue Ridge Parkway staff in the recovery efforts.

National Park Service assessment teams are still completing their initial inspections of the parkway, acquiring the data they will need to analyze the full impact of Hurricane Helene. Based on what the teams have seen so far, significant, and in some cases catastrophic, damage has occurred along the parkway, particularly from milepost 280 to milepost 469.

In the coming weeks, the assessment teams will utilize the data from their inspections to determine the full extent of the damage including the timeline and cost estimates for repairs. A projected reopening date of any section of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina has not yet been established; assessment crews are finishing their work in Virginia.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

National Park Service, 'Blue Ridge Parkway closed in Virginia and North Carolina as crews assess damage from Helene', Montgomery Herald (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04C5F0FD37BB0>



Blue Cross NC, Blue Cross NC Foundation commit \$2.5 million to Helene relief

October 4, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff report| Section: Mountaintimes | 657 Words OpenURL Link

DURHAM — In the wake of destruction caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) is taking action.

Blue Cross NC is working with local organizations, as well as state, federal and local officials, to understand the needs of their communities and determine how they can best support them with immediate relief, recovery, and long-term rebuilding. As part of this work, Blue Cross NC and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation (Blue Cross NC Foundation) are donating more than \$2.5 million to local, regional and statewide relief and recovery efforts, including support for food, shelter, and supplies.

"Our family, friends and neighbors in western North Carolina are facing unbelievable loss, and we are here for them – making it easier to get the health care they need and providing immediate relief and supplies," said Blue Cross NC CEO Dr. Tunde Sotunde. "We will continue to be there for our customers, employees, and communities as we navigate the challenges ahead together. This is how we take care of each other in North Carolina."

Working With Local Organizations

Community organizations have mobilized to get resources to North Carolinians in need. Blue Cross NC, the Healthy Blue Medicaid managed care plan and the Blue Cross NC Foundation have partnered with organizations on the ground in western North Carolina to ensure they have the support they need to continue their work.

For example, food is a critical need for those impacted. Darnell Farm is a working farm in Swain County that serves as a hub for prescription food boxes. Healthy Blue provided funding to purchase milk, bread and food supplies to serve 2,000 families. Diaper Bank of NC is distributing diapers and other baby supplies across western North Carolina. Healthy Blue purchased 900 units of formula for distribution through the Diaper Bank, helping to meet an urgent need in the region. WNC Food Systems Coalition is distributing emergency food supplies in McDowell, Buncombe and Macon counties, and Interfaith Assistance Ministry is working with NC Medicaid to provide food and supplies to Henderson County families.

Ensuring vulnerable children and families are safe and supported is also a need in western North Carolina. Foster Family Alliance is actively helping resource families in need of assistance due to the impact of Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina. Healthy Blue partnered with them to provide short term housing needs for foster families displaced by flooding. Crossnore Communities for Children provides homes for foster children in Avery, Henderson and Forsyth counties, as well as training and support for families. Healthy Blue rented a generator to provide power to a cottage housing eight young children in Avery County.

Supporting Regional & Statewide Efforts

The Blue Cross NC Foundation is donating \$1 million to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund at United Way of North Carolina for rapid response, recovery and long-term rebuilding. Additional funding is being provided to the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the Red Cross and the Diaper Bank of North Carolina.

Community Support

Blue Cross NC is also using its resources across the state to help and connecting employees to donation and volunteer opportunities. Blue Cross NC's Corporate Center in Boone is open to the public to charge their devices, use the bathroom and access the internet. Computers are available for requesting disaster assistance, contacting

loved ones and other urgent needs. In collaboration with county leadership, Healthy Blue's mobile medic is also regularly transporting supplies to the region.

Helping Members Access Care

To provide immediate relief, Blue Cross NC is increasing the availability of health care services and helping members access the care they need as quickly as possible. More information on these actions is available at www.bluecrossnc.com/helene, and doctors, hospitals and other providers can find the latest updates on the Provider News Page.

Additional updates and developments will be shared at www.bluecrossnc.com/helene. Members can also call the number on the back of their member ID cards for help getting care.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff report, 'Blue Cross NC, Blue Cross NC Foundation commit \$2.5 million to Helene relief', *Mountain Times, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C14880D8C33008



Popular Valle Country Fair, Woolly Worm Festival canceled due to storm

October 4, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff Report| Section: Mountaintimes| 537 Words OpenURL Link

The destructive path of Hurricane Helene has forced the cancellation of two popular High Country events as the community works to recover from the devastation.

According to organizers, the 46th Annual Valle Country Fair will not take place on Oct. 19 as originally planned.

The event's co-sponsors, Holy Cross Episcopal Church and the Valle Crucis Conference Center, are working on alternative plans to provide necessary human and financial resources to the non-profit agencies and families in need that we so faithfully serve.

"In the meantime, please keep our entire region in your thoughts and prayers," organizers said in a release. "Godspeed to all the first responders and local service agencies who are working mightily in this time of unprecedented need."

Following the announcement of other closings and cancellations across Avery County and the region, officials announced on Wednesday, Oct. 2, that the 47th Annual Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival, a tradition that attracts thousands annually to the High Country, has been canceled as a result of the devastating damage inflicted by the recent storm Helene.

"It is with pure heartbreak that I bring you the official decision that the 47th Annual Woolly Worm Festival has been canceled," Festival Chairperson Victoria Bowman shared in an email to the community. "The main goal for this year's festival was to connect our entire community to showcase how wonderfully unique Avery County truly is. We wanted so badly to be able to share our magic with you all, but we simply can't do that justice when so many of our locals are suffering."

Bowman noted that the spirit that drives the festival is being exemplified by the connection and galvanized heart of Avery County and its people.

"I suppose the irony in this horrific circumstance is that we are indeed showcasing the county to the world, maybe not with racing worms and funnel cakes, but with the strength and resilience that our people have. Mountain folks are truly built differently; they take care of one another regardless of circumstance," Bowman added. "I experienced it firsthand as my neighbors sheltered and fed us as our property was destroyed before our eyes. Everywhere I look, I see examples of selflessness, determination and tenacity. From our county and town leaders to our first responders, linemen and local business owners, everyone has jumped in to help. We are simply blessed to call this place home and I know we will build back stronger than ever."

Bowman recognized the logistical complications of the festival's cancellation, but provided some insight to plans moving forward.

"We realize that there are financial ramifications for a lot of our attendees with this cancellation, but we do hope that you make plans to attend next year instead. When we are back on our feet, our businesses will need your full support to help regain what has been lost in this," Bowman explained. "The planning committee is dedicated to maintaining the magic of this weekend for our vendors, volunteers, locals and tourists alike. The 2025 festival will be all that more special because of what has transpired this past week. Please be patient as we navigate through the e-ticket refunding process. Vendors, Sponsors and Partners will be contacted directly with a move forward plan as our communication infrastructure is rebuilt."

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Report, 'Popular Valle Country Fair, Woolly Worm Festival canceled due to storm', *Mountain Times, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C14880D252CFA8>



Response to Helene will shape Haywood's heritage

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Kathy Ross| Section: News | 609 Words OpenURL Link

As surely as the floods of Helene redefined the landscape, the people here will redefine Haywood County by their response.

"This county will be defined by our response to Hurricane Helene, how we treat each other," said Kevin Ensley, chairman of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners. "216 years of mountain heritage has been founded on neighbors helping neighbors."

That challenge was issued during a press conference of Haywood County's local government and emergency management leaders. Ensley is living the message: three people are living in his home who lost everything in the floods of Helene.

In just the past four years, Haywood has weathered a pandemic, the death and devastation of Tropical Storm Fred, the closure of the Pactiv-Evergreen paper mill. Don't tarnish that story of resilience and kindness now, Ensley said.

"We are Haywood strong for a reason. I would encourage the residents of this county, the neighbors who are helping neighbors, the people who are coming alongside those that are hurting and don't have resources, keep doing that," Sheriff Bill Wilke added. "If our response to Helene involves fighting or disregard for the law or turning on our friends and neighbors then that's how we will be defined."

It's not a perfect record, so far. The Sheriff's Office reported two arrests related to looting as of Monday afternoon. Reports were not available by press time from police departments. Contrast those two arrests however, to the multiple thousands who are pouring their resources into their county's rescue and recovery.

The challenge for Haywood will be for its citizens to maintain that grace and courage for a long-haul recovery. For now, the county's best colors are shining through the mud.

A multitude of others are living up to the challenge, as reflected in an emergency meeting of the Clyde Board of Aldermen on Monday. New Covenant Church is organizing volunteers to assist with deliveries of needed supplies. Multiple restaurants have fed volunteers and town staff at no charge, as have private individuals. Alderwoman Amy Russell arrived in one neighborhood to check on a friend and found a man and his wife had purchased stacks of pizzas and were carrying them to folks who were helping clean out flooded homes. Another business offered its services for debris pickup at no charge.

Legions of residents with machinery have been rebuilding washed out roads and driveways.

"We've had private citizens that were out fixing DOT roads so their neighbors could get in and out," Ensley said.
"They aren't getting paid anything, they are just doing it out of the love for their community."

A massive landslide closed the road on Little East Fork until a resident used his excavator to clear a path so a sick neighbor could be transported to medical care, he shared.

"There are a lot of Haywood County people — firemen, first responders, law enforcement, power crews, public works, DOT, who knows how many — loving on Haywood County people, trying to get us back to a better place. I want to make sure everybody is supporting those folks," Haywood Emergency Services Director Travis Donaldson said. "If you those folks out, love of them. Take care of them. Pat them on the back."

Waynesville Town Council Member Anthony Sutton had a similar message during an emergency town meeting Monday night.

"We need to have extra patience with one another and extra understanding. Please be compassionate with one another and give a little extra love to one another because it goes a long way," Sutton said.

He teared up talking about the heroism of the law enforcement officers and firefighters.

"Thank you so much. You rescued my family," Sutton said, battling back tears. "You have no idea how much I appreciate it."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Kathy Ross, 'Response to Helene will shape Haywood's heritage', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C00B3A981C7C40



Helene's death toll in Haywood rises to five

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Kathy Ross and Aarik Long | Section: News | 1014 Words OpenURL Link

Haywood County's death toll at the hands of Helene has risen to five.

The county's fifth fatality was a woman who lived in a trailer park in the Hyder Mountain community along the banks of the Pigeon River downstream of Clyde, according to neighbors who spoke with The Mountaineer Friday afternoon.

Neighbors say the woman refused to evacuate despite pleas from firefighters and neighbors because of her nine dogs. Her trailer was lifted up by rising flood waters and swept down river during the storm.

Her trailer then burst apart when it hit a bridge over the river a couple hundred yards downstream.

Amid the rising flood waters, Xavier Perez was among a group of neighbors who helped the woman's husband to safety through a window of the trailer before it was swept away.

Perez, along with his wife Janet Dimas and their 4-year-old daughter Nathalie, evacuated about 5 a.m. last Friday when fire department sirens and lights alerted them to immediate danger. They drove to safety higher up on Hyder Mountain Road, and after leaving their vehicle on higher ground, they walked back down to the park to help neighbors move their equipment.

That's when he saw the lights on in one of his neighbor's trailer surrounded by water and threatening to overturn. Perez and other neighbors scrambled to reach the trailer. The husband was at a window trying to get out and they helped pull him to safety.

It "already almost flipped when he jumped out, and his wife was inside," Perez said.

Both Perez and Dimas watched, unable to intervene, as the waters swept the home downstream where it smashed into the bridge and disintegrated, Perez said.

The rescued husband said he and his wife had refused to evacuate because they would not leave their nine dogs. Five of the dogs survived and were found behind a neighbor's home. The woman and four of the dogs were lost to the flood.

The woman's body was recovered several day later from Waterville, where a dam straddles the Pigeon River at the Tennessee stateline.

Haywood County Sheriff Bill Wilke announced that the death toll had risen from four to five during a storm press briefing on Friday. He declined to comment on the nature of any of the deaths, but did refer to someone who would not evacuate.

"Sadly, I know of an incident where someone refused to leave," Wilke said.

Authorities are not yet releasing the names any of the five victims at this time. While next of kin have been notified in all five instances, there could be extended family who are not yet aware, Wilke said.

"Out of respect to the extended families who still may not have communications, we are not going to release the names just yet," Wilke said.

Here is what The Mountaineer has learned from sources in the community about where the other four fatalities occurred.

A man in a truck was swept away while trying to flee rising flood waters at the Somers Dream campground along Jonathan Creek.

Another fatality occurred along Jonathan Creek. Witnesses reported seeing a man floating down Jonathan Creek on a recliner until it collided with a bridge.

A body was pulled from the Pigeon River in Bethel along N.C. 215 in the Stamey Cove vicinity.

A fourth individual was killed when looking for escaped cattle Friday night in the Lovejoy area of Lake Logan. His side-by-side encountered a washed out area that was compromised by the storm and collapsed beneath him, which is why he death is considered a storm-related fatality.

While five deaths have been confirmed, the number could have been much higher had it not been for the precautions and evacuations encouraged by emegrency personel, town leaders and county officials leading up to the storm.

"The fact that we haven't found more is remarkable to me," Wilke said. "It didn't happen by accident. It happened because the people that are now working to recover from this event were working long before it started."

Unlike other areas of WNC, Haywood County went through flooding in 2004 and 2021. Because of that, the county mobilized massive public awareness campaign prior to Helene's arrival urging residents to prepare.

An evacuation plan was then put into action starting Thursday and lasting through the night — with emergency officials, firefighters, police and even public works crews going door-to-door to make sure those in the projected path of flooding had heeded the warnings and got out.

While there were five lives lost in Haywood, 168 deaths were prevented by swift water rescue teams, said Travis Donaldson, the county's emergency management director.

The swiftwater rescues were conducted by local fire departments, law enforcement, search and rescue, with aid from an out-of-town task force.

"That's potentially 168 lives that were saved with these resources. Who knows the numbers of private citizens taking care of rescues themselves?" Donaldson said.

Welfare checks

As of Friday morning, over 900 requests for welfare checks had come in. A welfare check is when a friend or family member was unable to reach a loved one and asked emergency officials to check on them. Many of the requests were due to the lack of cell and phone service in the days immediately following the storm that prevented out-of-town family from contacting their loved ones.

Of those requests, 882 had been completed. There are still 39 individuals who haven't been located by loved ones.

"The rest are currently in process," Wilke said.

Donaldson emphasized it doesn't necessarily mean those individuals have met harm, but just that the family haven't heard from them yet.

While nearly all of the welfare check requests have been fulfilled, search efforts are not done.

"This is a massive event," Wilke said. "There are still very remote areas that we have to check. We hope and presume that we would have had a call or had a family member let us know, but we can't be sure. We still have to get to these very remote areas that may or may not have power."

The sheriff anticipated these efforts will continue for the next couple of weeks.

"We will be moving to a full recovery phase in the next one to two weeks," Wilke said.

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Response to Helene will shape Haywood's heritage

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Kathy Ross | Section: On Premise | 36 Words OpenURL Link

"This county will be defined by our response to Hurricane Helene, how we treat each other. 216 years of mountain heritage has been founded on neighbors helping neighbors," said Kevin Ensley, chairman of the county commissioners.

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Mega list of Haywood flood assistance resources: supplies, food, aid, donations and more

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 1517 Words OpenURL Link

The following is a running list of food and supply distribution sites, resources for storm victims, as well as volunteer and donation opportunities. The list is updated daily online at themountaineer.com by clicking "Disaster Assistance Resources."

If you have something to add to this list, email bjohnson@themountaineer.com.

Central hotline

Haywood County has set up a hotline for all things Helene. The Emergency Call Center can answer questions, direct people to the right place for the information they're looking for and provide information on resources. Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. daily. Call 828-356-2020.

Flood clean-up assistance

If you or someone you know needs help cleaning up damage from Hurricane Helene at your home/residence or house of worship, call Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386 to ask for help.

Crisis Cleanup is 100% free service that connects volunteers from local and national relief organizations, community groups, and faith communities who may be able to assist with mucking out after floods, moving debris to curbs, tarping roofs, and chain-sawing downed trees.

Supply distribution for flood victims

Essential supplies will be distributed at the following locations. There will be food, water, baby supplies, pet food, clothing, household supplies and cleaning supplies. Donations are also accepted at all sites.

Woodland Baptist Church from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday; and 2-6 p.m. Sunday. Located at 545 Crabtree Rd (on N.C. 209 across from the Smoky Mountain Event Center).

Maggie Valley Pavilion from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Friday. Located at 3987 Soco Rd.

IP Sports Complex in Canton from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily (seven days a week). This site is being run by the town of Canton, with food, water, household supplies and more. Located at 305 Silkwood Dr, Canton. Shower trailer, and hot meals by Eight Days of Hope from noon-5 p.m. daily.

New Covenant Church from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Located at 767 Lee Rd, Clyde.

Canton Central United Methodist Church from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. Supplies include food, yard tools, medical and first aid, toiletries, propane, cleaning supplies and more.

Dellwood Baptist Church on Jonathan Creek from 9 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Located at 115 Hall Dr. (beside Jonathan Valley Elementary.)

First United Methodist Church from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. weekdays. FUMC is also serving as a welcome center to assist community members offering clothing and shower access from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. weekdays. Located at 566 S Haywood St.

Bethel Baptist Church from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 1-7 p.m. Sunday. 5868 Pigeon Road (US 276) in Bethel.

Crabtree Baptist Church from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Located at 480 Crabtree Church Road, 2 miles north of exit 24 off Interstate 40.

* Distribution sites at Jonathan Valley and Bethel Elementary Schools were suspended after Wednesday, Oct. 9.

Donations

For those looking to help, all the supply distribution points listed above also accept donations. They are accepting non-perishable food items, bottled water, and other essential supplies. For a complete list of needed items, visit theorehardne.com/relief.

The United Way of Haywood County is serving as a centralized flood donation clearinghouse for monetary donations. Donate at www.uwhaywood.org or mail a check to PO Box 1139, Waynesville, NC 28786. Please note "Tropical Storm Helene Relief" in the memo line.

Free meals and food

IP Sports Complex in Canton has free hot meals served from noon-5 p.m. daily seven days a week by Eight Days of Hope. Located at 305 Silkwood Dr, Canton. Shower trailer also available.

Haywood Christian Ministry is providing free food assistance Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in downtown Waynesville at 150 Branner Ave.

First United Methodist Church in Waynesville has food to give away Monday to Friday from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Dellwood Baptist Church on Jonathan Creek is serving free food from Appalachian Smoke BBQ food truck, with lunch and dinner on alternating days. Located at 115 Hall Dr. (beside Jonathan Valley Elementary.)

Bethel Baptist Church is providing a free meal each evening at 5:30 p.m. Located at 5868 Pigeon Road (US 276) in Bethel.

Crabtree Baptist Church is serving a meal each day at 1 p.m. Located at 480 Crabtree Church Road, 2 miles north of exit 24 off Interstate 40.

Crestview Baptist Church is operating a food truck that serves meals twice a day at noon and 5 p.m. to anyone in need, including first responders. Located at 3258 Pisgah Dr, Canton.

Clyde Central United Methodist Church on Charles Street is offering meals from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

* Meal sites at Jonathan Valley and Bethel Elementary Schools are being suspended after Wednesday, Oct. 9.

Volunteering

A centralize clearinghouse for volunteers is being organized by Orchard Church. To find out how to help and sign up for a volunteer shift, visit theorchardnc.com/relief.

First United Methodist Church in Waynesville is also in need to volunteers for its relief efforts.

Haywood Christian Ministries is also in need of volunteers to help with food sorting and distribution due to overwhelming need.

Farmer assistance

Hay, livestock feed and supplies are available at the horse arena at the Smoky Mountain Event Center. Donations accepted and supplies given out between 7:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. Call 828-564-7010 if the Tuesday through Saturday times won't work for you.

Agricultural supplies are also available at the Western North Carolina Regional Livestock Center, located at 474 Stock Drive, Canton and are being distributed from there to other sites, including the event center and Crabtree Baptist Church.

Disaster unemployment assistance

If your employment has been lost or interrupted because of Helene, you may be eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance, including self employed and business owners. The deadline to apply is Dec. 2. Apply online at des.nc.gov or call 919-629-3857 for assistance.

Water supply

There are 200-gallon water tanks available for those with compromised wells due to Helene. Please note that the water will still need to be boiled before use. You will also need a truck to pick up the tanks. Available at the International Sports Complex in Canton located off I-40 exit 33 at 305 Silkwood Dr, Canton.

Bottled water is also being distributed at at all supply distribution sites listed above.

Listening Circles

If you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or upset; if you saw or responded to something hard; or if you are looking to connect with others in the community, join an online listening circle as we lean on one another and highlight what is getting us through this difficult time and practice tools that can help with the stress.

Listening Circle sessions held over Zoom from noon-1 p.m. every day through Oct. 18. Free, no sign-up needed. Go to bit.ly/WNCListens or call 646-876-9923 (meeting ID 847 0135 3002).

Learn more about Resources for Resilience Listening Circles by watching a short video at bit.ly/AboutListeningCircles.

Mental health

Emotional support, stress relief, and mental wellbeing services to those affected by the storm is being provided by the Pollinators Foundation for Wellness and Social Healing, located at the Folkmoot Friendship Center in Waynesville.

The Pollinators of Hope project aims to provide compassionate connection, listening, and healing.

Trained volunteers will be deployed to key locations such as resource centers, food distribution sites, and community gathering places to offer emotional support, document stories, and invite individuals to participate in healing activities, including art and storytelling circles, stress relief techniques, mind-body and mental wellbeing classes, nature walks, and support services.

Services are free, donations welcome. Volunteers needed. To participate in healing services or to volunteer, contact Executive Director Marga Fripp at margacfripp@gmail.com or 828-424-1398.

FEMA assistance

People in North Carolina affected by Helene can apply for disaster assistance on DisasterAssistance.gov, on the FEMA App or by calling 1-800-621-3362.

Business loans

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-cost financial assistance for businesses impacted by Helene.

Business Physical Disaster: Loans to businesses to repair or replace disaster-damaged property, including real estate, inventories, supplies, machinery and equipment. Nonprofit and churches are also eligible.

Economic Injury Disaster: Working capital loans to help small businesses who may not have been physically impacted the storm, but have suffered revenue loss as a direct result of the disaster.

Survivors are now encouraged to simultaneously apply for FEMA grants and SBA low-interest disaster loan assistance to fully recover. Disaster survivors also should not wait to settle with their insurance company before applying for a disaster loan, as borrowers can use insurance proceeds that come in later to pay back the loan.

Apply online at sba.gov/disaster, call 800-659-2955 or apply in person at the Asheville Chamber of Commerce at 36 Montford Avenue. Deadline for physical property damage is Nov. 29 and for economic injury is June 30.

Free legal assistance

Free legal assistance is available to victims of Tropical Storm Helene. Through a partnership among Legal Aid of North Carolina, the North Carolina Bar Association, the American Bar Association, and FEMA, low-income storm survivors can access free legal help via a toll-free hotline: 866-219-5262.

This service connects eligible callers with volunteer lawyers to assist with FEMA appeals, insurance claims, contractor disputes, and more. It's a critical resource for those navigating the aftermath of the storm.

Well testing and ag assistance

For well water testing, call 828-452-6638. For agriculture assistance, call 828-452-2741 ext 3.

Shelter

The shelter at the old armory in Clyde beside Haywood Community College is still open. Located at 235 Armory Drive, Clyde.

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Clyde's flood-experienced leaders draw on past experience

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Kathy Ross | Section: News | 383 Words OpenURL Link

Clyde's key infrastructure endured Helene's attack well, compared to many in WNC, thanks to preparations gleaned the hard way from experience.

That was one of the messages the Joy Garland, the town's administrator, delivered to her board, and it came with a supportive challenge.

"This is why we are in these roles we are in," she told the board. "We've got to be strong and be there to help our residents in any way we can.

"We have been through this before. We will come back from this," she said.

Not that it has been easy. The town's public works crew worked nonstop immediately after the storm to make sure water was restored to town customers. That water supply was the first priority, said Public Works Director Richard Hodge. With the flooding of Canton's water system, the town switched suppliers during the storm, receiving water from the Junaluska Sanitary District, which in turn gets its water from Waynesville. The next issue, he said, was "making sure we had the sewage, wastewater taken care of."

One of the board's inquiries: How were town employees coping with the stress. Despite the long hours, they were handling the situation well, Hodge said. Their biggest issue, he said, was getting fuel for their own vehicles.

"During the days, our employees are working, they can't go sit in long gas lines," he said. "It's a situation for all public works employees right now."

Clyde's maintenance shop is "pretty much wiped out," Garland told the board. Not for lack of planning – the town moved what equipment was on wheels, then elevated the rest, including its generators, 5 feet above the floor. But the flood waters reached the top of the door.

Meanwhile, national media are taking notice. CNN has requested an interview with a member of the Clyde Board, Alderwoman Amy Russell reported. Alderman and Mayor Pro Tem Dann Jesse was nominated for the honors.

Garland's childhood home is destroyed, and she said her 85-year-old father is done with trying to live in the heart of Clyde so close to the Pigeon.

There are some actions the town must wait to take. While Clyde has received word that the region has been declared a state and federal disaster area, Garland hold off for the actual documentation, including assignment of a "disaster number," before awarding contracts for cleanup.

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Water on in Clyde; flood-experienced leaders draw on past experience

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Kathy Ross| Section: News | 384 Words OpenURL Link

Clyde's key infrastructure endured Helene's attack well, compared to many in the county, thanks to preparations gleaned the hard way from experience.

That was one of the messages the Joy Garland, the town's administrator, delivered to her board, and it came with a supportive challenge.

"This is why we are in these roles we are in," she told the board. "We've got to be strong and be there to help our residents in any way we can.

"We have been through this before. We will come back from this," she said.

Not that it has been easy. The town's public works crew worked nonstop immediately after the storm to make sure water was restored to town customers. That water supply was the first priority, said Public Works Director Richard Hodge. With the flooding of Canton's water system, the town switched suppliers during the storm, receiving water from the Junaluska Sanitary District, which in turn gets its water from Waynesville. The next issue, he said, was "making sure we had the sewage, wastewater taken care of."

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Post-flood status report: daily updates and useful things to know

October 4, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 1816 Words OpenURL Link

The following is a running list of important updates on flood recovery in Haywood County — from groceries, I-40, water status, mail routes, power, school, travel advisories and more. This list is updated with need-to-know information daily online, as well as print editions of The Mountaineer.

If you have something to share in this community bulletin board, email bjohnson@themountaineer.com.

For a list of assistance and resources, as well as volunteer and donation opportunities, visit the link below.

Ingles supply chain

Ingles Markets central distribution center in Swannanoa was severely impacted by the flood, which in turn has affected stocking of Ingles grocery stores across the region. Ingles issued the following public statement on Oct. 4:

"Our hearts are heavy for those in our communities who lost lives, loved ones, homes and access to basic necessities. Hurricane Helene brought with it unprecedented flooding and property damage, together with continuing power and water outages, which have impacted our footprint of operations.

Currently, of our 198 stores, 186 stores are open for business, but a lack of internet access and other connectivity has limited transactions in many locations. Of the locations that remain closed, we expect all will reopen upon restoration of power to their respective areas, but we do not have a timeline for power restoration."

School status

Haywood County Schools are closed through at least Friday, Oct. 11, for students and teachers. This amounts to 12 lost days of school. A determination of whether to resume school the following week has not been made. Advanced notice of 48 hours will be given before school resumes again.

The following report was as of Tuesday:

Two schools were still without power — Clyde and Bethel Elementary. Riverbend has no sewer pending a line repair within the next week or so. Busses are unable to traverse their normal routes due to washed out roads, but the school system is planning modified bus routes with community pick-up points where roads aren't navigable by busses.

The biggest obstacle in returning to school is the disruption of communications — along with the server that functions as the central nervous system for the school system being down. This poses a safety concern as schools have no way to notify parents in the event of an emergency.

Mission Hospital update

Mission Hospital in Asheville has been impacted by the loss of water and power in Buncombe County, leading to an influx of patients at Haywood Regional Medical Center.

However, Mission has remained open and caring for patients since the storm. "We have the staff and resources to treat all patients, including trauma patients, that come to our hospital via ambulance or through our emergency room," according to a statement from Mission.

The following are some of the steps in place at Mission:

Water trucks are supplying more than 200,000 gallons of water per day.

Water availability remains a chief concern, however. Alternative solutions, including the drilling of additional wells, are being explored to provide water to cool HVAC units.

Tens of thousands of gallons of fuel are coming in to power generators.

Mobile units including kitchens, bathrooms and handwashing stations have been brought in.

400 nurses from eight states arrived to provide support.

More than 40 physicians from other HCA Healthcare hospitals have been dispatched from other regions.

Water contamination

Canton's boil water advisory has been lifted as of Oct. 6. Canton was back under a boil water advisory due to a 6" inch water line break, but it was lifted again after repairs. Canton is also under voluntary water conservation measures.

Canton water advisory's no longer affect Clyde, as Clyde is now getting its water from Waynesville's reservoir instead of from Canton.

The boil water advisory for the town of Maggie Valley has been lifted. Waynesville's boil water advisory was lifted within a couple of days of the storm, which also applies to those on Lake Junaluska's system and Junaluska Sanitary, both of which get water from Waynesville.

Power

As of Sunday morning, only 762 customers in Haywood County were still without power.

Duke Energy had 37 customers without power in Haywood.

Haywood Electric Membership Corporation had 725 customers without power. (HEMC covers many of the most remote, rugged and isolated areas of the county.)

As of Monday, 13,000 homes in Haywood County were still without power. As of early Thursday morning, that number was 6,438 — around 16% of the county. As of Friday evening, only 2,356 homes remained without power.

Internet and cell service

Internet service with Spectrum appears to have been restored for at least part of Haywood County as of Wednesday evening. Most of the fiber network in Haywood County has been restored. hose with Spectrum were back up by Thursday, and those with AT&T were back up by Friday.

For those with Skyrunner, the internet service is now shifting its focus to bringing the wireless infrastructure back online and will begin assessing and addressing drop repairs in the coming days. For those with Zito, Zito was back up in may areas early last week, but Zito is aware of multiple utility poles down, specifically in the Cruso and Canton areas. Zito is working on a temporary solution to get service back to residents until the poles can be replaced.

Cell services is now restored for all carriers.

An AT&T mobile tower has been set up in Waynesville, which has helped with service for those on AT&T. A Verizon mobile tower has been requested but due to high demand, none have been procurred yet. Verizon mobile tours from across the country are being brought to flood areas in WNC, and Haywood hopefully in line to get one at some point.

Interstate travel

A landslide in the Pigeon River Gorge on Interstate 40 has prompted an I-40 closure west of Fines Creek exit 15. While there is varying degrees of damage along a more than two-mile stretch of I-40, the east bound lanes are completely gone in one spot. The road bed sheered off on the downhill side, collapsing out from under the asphalt and taking the interstate with it.

The damage is so extensive it could 3-4 years to rebuild, according to early projections.

To the east, a landslide on I-40 around Old Fort blocked I-40 for several days following the storm. The area is now passable, but there are reduced lanes through the Old Fort section of I-40.

Meanwhile, I-26 heading north is closed at the Tennessee line due to a washed out a bridge near Unicoi, Tenn.

Mail

The USPS is delivering mail wherever possible. If they are unable to reach you due to washed out roads or debris, your mail will be held for pickup at your local post office.

Amazon deliveries are suspended, but an update is expected next week.

Court Schedule

All Haywood County courts were canceled this week. On Monday, Oct. 7, Haywood County courts will be open to handle emergency hearings and statutorily required hearings.

Fatalities

As of Friday afternoon, Haywood County officials have reported five known fatalities in the county during the flood.

An effort has been underway across the county since Saturday to visit homes in the path of the flood or landslides, or rendered inaccessible by washed out roads and bridges. The wellness checks have been a joint effort of law enforcement, firefighters, public works crews, first responders and outside agencies that have come in to aid with response and recovery.

Tourism discouraged

Haywood County officials have issued the following notice discouraging tourism.

"It is too dangerous to travel to Haywood County right now. While many of you are excited about the upcoming leaf season, the aftermath of Helene has created unsafe conditions across the region. Flooding, landslides, downed trees, power outages, and poor cell service are making travel unsafe at this time. Additionally, there is no food, water, or fuel in the area, and many places are only accepting cash. We know this is not ideal, and we would love to have visitors in our beautiful region, but now is not the time. State and local officials are urging everyone to postpone any plans to visit."

Curfew

A curfew was imposed across all of Haywood County from 9 p.m. until 7 a.m. while recovery efforts continue. By 9

p.m., no one should be out or on the roads.

Debris and trash sites

The White Oak Landfill is open again, following a closure due to no power.

The Materials Recovery Facility and Convenience Centers at Jonathan Creek, Beaverdam, Bethel, Hazelwood, Mauney Cove, Jones Cove, and N.C. 110 are also open.

At this time, the county sites can only accept household waste. Storm debris and demolition materials must be taken to the landfill or placed beside public roads for pick up.

"Please ensure that debris is placed beside, not on, the road," Haywood County Information Office Dillon Huffman said. "Debris should be placed next to state maintained roads, not private roads."

Whenever possible, separate tree debris from construction materials. Debris should be photographed for documentation purposes.

Gas, groceries and cash

Gas is now easier to find, with more stations having gas and lines being shorter. In fact, by Thursday morning, lines had almost dissipated.

Many stores were only taking cash as of Wednesday, leading to a run on ATM machines. But restoration of internet overnight Wednesday means most businesses are now able to process credit card transactions. A few businesses still remain cash only.

Grocery store shelves are still empty in some aisles, particularly Ingles. In the days after the storm, some grocery stores implemented lines outside to limit the number of people inside at any one time, in part due to skeleton crews coupled with high demands.

Landslides and washed out roads

Landslides have washed out roads and bridges countywide — from Cruso to Maggie Valley. Landslides have left many residents stranded and isolated — without power or communications.

"It's different this time because it's not just Cruso. We've seen damage across the entire county," Huffman said. "Dozens of landslides and probably more than that."

Waynesville Firefighter Luke Palmer was among a team of Waynesville firefighters who hiked through Camp Branch, going door to door to homes cut off by landslides and collapsed roads.

"You have catastrophic mudslides, and the only access to their homes are destroyed," Palmer said.

In Appalachian fashion, neighbors have been pitching in to dig each other out.

"The community came together with their equipment — their dump trucks, dozers, excavators, you name it — and managed to get roads built back to the point people can at least get out."

Dams didn't fail

An alarming but false rumor circulated through Haywood County Friday that the Lake Junaluska dam had failed. Dispelling the rumor in a county with spotty cell, phone and internet service was a challenge.

The following public alert was sent out by the Haywood County Sheriff's Office: "Lake Junaluska dam has NOT collapsed. It is functioning as designed — serving as a spillway to manage excess water. The dam is being closely monitored by officials to monitor safety and proper operation."

Meanwhile, a rumor began circulating in Cocke County, Tennessee, that the Waterville Dam on the Pigeon River in Haywood County at the state line had collapsed. Also not true.

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Biden visits NC, pledges continued federal aid after Helene

October 4, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 677 Words

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After taking an aerial tour of damage inflicted by Tropical Storm Helene in Western North Carolina on Wednesday, President Joe Biden visited North Carolina's Emergency Operations Center in Raleigh to promise that the federal government will continue to help with the state's recovery.

"The United States, the nation, has your back. The nation has your back. We're not leaving until you get back on your feet completely," Biden said to a roomful of emergency management officials and members of the National Guard.

Gov. Roy Cooper told Biden about challenges ranging from washed-out bridges and roads to damaged water systems and electrical grids to lost homes and businesses.

"An entire region of our state is still in a dangerous situation," Cooper said.

Earlier Wednesday, Biden approved additional federal resources for the response, including up to 1,000 active duty U.S. Army soldiers from Fort Liberty and 22 aircraft.

"Simply put, we've got the capabilities to get the job done and we're going to get it done as fast as possible," Biden said.

Biden also said he'd approved a request Wednesday from Cooper to cover all of the costs of debris removal for the next six months. And 50 StarLink satellite links have been deployed, Biden said, with more on the way..

"Folks, it's going to cost us billions of dollars. It's going to cost billions of dollars to deal with this storm and all the communities affected, and Congress has an obligation to ensure that states have the resources they need," Biden said.

NC Emergency Management Director Will Ray told Biden that North Carolina still has about 350,000 people without power, five days after Helene barreled through.

Ray said 24 North Carolina search-and-rescue teams are working in Western North Carolina, along with 13 from other states and 18 from the federal government. Those teams have had more than 5,000 interactions - from rescues to evacuations to shelter inspections - since Helene response began.

"The teams continue to do really incredible work in some pretty austere conditions," Ray said.

North Carolina is also operating 26 aircraft in Western North Carolina that have airlifted more than 700,000 pounds of supplies, Ray added.

Biden said that since becoming president in 2017, he'd flown over so many downed trees that they would cover an area larger than the state of Maryland, largely from wildfires.

"I've seen a lot, but looking at Asheville and just imagining what it must have been like sitting along those rivers and streams as all of that rain came down ... You could see homes that were removed clearly from one side of the river, down the river, to the other side of the river," Biden said.

Biden thanked Cooper and South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, for focusing on the response instead of prioritizing politics. Tuesday, Biden called former President Donald Trump a liar after Trump said he was hearing reports that Cooper and Biden, both Democrats, were not helping parts of the state where large proportions of Republicans live.

"In a moment like this, we put politics aside. Or at least we should put it all aside, and we have here. There are no Democrats or Republicans, only Americans," Biden said.

Biden closed by saying it is clear that the climate crisis is having an impact in the United States, including strengthening storms like Helene. Those storms like Helene are going to get stronger and stronger as oceans continue to warm, he said.

"Nobody can deny the impact of the climate crisis anymore," he said. "At least I hope they don't. They must be brain-dead if they do."

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