

Some Western NC counties hit by Helene changed early voting plans. Here are the details.

October 11, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Kyle Ingram, News & Observer | Section: election | 255 Words OpenURL Link

Due to the destruction caused by Hurricane Helene, some counties in Western North Carolina are changing their early voting plans.

While most counties have been able to maintain their original voting plans, three have had to make adjustments: Buncombe. Madison and McDowell.

Information on those changes will be updated below as it becomes available.

Voters can also search for early voting sites in their area on the State Board of Elections' website.

Buncombe County

Early voting will be held from Oct. 17 through Nov. 2, including weekends.

Polling sites will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except for Nov. 2, when polls will close at 3 p.m.

The early voting sites are:

Black Mountain Library, 105 N. Dougherty St., Black MountainEast Asheville Library, 3 Avon Road, AshevilleEnka-Candler Library, 1404 Sand Hill Road, CandlerFairview Library, 1 Taylor Road, FairviewLeicester Community Center, 2979 New Leicester Hwy., LeicesterSouth Buncombe Library, 260 Overlook Road, AshevilleUNCA Health & Counseling Center, 118 W.T Weaver Blvd., Asheville (new location)Weaverville Community Center, 60 Lakeshore Drive, WeavervilleDr. Wesley Grant Southside Center, 285 Livingston St., Asheville (in lieu of Board of Elections location)West Asheville Library, 942 Haywood Road, Asheville

Madison County

Early voting will be held from Oct. 17 through Nov. 2, not including weekends.

Polling sites will be open from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. every day except for Nov. 2, when polls will close at 3 p.m.

The early voting sites are:

Beech Glen Community Center Humanism, 2936 Beech Glen Rd, Mars HillHot Springs Senior Meal Site, 356 NW 25/70, Hot SpringsMadison A-B Tech Campus, 4646 US 25/70 Hwy, Marshall

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Kyle Ingram, News & Observer, 'Some Western NC counties hit by Helene changed early voting plans. Here are the details.', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027D485DA1D0>



Open Source: NC mines stir conspiracy theories - Boom nears a boom - Morrisville tenant wait

October 11, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Brian Gordon, News & Observer | Section: business | 1065 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.

Next to Asheville, perhaps no place in North Carolina attracted more national attention in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene than Spruce Pine. The mountain town in Mitchell County was hit hard by the storm; its local North Toe River flooded and destroyed the community's historic brick downtown. Water stains marked 8 feet up walls. Yet sadly, such scenes weren't unique among ravaged Western North Carolina areas.

What made Spruce Pine unique is what's underneath it. The town of 2,000 has a deep deposit of the world's purest quartz. For much of the last century, miners actually threw away the mineral - instead prizing the abundant mica and feldspar - but that shifted with the advent of cell phones, laptops, solar panels and pretty much anything powered by a semiconductor chip, which rely on very, very pure quartz.

Nowhere on the planet has it like Spruce Pine.

The biggest of Spruce Pine's quartz mines partially reopened this week after then-Tropical Storm Helene swept through. On Thursday, the private Belgian mining operator Sibelco announced "both production and shipments are progressively ramping up to full capacity," though the company didn't say (or answer my follow up email) about how long it will take to return to normal operations.

A second mining company in the area, the straightforwardly named The Quartz Corp, has yet to resume operations after also closing on Sept. 26, the day before Helene arrived. In a statement last week, The Quartz Corp did not offer a timetable for doing so.

299126297 406829851571768 2341074942917139655 n.jpgOpen Source Newsletter Logo

Any restarts in Western North Carolina right now are a welcome sign. For Mitchell County, the partial opening of its largest employer is especially good news. As for any broader economic consequences the mine disruptions may cause, we should know the extent in time. Spruce Pine quartz is too important to go under the radar.

My article about the Sibelco mine was shared on Facebook yesterday where it received more than a dozen comments about the government using Helene as an opportunity to build a quartz mine in Spruce Pine, as if the mines weren't already there. Misinformation has been widespread since the storm, and leaders from both major political parties have denounced its hindrance to the region's recovery effort.

In separate mine news, the government is not seizing private property in Chimney Rock, North Carolina, to build a lithium mine. Several people on social media have tied the ongoing permitting process for lithium mining in Kings Mountain (50 miles away) to a supposed land grab in storm-affected Chimney Rock, which local and state officials assure isn't happening.

chmineyrock_06.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

Seeking tenants on both sides of the street

Two of the Triangle's largest incoming life science hubs are still seeking tenants. Standing across the street from

each other in Morrisville, Pathway Triangle and Spark LS are both massive \$1-billion-plus complexes nearing completion. They offer discrete manufacturing accommodations and ample R&D space, but as of today, no announced leases.

Funding in the biotech sector had been sluggish since a pandemic-era boom, said Jeff Sheehan, managing partner at Trinity Capital, which is developing Spark LS. He described "a natural recoil" in the industry following the rush of 2020 and 2021. But over the past two months, Sheehan said, there's been a "strong uptick" in discussions with potential tenants. And lower interest rates, while not a total panacea, should only help.

Over at HUB RTP, Research Triangle Park's emerging downtown, a projected eight-story tower called Via Labs also lacks tenant commitments. The building is being developed by Long Fellow Real Estate Partners, which this week shared a piece of positive local office space news. Longfellow said "well over 90%" of its 11-building, 806,000-square-foot Triangle LIFE campus is leased following the recent arrival of the tech company SWIR Vision Systems.

SPARK01-041023-EDH.jpgWork continues on Spark LS, a 109-acre biotech campus in Morrisville, N.C., on Monday, April 10, 2023.

Clearing my cache

Soon comes the boom. Within a few years, the startup Boom Supersonic aims to begin manufacturing supersonic passenger jets at its newly constructed superfactory in Greensboro. But first, it has to build the plane. Boom completed its fifth test flight this week in California's Mojave Desert, taking its XB-1 aircraft up to 373 mph. The company says it'll break the sound barrier (starting around 770 mph) by the end of 2024. Another week, another development in the antitrust battles between the Cary video game company Epic Games and Apple/Google. The latest turn was good news for Epic, as a federal judge ordered Google to open up its Android app store. Google said it will appeal. Or, as Epic founder Tim Sweeney posted online alongside an image of a popular Fortnite banana character, Google will "a peel."Twice in the past few days, I lacked cellular signal. The first was self-explanatory. I was reporting on Helene damage and recovery in the storm-battered remote mountains of Western North Carolina. The second time was when I went grocery shopping at the Harris Teeter on Durham's 9th Street. Why this busy Bull City commercial corridor lacks consistent cell service continues to vex.Not a long trip. On Tuesday, North Carolina awarded incentives for the physician staffing company Weatherby Locums (and its parent CHG Healthcare) to add 155 jobs to its Triangle workforce. The company announced it will relocate from its current Durham office to a 45,000-square-foot space in Raleigh.

xb-1-first-flight-5.jpgBoom Supersonic's XB-1 testing aircraft at the Mojava Air and Space Port in California.

National Tech Happenings

Amazon says it will hire 250,000 part-time, full-time, and seasonal workers ahead of the holiday shopping season, including 3,000 employees in Charlotte and 2,000 between Raleigh and Durham. OpenAl secured a \$4 billion credit line, adding to its financial arsenal after recently raised \$6.6 billion in investment. The New Yorker called Silicon Valley "the new lobbying monster" this week, writing "from Coinbase to OpenAl, the tech sector is pouring millions into super PACS that intimidate politicians into supporting its agenda."The creator of Bitcoin has successfully concealed their identity - up until now. Potentially. A new HBO documentary claims the cryptocurrency founder, who goes by the alias Satoshi Nakamoto, is in fact an early Bitcoin developer named Peter Todd.

Todd has denied he is Nakamoto.

Thanks for reading!

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Brian Gordon, News & Observer, 'Open Source: NC mines stir conspiracy theories Boom nears a boom Morrisville tenant wait', News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8A4FE6341E100>



With schools still closed, NC fifth grader's spirits lifted by teacher's special call

October 11, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Josh Shaffer, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 491 Words OpenURL Link

An eager fifth-grader, Molly Bloemendaal had already missed two weeks of school, huddling in her Banner Elk house without power, water or a good-work sticker.

From her front porch, she could see where the Elk River roared through town at 10 times its height, carrying off the town's water and sewer lines, ripping out bridges and roads.

School seemed out for good.

Then on Monday, Molly's mom handed her a cell phone, where her teacher Libby Gragg smiled from the screen.

"I miss you so much," she said.

Molly's face lit up inside her pink hoodie.

"Is your house OK?" she asked.

After two weeks of missed school, 5th grader gets call from her Banner Elk teacherMolly Bloemendaal, 10, a 5th grader at Banner Elk Elementary School, talks to her teacher, Libby Gragg, on Wednesday, Oct. 9, for the first time since Helene passed through Western North Carolina.

The wreckage from Hurricane Helene has canceled class across western North Carolina as the schools themselves were heavily damaged by rising water and sliding debris, and many of the remote mountain towns are still enduring power and water supply outages that could take months to repair - at least.

In Banner Elk, high above Boone in Avery County, the elementary school escaped heavy damage, but the town's 1,000 residents are surviving on bottled water, portable showers and toilets flushed with buckets carried from the Elk River.

At Banner Elk Presbyterian Preschool, a wall of water pushed through the walls and flooded the building. A Noah's Ark carpet hung ironically to dry over a ruined table.

"All my cubbies are gone," said teacher Jarrett Koski, better known as Mr. K. "One of my parents called and said, "Can you FaceTime with him, so he doesn't think Jesus came and got you?' "

'I love you. You take care.'

Molly's mother Nola Bloemendaal spends her day ferrying supplies around town, and when she stopped at the Best Western, a hub for meals and showers, one Avery County child told her, "I'm afraid all my friends are dead."

At Banner Elk Elementary, Gragg checked on every fifth-grader - talking to dozens like Molly.

"We have power but no water," the 10-year-old said.

"OK," Gragg said, "well, you tell your mom to get you over to our house."

At this point, Molly's mother jumped on the call to say her daughter was still wearing the crescent moon necklace

the principal gave her before the storm.

"The electricity turned out for a second and then I could see it glowed in the dark," she told her teacher.

"How neat!" Gragg raved. "Well, I hear you are just making us all so proud. You've got that river spirit. The dreamer. Way to go, girl."

"Where are you?"

"I am actually at Banner Elk Elementary. I was just checking in to see how you were because I miss you and love you and I want to see you soon."

"OK."

"OK, girlfriend. I love you. You take care."

"OK."

"Bye, Molly."

"Bye."

She clicked off the phone, revived for the moment by a 2-minute outreach.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Josh Shaffer, News & Observer, 'With schools still closed, NC fifth grader's spirits lifted by teacher's special call', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8A4FE741C06E0>



Local high school football schedules coming together after Hurricane Helene chaos

October 11, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: Football | 807 Words OpenURL Link

After two-plus weeks of chaos caused by a stoppage in place due to the effects of Hurricane Helene, all three of Burke County's active varsity high school football teams either have resumed play or now know when they will, and schedules slowly are coming together.

While Freedom (in a home Northwestern 3A/4A Conference game versus Alexander Central at Patton late Friday in Morganton) and East Burke (in a road Catawba Valley 2A Conference game at Bunker Hill late Friday in Claremont) resumed play in Week 8 to end three-week layoffs, Draughn finally set its first game back from what will be a four-weeks-and-change hiatus by announcing on Thursday that it will host Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference opponent Mitchell at 2 p.m. this coming Saturday, Oct. 19, for Week 9.

The game is being played on a Saturday due to special provisions put into place by the WHC, whose communities mostly are in the mountains and were hit particularly hard by the storm on Sept. 27.

"Most of our conference teams are starting back next week with athletics, but face nighttime travel restrictions," wrote DHS coach Chris Powell on the team's Facebook page. "We will work on the following weeks' schedules next week."

These decisions and a wholesale resumption of play came after the NCHSAA extended the fall season by a week with a Wednesday decision. For football, this comes with a stipulation that a minimum of three calendar days must occur between contests as teams seek to make up for lost time. Sunday practices and games remain disallowed.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," said NCHSAA President Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes, and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The Cavaliers will follow up their road trip to Bunker Hill by hosting Lincolnton this Friday, visiting West Lincoln on Oct. 25, hosting West Caldwell on Nov. 1, visiting Newton-Conover on Nov. 5 and hosting Bandys at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 9.

The Patriots' home game versus the Cougars at PHS will be followed by another crosstown home game against South Caldwell at Patton this Friday, along with road games at Ashe County on Oct. 25, Watauga on Nov. 1 and Hibriten on Nov. 8.

Additionally after the NCHSAA changes, the reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 1 to 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 9, and seeding will follow after 1 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 10.

The new playoff schedule includes the first round on Nov. 15, the second round on Nov. 22, the third round on Nov. 29, regional semifinals on Dec. 6, regional finals on Dec. 13 and state championships from Dec. 20-21.

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

BOYS SOCCER

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

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

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

CROSS COUNTRY

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

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

GIRLS GOLF

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

GIRLS TENNIS

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

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

VOLLEYBALL

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

The reporting deadline has been moved from this Wednesday to 11:59 p.m. this coming Saturday, with seeding to take place after 1 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 20. The revised playoff schedule starts with the first round on Oct. 22, followed by the second round on Oct. 24, third round on Oct. 26, regional semifinals on Oct. 29, regional finals on Oct. 31 and state championships on Nov. 2.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor, 'Local high school football schedules coming together after Hurricane Helene chaos', *News Herald, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C24899222AB828>



CAKED IN MUD

October 11, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Caked In Mud | 741 Words OpenURL Link

COMMENTARY

One of Miss Letitia Currie's favorite topics in her history class in the 1950s at Davidson Junior High School was the Great Flood of 1916.

Miss Currie was the daughter of a Davidson College professor.

Many of her students also knew what she was talking about because their parents had experienced that 1916 flood and talked about it whenever rain poured down hard.

Today, many of Miss parents and grandparents, great-grandparents, and their children and grandchildren are having a similar experience dealing with the flooding that followed Hurricane Helene.

And they will be talking about it for the rest of their lives.

"News of Davidson," the news outlet in my hometown, published the following account by Gatewood Payne Campbell, granddaughter of Davidson professor Gatey Workman and niece of the late, great opera singer William Workman. Gatewood and her husband Johnny live near Black Mountain.

"Life has stopped. We don't know dates or times. Sirens are 24 hours a day. It's relentless. Helicopters invade our sky. Chainsaws sound nonstop and we run outside in hopes it's in our neighborhood. ...

"Let me back up. We awoke around 6 Friday morning without power. The storm was loud and pounding but we didn't know where we were in the storm. We could not get updates. Around 8:30 we lost internet across cell lines. I called a friend and got her to look at radar and let me know an ETA on rain ending. That was the last call I was able to make. By 9:30 all cell signal was completely lost. The rain was increasing. We could see the creek rising. Johnny stepped outside under the porch and was soaked from head to toe after 30 seconds.

"Around 11 we felt like we could go out and survey the neighborhood. We began to feel the weight of the destruction, yet we had no clue. The creek had turned into a river greater than 50 yards wide. The noise of water heaters, propane tanks, bikes, grills, construction supplies and yard equipment banging on the rails of our bridge to Black Mountain was deafening. We saw two neighbors with trees on their homes and knew they were taking on water."

Meanwhile in Asheville, Bryan King and his wife Angela Koh are assessing the damage to their 12 Bones Smokehouse restaurant on Foundry Street in the River Arts District. As I wrote in my book, "North Carolina's Eateries," "Even if 12 Bones had not been made famous by Barack Obama's visits there, it would be a 'must-do' in Asheville." When I first visited 12 Bones several years ago, it was located closer to the French Broad River. Had Bryan and Angela not moved the restaurant a few blocks up the hill, it would have been completely washed away. At its current location, they may be able to repair and survive.

Angela's sister writes, "As the floodwaters recede, we see catastrophic damage to homes and businesses, including the River Arts District, where 12 Bones was founded. Entire livelihoods have been lost. In nearly every direction you look, everything is caked in mud and scattered debris. Broken wood and mangled wiring now stand where intersections once existed."

Coincidentally, on Oct. 15, the publisher Blair is releasing "River Road," a book of poems by mountain author Wayne Caldwell. His fine poetry describes the power of the flooding waters on the French Broad as shown in the following excerpt:

A selection from 'River Road'

The French Broad, being a river, floods.

How many times over the millennia has it left its banks and moved whatever was swept up in it

To some far away (and sometimes ridiculous) place?

Perhaps thousands. And each time it returned to its placid face.

The worst (in the last century) was in July 1916.

Asheville's Riverside Park was washed away.

Parts of which one could have seen rushing by my house

Had it been there then. (Even this relatively high ground Would have been inundated for several days.)

Only a half dozen people died in Asheville, Which I'd consider a small miracle. Thanks to the telephone, Warning came to Marshall, and only two or three drowned, Even though the courthouse was about the only thing left On Main Street. Fifty-Three houses disappeared.

From high ground one could have seen rushing by

Bales of cotton, houses, mules, gas tanks,

Vehicles, sheds, chickens, roosting on pieces of roof,

Tires, fences, trees, pigs, dogs, cats,

Anything thing not tied down — and many things that were.

D.G. Martin, a retired lawyer, served as UNC-System's vice president for public affairs and hosted PBS-NC's "North Carolina Bookwatch."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'CAKED IN MUD', *News Herald, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C248991971AFE8>



Trop assessment could take 'weeks'

October 11, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 223 Words OpenURL Link

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

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

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

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

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

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Trop assessment could take 'weeks'', *News Herald, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C248994B4573C8



Help from above: Guideway-based firm uses aerial saws to clear western N.C. debris

October 11, 2024 | News Reporter, The (Whiteville, NC) Author: Diana Matthews dianamatthews@nrcolumbus.com| Section: Business| 527 Words OpenURL Link

An aviation business headquartered in Columbus County is helping restore electric power to mountain communities hit by Hurricane Helene while also assisting with "humanitarian operations," according to a company spokesman.

Aerial Solutions, based in the Guideway area since 1985, flies helicopters into areas where there's otherwise "no access," General Manager Ted McAllister said. While hovering above the damage, crews lower aerial saws and cut up trees that toppled onto power lines during the storm two weeks ago. The teams then use grapples to remove the cut pieces, opening the way for power companies to begin repairing infrastructure.

In many cases, it will be a matter of "rebuilding" rather than repairing, McAllister told The News Reporter. "A lot of poles and wires are just not there" anymore.

"I've been in this business for more than 40 years," he said, including during the time of Hurricane Andrew. However, McAllister's seen few storms leave as much destruction as Helene did, especially in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. "Hugo might possibly compare," he said. Helene "is pretty high up there on the devastation scale."

Family-owned business

The current operations are similar to routine work Aerial Solutions does every day, maintaining railroad or highway corridors and utility rights-of-way.

In the 1980s Aerial Solutions founder William Cox pioneered technology to trim trees from above, which "precludes the need to get in on the ground," McAllister said. "In a flood situation," or when roads are demolished, "a helicopter is a good tool" to reach otherwise unreachable areas, he said.

The company is still family-owned and employs about 75 people, operating in 26 states, said McAllister, who became general manager in 2000.

Aerial Solutions owns 13 aerial saws, he said. On Friday morning, three of those were serving areas in Tennessee and western North Carolina. Another had gone to Florida to help with cleanup from Hurricane Milton.

Partnerships

McAllister said logistics experts with Operation Airdrop, based in Texas, have been coordinating the efforts of numerous aviation companies to meet needs identified by N.C. state officials. Aerial Solutions also worked with Operation Airdrop after Hurricane Katrina.

"More than 30 aircraft," — representing military, civilian and emergency medical agencies — are currently flying out of Hickory and Lenoir as well as out of Greenville, Tennessee, McAllister said Friday. Most are helicopters, but some are fixed-wing aircraft. In addition to addressing infrastructure damage, McAllister said, the aviators are taking part in "one of the bigger concentrations of humanitarian operations" now going on for Helene victims. As they fly into disaster areas, pilots are at times hauling in emergency medical personnel and materials, and some are carrying out evacuees when they return.

Overall, McAllister said, he's seen "wonderful recovery efforts going on," but "it's going to be a while" to restore "a lot of devastated infrastructure." In "some of the more remote areas, roads are essentially gone," and, "roads need

to happen before anything else."

McAllister said he thought the crew now serving in Florida will have a shorter turnaround time because, "Milton didn't wipe out the roads." The rest of Aerial Solutions' trimming crews have been able to keep up with the company's normal work. "That never really slowed down," he said.

The web address of the business is aerialsolutionsinc.com.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Diana Matthews dianamatthews@nrcolumbus.com, 'Help from above: Guideway-based firm uses aerial saws to clear western N.C. debris', *News Reporter, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29FB76A4899A8>



Local volunteers and organizations make recovery efforts post-Helene

October 11, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 747 Words OpenURL Link

Following the impact of Tropical Storm Helene, several individuals and organizations have worked to mitigate the struggles of those hit especially hard by the storm and administer relief and recovery to regions further west that have suffered the greatest damages. Here are a few stories of some of these organization efforts.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Latter-day Saints recently opened two disaster relief operation centers to house and distribute recovery equipment and volunteer teams, one in Lenoir and one in Asheville. As those in need call the church's Crisis Cleanup hotline, command centers collect work orders for cutting trees, removing debris, mucking out flooded rooms or basements and other labor. Volunteer teams receive the work orders and are dispatched across the area, according to communications director Libby Brown.

Nearly 950 volunteers arrived from around Hickory, Winston-Salem, Lake Norman and Charlotte to form around 100 crews.

In only the beginning 3 days of recovery these crews were able to fill 326 work orders.

"There are a lot of organizations in our community doing work," said Hickory Stake president Chance Powell, noting that with the additional organization provided by the operation center, "we are able to give volunteer teams information and send them out ... this is an ongoing project, we'll be continuing work until things are polished and people are back on their feet."

The operations center is reorganizing each week and reviewing work orders to assign to its volunteer crews.

"This is who we are," Powell said. "What I love about what we do as a church is that it's so organized in a way that allows us to be efficient, aligned and calibrated and that allows us to reach more people."

Powell will be meeting with other churches in the area soon to discuss how the church can better distribute resources across the community.

"I cannot tell you how many miracles I've just seen," Powell said. The recovery provides a chance for people to come together as a community. "We are just grateful for the opportunity to serve."

Yokefellow

Shortly after the storm came and recovery efforts began, Yokefellow began accepting donations of clothing for distribution as the designated drop off locations. The donation drop-off was closed on Tuesday, Oct. 8 as the influx of donations quickly outstripped the organization's ability to store and process donations.

So far in their efforts following the storm, the organization has sent one 20-foot box truck to Happy Valley with assorted clothing sorted by size and type. The organization sent an additional four 20-foot box trucks to Collettsville, two of which had sorted clothing and the other two had housewares such as pots and pans.

Yokefellow hosted a drive-thru pantry on Wednesday, Oct. 9, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., during which the organization fed 627 individuals and 228 families. An additional pantry will be held on Saturday, Oct. 12, at 1 p.m. for this with Caldwell County IDs.

Local volunteers deliver supplies to Spruce Pine

Last week the News-Topic discussed the volunteer efforts of a group of teachers and other community members who loaded a dozen trucks with relief supplies to deliver to Burnsville, organized in part by teacher Jamie Boggs. Boggs planned to return to Burnsville on Sunday, Oct. 6, though the trip was later changed to Spruce Pine.

Another community volunteer who helped with the Burnsville run, Ricky Harris of RDH Automotive, suggested that the group focus on delivering winter supplies like blankets, sleeping bags and other cold weather items to ensure that people could stay warm as the fall weather grew closer. Harris and Boggs collected donations from a smaller group of people to store at the auto shop until they could make the trip on the 6th.

Volunteers loaded up 18 cars, Boggs said, to travel through Boone, Banner Elk, Newland and eventually Spruce Pine, leaving donations at centers along the way. Donated medical supplies were left with doctors practicing out of a Spruce Pine church.

A big concern for the time being is storage, Boggs said. Workers at donation centers said that they will need all the donations that they can get, but that they physically lack the space needed to properly store them as they are used and distributed. Roads are also severely damaged in the area, and volunteers are using ATVs to distribute supplies.

Boggs said Harris will be taking an additional crew up on Saturday, Oct. 12 with tools to clear roads, and additional solutions are being looked at by the group to help mitigate the storage problems being faced by Helene's most impacted communities.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com, 'Local volunteers and organizations make recovery efforts post-Helene', *News-Topic, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A01A0FAA1DD8>



Power restoration continues in Caldwell County

October 11, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 609 Words OpenURL Link

LENOIR — With nearly 97% of Blue Ridge Energy members restored with power after Hurricane Helene left 63,000 members in the dark, the cooperative now has 82 customers in Caldwell County without power, according to a press release from Blue Ridge Energy.

As of 4:30 p.m. Thursday, crews are working to restore the final 2,535 members: 1,451 in Watauga County, 930 in Ashe County, 82 in Caldwell County, 49 in Wilkes County, 15 in Alleghany County and 8 in Avery County, according to the press release.

Across the system, the cooperative has dispersed teams of service crews responsible for repairing and energizing tap lines as well as construction crews responsible for replacing broken power poles — a job that can take 4 to 6 hours in the best of conditions, according to the press release.

The raging swift water led to flooding and mudslides, downed trees, washed away bridges and not only roads and pavement but in many cases the actual ground beneath them. The storm took down much of the cooperative's electric grid, leading to quick rebuilds just to get power restored as quickly as possible. Long-term repairs will go on for months to ensure the electric grid is strong and reliable, according to the press release.

"Blue Ridge Energy serves a very rough, mountainous terrain and our crews are accustomed to working in high winds, snow, ice and some flooding but nothing close to the conditions and level of damage caused by Helene," said Renee Walker, director of public relations for Blue Ridge Energy, according to the press release.

Currently, the cooperative is expecting most of the power restoration to be complete by midnight Friday. Several hundred outages in the most damaged of locations will carry over into the weekend before all restoration is complete. Additional time will be needed for structures that require owner repair before restoration is possible and areas that are totally inaccessible with no way to reach the structure, according to the press release.

The cooperative still emphasizes the following safety measures:

Downed Power Line Safety

Downed power lines can still be energized and therefore dangerous, or even deadly, so stay far away. Downed lines can be hidden underneath fallen trees, water and other affected structures so stay alert and use caution around these areas. Only a trained line technician should ever go near a downed power line. Report downed lines by calling 1-800-451-5474, according to the press release.

Protect Line Workers

Move over and slow down if you see line technicians or trucks working on roadsides. This is especially difficult work under current conditions with many roads washed out, severely damaged, or down to one lane roads. Please slow down for your safety and the protection of all those working to restore power.

Be alert for flaggers and other traffic directions and indications of work under way.

Don't drive distracted. Road damage and debris is scattered throughout the area, according to the press release.

Generator Safety

The only safe way to connect a portable generator to your home's wiring is to have a licensed electrical contractor install a transfer switch.

Never connect a generator to your home's electrical system. It can "back feed" and potentially harm or kill line technicians working on power lines.

Keep generators away from water.

Always turn off a generator and let it cool down before refueling.

Never use a generator inside your home or garage. Install a carbon monoxide detector for added safety, according to the press release.

To check outage status

Call 1-800-451-5474 to speak with a member service representative

Link to live outage map: https://bremco.maps.sienatech.com/

Refer to general restoration estimates at www.BlueRidgeEnergy.com

Report new outages by calling 1-800-448-2383 or

Use our Blue Ridge Energy mobile app or

Text "OUT" to 70216 if your mobile number is on your account

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• Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'Power restoration continues in Caldwell County', *News-Topic, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25C6AC95C7430



Autumn in the Park festival coming to Sawmills

October 11, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 275 Words OpenURL Link

SAWMILLS — In the Park Events' fourth annual Autumn in the Park festival is set to take place on Saturday, Oct. 19, at Baird Park in Sawmills. The festival will begin at 1 p.m. and run until 7:30 p.m. In the Park said it will be offering some assistance to vendors that need help getting to the venue following the impact of Tropical Storm Helene.

According to a statement from In the Park Events, the event "shattered records last year, drawing in a whopping 7,000 attendees."

This year's event will featured a number of activities including a show from the Granite Falls's new Appalachian Rhythm dance studio, costume contests for dogs and for children, live music and more.

"This year, we're raising the bar even higher with an expanded Big Kids Zone, a Dog Costume Contest that's sure to wag some tails, a Kids Costume Contest to showcase the cutest little pumpkins, and live music that will set the perfect autumnal soundtrack," according to the In the Park website.

"With over 50 vendors offering a diverse array of treasures, food trucks serving up delectable treats, and a mesmerizing Cruise-In, Autumn in the Park promises an experience like no other. Whether you're a fan of shopping, a foodie seeking culinary delights, or a music lover looking to groove, there's something for everyone at this spectacular event.

"Join us in making this year's Autumn in the Park the best one yet! Bring your family, friends, and furry companions for a day of community, celebration, and the vibrant spirit of fall. See you at Baird Park, where autumn comes to life!"

More details on the festival and schedule can be fount at intheparkevents.com.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com, 'Autumn in the Park festival coming to Sawmills', *News-Topic, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25C6AC32AAF28



FEMA assistance available for Caldwell County residents

October 11, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 265 Words OpenURL Link

Caldwell County residents can begin filing for FEMA assistance on Friday. A Disaster Resource Center will open at the Health and Human Services Building, and FEMA representatives will be visiting hardest hit areas to help people file for assistance, according to a press release from the county.

The Disaster Resource Center is expected to hold a soft opening on Friday at 1 p.m. The center will be located at on the third floor of the Health and Human Resources Building, 2345 Morganton Boulevard, Lenoir. The Disaster Resource Center will help people applying for individual assistance and small business loans, according to the press release.

The center will be open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. People applying for FEMA assistance need to provide:

Address with zip codeCondition of damaged homeInsurance information, if availableSocial Security numberPhone number where you can be contactedAddress where you can get mail or email address to receive electronic notificationsA picture ID is not required to apply for FEMA assistance.

Disaster Survivor Assistance teams wear FEMA attire and have federal photo identification badges. The teams go door to door in impacted neighborhoods to help people apply for federal assistance, check the status of an application, identify potential needs and make connections with organizations that can provide resources. Disaster Survivor Assistance crews never ask for, or accept, money, according to the press release.

To apply for FEMA assistance online, visit disasterassistance.gov, call 800-621-3362 or by download the FEMA app.

Testing kits for wells are available at the Caldwell County Health Department, 2345 Morganton Boulevard, Lenoir. Testing fees have been waived.

For more information, visit www.caldwellcountync.org/494/Helene.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'FEMA assistance available for Caldwell County residents', *News-Topic, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25C6ACCAAA918



Western North Carolinians without flood insurance left to rebuild

October 11, 2024 | North State Journal (NC) Author: Dan Reeves | Section: Article | 563 Words OpenURL Link

As Western North Carolinians, shocked by the devastation of Hurricane Helene that left countless homes destroyed, lives shattered and even entire towns eviscerated, many wonder how and when those affected will pick up the pieces.

While assuming flood insurance is the obvious first step, the unfortunate fact is an overwhelming number of homeowners aren't covered.

"When disasters like this occur, you do find that a lot of people are uninsured," said Franklin Rouse, president of Rouse Insurance Agency Inc. "And if they do have flood insurance, the policies are usually thin."

The risk of severe flooding in the mountains is low. By no fault of their own, homeowners can assume a sense of ease and default complacency based on the infinitesimal probability of high water in an elevated region. It's also easy for real estate agents, mortgage lenders and banks to tell homebuyers flood insurance isn't necessary.

"'You're not in a flood zone' is a dangerous term," Rouse warned. "You could stand at the top of Mount Mitchell or have your toes in the sand, Mother Nature doesn't know or care."

In 2004, the damaging remnants of hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne triggered some in western N.C. to participate in The National Flood Insurance Program, or NFIP. Still, the low risk factor has kept most in the area seeing coverage as essential.

"Many people think, 'I'm on the side of a mountain, I'm never going to have to worry about rising water,'" said flood insurance expert Charlotte Hicks. "I would expect the majority do not have flood insurance."

The maximum coverage you can buy for a home or dwelling through NFIP, which is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is \$250,000. If your home or dwelling is in a regulated flood plain or special hazard zone, flood insurance is mandatory.

"But that doesn't cover critical costs such as additional living expenses, lodging elsewhere; it can be very expensive," Rouse said.

Two years ago, a geospatial study by a doctoral candidate at NC State found that 84.5% of flood damage losses occurred outside regulated flood plains or special hazard flood areas. Still, because homebuyers in regions like western N.C. are not in a designated flood plain, flood insurance is optional. "People think they don't have a risk, and it's not true at all," Hicks said.

Both Hicks, an expert on flood insurance in North Carolina, and Rouse, who is based in Wilmington, expressed an urgent message of education, preparedness and mitigation to homeowners.

"Flood maps are available to the public," Hicks said. "Everybody needs to be educated about their risk, and each individual needs to decide for themselves with all the facts. The information is out there."

On the real estate transaction side, Rouse added, "Everyone involved needs to inform buyers about flood insurance and the risk to their property in close proximity to lakes, rivers, ponds or otherwise. Again, Mother Nature doesn't know flood plains begin and end."

Faced with the unknown and the strong likelihood of rebuilding without flood insurance or, at best, the maximum coverage, those in washed-away communities like Chimney Rock and ravaged parts of Asheville, Black Mountain and Hendersonville are left to fend for themselves. As private home insurance plans generally only cover wind damage from hurricanes, Helene victims will need assistance from federal agencies, charities and private donations to rebuild their communities.

The post Western North Carolinians without flood insurance left to rebuild first appeared on The North State Journal.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Dan Reeves, 'Western North Carolinians without flood insurance left to rebuild', *North State Journal* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C27D73808E8078



Lumbee Boys & Girls Club gathers supplies for hurricane victimes

October 11, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC)
Author: Tasha Oxendine For The Robesonian | Section: developing-news news news-main top-stories | 194 Words
OpenURL Link

PEMBROKE — The Lumbee Tribe of N.C. has partnered with the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association to collect donation items for the disaster relief effort to assist our neighbors in Western North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Burnt Swamp Baptist has mission teams already on the ground in the mountains.

This past week, the Lumbee Tribe Boys & Girls Club Staff, as well as members of the Boys & Girls Clubs have begun filling buckets with hygiene products for babies, men and women. The children are also coloring cards to send to the families.

Community members or organizations may drop donations at any of the (7) Lumbee Tribe Boys & Girls Club locations. Collections are accepted from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at each location. To make a online monetary donation, visit GiveNCMO.com.

Pembroke Boys & Girls Club

120 Youth Drive

Pembroke, NC 28372

First Nation Boys & Girls Club

784 Singletary Church Rd

Lumberton, NC 28358

Southern Spirit Boys & Girls Club

1872 Back Swamp Road

Lumberton, NC 28360

Four Winds Community Building

1073 Rennert Road

Lumberton, NC 28360

Two Stream Community Building

16 Rosie's Drive

Maxton, NC 28364

Hawkeye Boys & Girls Club

3066 Blue Springs Rd Red Springs, NC 28377

Scotland County Boys & Girls Club

10306 Stewartsville Cemetery Church Road

Laurinburg, NC 28352

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Tasha Oxendine For The Robesonian, 'Lumbee Boys & Girls Club gathers supplies for hurricane victimes', *Robesonian, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C275BB20457980>



NCHSAA changes fall sports schedule due to Hurricane Helene

October 11, 2024 | RockinghamNow (NC) Author: Bryant Roche | Section: Sports | 794 Words OpenURL Link

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association has changed its fall sports calendar in response to the damage caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," NCHSAA President Stephen Gainey and association Commissioner Que Tucker said in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the board of directors in making time to consider these changes and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The football schedule has been pushed back a week for each round. State championships will occur on Dec. 20 and 21. The reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 1 to Nov. 9, with seeding occurring on Nov. 10. The first round is scheduled for Nov. 15 and subsequent round following each week.

The new state championship football schedule conflicts with the annual HAECO Invitational basketball tournament, currently scheduled for Dec. 19-21. Of the participating schools, Greensboro Day, an NCISAA member, is the only one of the eight participants that doesn't have football.

Dudley is likely to be affected the most. While basketball hasn't begun, based on last year's rosters, four projected key players — Jerron Blackwell, CJ Neely, Nasir Newkirk and Andrew Rogers—are also key starters for the Dudley football team which is 6-0.

The Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas is also scheduled for Dec. 21, with Blackwell and Newkirk having been selected to play.

The North Carolina Coaches Association said its East-West All-Star Game in Greensboro is still scheduled for Dec. 22. The NCCA said that players chosen for that game and are involved in the NCHSAA state championships will be replaced, and that head coaches for the all-star game will be replaced by an assistant and reassigned for the 2026 game.

Dudley coach Steven Davis was selected to coach the West team, and Southeast Guilford coach Earl Bates is an assistant. Player rosters for this game have not been announced.

The Frank Spencer Holiday Classic, a traditional Winston-Salem boys basketball tournament, is scheduled for Dec. 18-21. Mount Tabor's Virginia Tech recruit Shamarius Peterkin has excelled in both football and basketball for the Spartans.

The NCHSAA is allowing teams to participate in one additional contest for all sports with a season limit. In this case, the contest must receive prior approval from the NCHSAA. It can't exceed daily or weekly limitations and the contest can't exceed the season limit for both schools. Statistics from the added game cannot be entered into MaxPreps.

The volleyball reporting deadline has been moved back three days to Oct. 19 with seeding to be announced on the next day. The new schedule puts the first round on Oct. 22, the second round on Oct. 24, the third round Oct. 26 and the fourth round on Oct. 29. Regionals will be on Oct. 31 and state championships on Nov. 2.

The weekly limitation on volleyball has been modified to allow for eight matches to make up for postponements, but

the weekly limitation remains the same.

The boys soccer reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 31 to Nov. 6, with seeding on Nov. 7. The first round of the playoffs is set for Nov. 9, the second round Nov. 12, the third on Nov. 14 and the fourth on Nov. 16. Regionals are set for Nov. 19 and state championships are to take place on Nov. 22 and 23. The weekly limitation is modified to make up games but can't exceed four in a week, with the daily limitation being the same.

The girls tennis individual tournament reporting deadline is the only one that remains on the same day, Oct. 14, but the time has been shifted from 3 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. Regionals are on Oct. 18 and 19 and the state championships are on Oct. 25 and 26. However, the dual team reporting deadline has been modified from Oct. 10 to Oct. 17, with seeding on Oct. 18. The first round is on Oct. 21 with the second round two days later. The third round is set for the 28 and the fourth on Oct. 30. Regionals are to be held on Nov. 5 and state championships on Nov. 9.

The cross country reporting deadline has been pushed back three days from Oct. 22. Regionals are to be held on Oct. 26 and state championships on Nov. 2.

Cheerleading and girls golf are the only sports not to undergo a calendar change, but for girls golf, the minimum number of nine-hole rounds to qualify for regionals is revised from five to three.

The association didn't announce any changes for winter or spring sports. For state playoffs, there have been no venue changes.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Bryant Roche, 'NCHSAA changes fall sports schedule due to Hurricane Helene', *RockinghamNow* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25A9B83A60D30



Local teams, organizations rally for Helene victims

October 11, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: David Cruz | Section: Local | 728 Words OpenURL Link

If there's one thing Twin Counties residents aren't known for, it's sitting on the sidelines in the aftermath of a tragedy. Much of the recovery efforts and volunteering to help neighbors get back on their feet goes unheralded.

But at the conclusion of Monday's Nash County Board of Commissioners meeting, several commissioners took a moment to commend the actions of county employees and the county's residents who packed up vans and trailers and headed west to help fellow North Carolinians who are struggling to recover from the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Helene.

Commissioner Sue Leggett said the experiences that local residents have had with hurricanes and massive flooding have played a role in inspiring people here to help their neighbors in western North Carolina.

"It is so personal to want to help," Leggett said.

Commissioner Wayne Outlaw called the hurricane the most significant natural disaster of his lifetime.

"There are hundreds of people dead, and hundreds of people who haven't been found yet," Outlaw said.

He noted that numerous police officers, sheriff's deputies and firefighters from agencies around the county have volunteered to help in the rescue and recovery efforts. He asked the county's staff for help in identifying those that volunteered for duty in western N.C. counties so that he could thank them personally.

Among those who have answered the call to help was a large contingent of nurses and other hospital personnel from UNC Heath Nash in Rocky Mount. Registered nurse Nik Powell said he worked in a surgical unit at a UNC hospital in Morganton that had 13 staff members unaccounted for after the storm.

"The hardships and devastation I witnessed were heartbreaking. It reminded me of Hurricane Floyd back in 1999," Powell said. "Seeing the destruction of homes, businesses and communities was a stark reminder of the fragility of life."

However, Powell said, he also saw strength and perseverance amid tragedy.

"This experience deepened my understanding of hope, which sustains us even in the darkest of times," said Powell of what he witnessed in Burke County.

And in spite of the devastation, Powell said there were bright moments also.

"Witnessing the resilience and compassion of the community was truly inspiring. People told stories about how they came together to help their neighbors, sharing resources and offering support," Powell said.

Commissioner Fred Belfield said his church, Mt. Zion First Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, held supply and food drives to assist the storm's survivors. Such efforts in the faith community were happening at numerous churches across the county.

At Nashville Methodist Church, parishioners pulled together with town leaders and local residents for a hurricane relief effort which collected two trailers full of food and supplies. The first trailer load was headed to Samaritan's Purse in Boone and was then directed to more isolated communities in western North Carolina and eastern

Tennessee.

Parishioners leading the effort said the response from both the church and the community as a whole has been tremendous, with Nashville residents making multiple trips to the trailer to drop off a few different items each time. A couple volunteered to accept items and load them on the trailer even though they weren't members of the church.

A parishioner said he remembered the flooding and devastation the area suffered during Hurricane Floyd in 1999 — both the feeling of helplessness and also the help that area residents received from neighboring communities.

Many Nashville residents and church members who pitched in on the local relief drive felt the need to pay forward that same assistance, said the parishioner who wished to remain anonymous.

Powell also said his faith inspired him to make the trip to flood-ravaged Burke County.

"I felt compelled to go to western NC because I believe that we are all called to serve our fellow human beings," Powell said. "The Bible teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and I saw this as an opportunity to live out that principle. Helping those affected by Hurricane Helene was a way for me to make a difference in the world and to show God's love to others."

Powell added that it was inspiring working with his fellow volunteers.

"One of the most memorable aspects of this experience was the sense of community and camaraderie among the volunteers," Powell said. "We worked tirelessly together, sharing stories, laughter and tears."

For Powell, it was a powerful reminder of the strength that comes from unity and the importance of supporting one another in times of need.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

David Cruz, 'Local teams, organizations rally for Helene victims', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25E4A4AFF8188>



County could be connected within 3 years

October 11, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Reports | Section: Local | 457 Words OpenURL Link

Virtually every Edgecombe County resident could have access to broadband internet service by the end of 2027.

That's according to a report presented Monday to the Edgecombe County Board of Commissioners by Steve Brewer, director of government affairs for Brightspeed.

Brewer, a native of Edgecombe County, provided commissioners with a color-coded map that showed the various projects under way across the county and the number of internet-eligible locations.

Brewer also told commissioners that the state has changed the rules for one of the programs — dubbed Completing Access to Broadband — and that the state will now meet the match requirement, rather than it falling to the county.

The program provides an opportunity for individual counties to collaborate with the N.C. Department of Information Technology to fund broadband deployment projects in unserved areas.

Funding for the program comes from a \$400 million appropriation from the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Brewer also discussed the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, a broadband initiative by the Federal Communications Commission that awards funds to support the construction of broadband networks in rural communities without current (or already-funded) access to adequate broadband internet service. These projects are constructed at no direct cost to the county.

He also discussed the state GREAT Grant program, which was established in 2018 as part of Gov. Roy Cooper's plan to close the digital divide. It is a competitive program that provides matching grants to internet service providers that work with individual counties to expand high-speed internet service to unserved areas of the state.

In Edgecombe County, Brightspeed has 4,295 locations under the federal and state grant programs; Spectrum has 1,680 locations under the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund; and NfinityLink has 622 locations under the state program.

A location is a point-of-service connection.

Even with the various programs, there are still 878 locations where Brewer said it could be cost-prohibitive to connect to the internet.

He told commissioners that the state was preparing to introduce Completing Access to Broadband 2.0 when Hurricane Helene hit and devastated the western part of the state.

The storm caused the rollout to be pushed back, he said, "but I still think it will be announced in November."

The second phase of the program will see the state provide counties with an additional \$500,000 to help fund broadband. Edgecombe County had already set aside \$1 million from American Rescue Plan Act funds, and Brewer said indications are that the state will match the funds. That would provide funds to connect even the most isolated locations in the county.

Brewer said he thought it was likely that all of the projects would be completed by the end of 2026.

Seeking clarity, Board of Commissioners Chairman Leonard Wiggins asked: "So you're telling us that we should be connected in three years?"

"I would hope so," Brewer said.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Reports, 'County could be connected within 3 years', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 11 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25E4A4FC97930



DEVASTATING - How Gastonia, Shelby athletic programs are aiding those affected by Helene

October 11, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Joe L Hughes II; Gaston Gazette | Section: Sports | 619 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

Gratitude served as somewhat of a keyword the past two weeks for high school athletic programs in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties, thankful for another opportunity to participate in activities which they enjoy.

For as much as a return to normalcy has been welcomed by those fortunate to escape the brunt of Tropical Storm Helene, a palpable sense of grief and sympathy has also been notably present in its aftermath.

The tropical system came ashore Sept. 27 as a Category 4 hurricane, carving a path of destruction through six states in the Southeastern U.S. Hardest hit were the mountains and foothills of North Carolina, where high winds and heavy rains combined to down trees, create landslides and wash out entire communities.

"(We're not dealing with anything) compared to what those guys in the mountains are going through; I feel real strong about how hard that is for the people up there, a whole lot of good people up there," said South Point football coach Adam Hodge following his team's win over Crest last Friday night. "I called several coaches, talked to them and it's a real devastating thing going on up there. We get to play football, and that isn't anything like what they are going through."

A moment of silence was observed last week at high school sporting events throughout the area. However, programs in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties are going the extra mile in aid of their mountain neighbors.

Since Helene left a path of carnage, local programs have used their platform to garner much-needed resources for communities in the mountains and foothills.

A tractor-trailer welcomed patrons to Burns High's Ron Greene Stadium last Friday night, cramming as many cases of water as possible before the hometown Bulldogs' victory over Bessemer City. North Lincoln challenged those in Pumpkin Center to do the same, requesting materials ranging from batteries, blankets, heavy coats and gloves to detergent, baby formula, as well as items for pets and livestock.

Proceeds from Shelby High's junior varsity matchup with Burns, as well as its varsity game against Highland Tech the following night were to benefit Samaritans' Purse relief efforts. The school also sought bottled water, diapers, wipes, paper towels and medical supplies among other items

Such charity will continue into this week. Prior to its key Big South 3A matchup with South Point, the Kings Mountain athletic department announced \$2 from each ticket sold Friday night will go to help Pisgah High School recovery efforts.

"Pisgah High, a fellow western 3A school, has been a valued partner, hosting wrestling and golf regionals in recent years," according to a prepared statement by the Kings Mountain High athletic department. "They are now facing the challenges of Helene after recovering from Tropical Storm Fred (in 2021), and we hope this contribution helps their students and staff during this difficult time."

Such comes on the heels of the Mountaineer volleyball team's "Fill the Jug" campaign, hoping spare change could "make change" for those impacted by Tropical Storm Helene. They also accepted canned goods and water.

Also getting in on the act is Ashbrook High, its booster club announcing a portion of funds raised via concessions will go to help Owen High School in Swannanoa.

"One of the messages we put out (last week) was to take advantage of your opportunities, because it can be taken away," said Ashbrook football coach Darius James. "You have guys in the mountains, they don't have football right now. Some of them are either grieving, looking at loss of homes, family members and that's more important than football. So (it's about) putting that all in perspective."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe L Hughes II, Gaston Gazette, 'DEVASTATING - How Gastonia, Shelby athletic programs are aiding those affected by Helene', *Star, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 B1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C23EB44BF8CDD8>



Benefit planned for those hit by Helene

October 11, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Diane Turbyfill; Shelby Star | Section: News | 182 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Performers will include Dirty Grass Soul, Todd & Friends with Jeff Cline and Bailey Marie Griggs.

An event will be held this weekend to help those impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Here's what you need to know:

What

Appalachian Aid Jam 2024 is a 7 hour and 30 minute event to provide entertainment for attendees and assistance for those in need.

When

2 to 9:30 p.m. Saturday

Where

WoodMill Winery, 1350 WoodMill Winery Lane, Vale

Cost

Monetary or relief supply donations

A list can be found at woodmillmusicworks.com/appalachianaidjam2024.

Details

Performers will include Dirty Grass Soul, Todd & Friends with Jeff Cline and Bailey Marie Griggs.

Food Trucks will be on-site and available during the event.

Half of all monetary donations will be used to purchase and transport items needed for farms and farm animals displaced by Hurricane Helene.

The remaining half will be given to Samaritans Purse to support their ongoing efforts to provide help for our Western North Carolina neighbors during this time of much need.

For additional information, contact Larry G. Cagle Jr., owner of WoodMill Winery and Music Works at 704-736-7733.

Performers will include Dirty Grass Soul, Todd & Friends with Jeff Cline and Bailey Marie Griggs.

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• Citation (aglc Style)



Want to help Hurricane Helene victims? Here's how to spot a scam

October 11, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Kara Fohner; Gaston Gazette | Section: News | 700 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

People looking to help Western North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene should be on the lookout for scammers, according to the Better Business Bureau. Here's how you can spot them.

Fake charities

"So what happens oftentimes is scammers will actually go on social media and create big charities. They'll create fake donation websites. They'll create social media campaigns, crowdfunding pages, and it looks like they're supporting relief efforts," said Juliana O'Rork, vice president of Marketing, Communications and Business Development for the Better Business Bureau. "And they use, you know, that emotional appeal to try to get people to donate immediately and in the moment ... They're creating fake websites, fake links for people to click on and then provide their credit card for donations. And unfortunately, they're just not legit."

Storm chasers

People affected by the hurricane also should be on the lookout for storm chasers, businesses or scammers that approach people after a storm and pressure them into paying for services, O'Rork said.

"So people will come out of the woodwork. They will travel across state lines and try to offer their services. They'll go door to door sometimes, and sometimes the companies are legitimate, but you know, oftentimes they're not," O'Rork said. "They'll show up at your door. They're gonna say they can fix your roof ... They may take a 50% down payment upfront and literally never return to do the work."

"If you have ... an unsolicited person offering these services to you, if they're pressuring you, if they're using these tactics that you have to hire them now, you have to make these payments up front, those are going to be red flags that they're more than likely a storm chaser," O'Rork added.

Be cautious

People who need help should carefully research people or organizations that offer their services. Websites set up by scammers might have misspellings, broken links, photos used elsewhere online, and icons that don't work correctly.

"One thing we just always recommend is to do your research. If you're looking for a specific service, research the heck out of it online. Make sure that you feel comfortable. Make sure the websites look legitimate," O'Rork said. "You know, there's no misspellings. There should be very visible contact information, phone numbers, addresses where they're located, prior pictures from prior work, so that you can see the work that they've done."

People who want to donate to the relief efforts in WNC should check online to see if the charity they wish to give to is legitimate.

You can do this on the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance at give.org, or go to https://www.charitynavigator.org/.

"You know, most of the time when it comes to charities, especially if you're visiting like their website or seeing where they've been vetted, you can find things like financial records. You know exactly what their mission is, what

they're doing with the donations, how they're actually helping people, versus just saying, you know, we're helping victims of the hurricane," O'Rork said. "It's like, okay, but you're helping victims of the hurricane. In what capacity? Are you providing meals? Are you providing food, clothing, cleanup assistance? So we would recommend those two websites ... to be able to determine which charities are legitimate and which ones we have vetted."

People who wish to donate should donate directly to the organization they want to support, using the organization's official website. They should also use a credit card, O'Rork said.

"Obviously, a credit card offers additional protection against fraud, so we always encourage people to use your credit card and avoid sending cash or using like the ... payment apps, like Venmo or Cash App," she said.

When donating to crowdfunding campaigns on websites like Go Fund Me, people should be cautious.

"GoFundMe is an accredited business, so we know as an organization, they do good work. It's just the scammers that (are) raising funds for X, Y and Z. But if you don't know the individual, you may want to steer clear of that, just because ... if they're not explaining exactly what they're doing with the money, how they're helping victims, it could potentially be a scam," she said. "Make sure you do have enough information to know whether it's legitimate or not."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Kara Fohner, Gaston Gazette, 'Want to help Hurricane Helene victims? Here's how to spot a scam', *Star, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C23EB4649FEE48



Church community finds comfort in reverend's message, volunteerism

October 11, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Shawn Raymundo; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 827 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE, N.C. - Inside Courtney Walker's home in Asheville, there's a certain hour in the evening when everything becomes black.

"We have flashlights in the house, and we just sit there and kind of look at each other," Walker said of her family who have been without power and water in the week since Helene hit as a tropical storm after making landfall in Florida as a hurricane.

Similarly, Lolita Harrison hasn't had running water. Much like the rest of the Helene-ravaged community, she and her husband have fetched water from the creek to use as "gray water" for flushing toilets.

They've used paper plates and other disposable items to eat, since they cannot wash dishes. They were temporarily without power after the storm, but it's been restored. Harrison acknowledged that even when the house lost electricity, she was fortunate her gas stove allowed her to cook.

That hasn't been the case for Walker and her parents. Instead, she's grabbed food and other resources from distribution centers including her church, Saint James African Methodist Episcopal.

It's also there that she's found comfort and hope at a time when such things appear to be in short supply.

The storm left a path of destruction across the region and a death toll that's risen to more than 200, according to local officials. Most of those occurred in Western North Carolina, where hundreds more remain missing.

Attending Sunday's 11 a.m. service – the church's first since Helene – Walker hoped to hear the Rev. Douglas Bynum deliver an uplifting message to "keep us going" and a reminder that God "is in charge."

Harrison, a fellow congregant, echoed the thought.

"He is in charge, He will not put more on us than we can bear," Harrison said.

That's the sentiment Bynum hoped to instill in his congregation Sunday morning. He read from the Book of Job, the Old Testament story of a devout believer in God whose faith was tested through a series of adversities.

"Today's homily is about finding hope and holding fast to what you believe, even when troubles come and when the tribulations of life rise," he said ahead of the service, which gathered a dozen members, down from the 35 to 50 who usually attend.

For the relatively new pastor, appointed to the role in May, his message, which he titled "When Trouble Comes," also served as a lesson for himself as he acknowledged his struggle to remain "emotionally sturdy" in the face of the crisis.

"All of this happening in the first six months is, I think, for me, indicative of God placing us where he needs us to be, for when he needs us to be there," he said.

What's helped Bynum cope so far is just staying busy.

"I think it is really being of assistance to the community of being busy doing something that's productive," he said.

That includes getting the church's distribution center up and running.

In the past week, the church has amassed a collection of food and supplies thanks to donations from various agencies, businesses and nonprofits.

Dozens of volunteers, both within and outside of the church, have stepped up to organize and administer those provisions to those in need.

One such volunteer is Valerie Cason-Bond. She's a recreational therapist at a local hospital and is one of the ministry's stewards who helps the pastor run the church.

Cason-Bond said she wanted to dedicate more of her free time at the church this past week, helping to inform the community that Saint James was open to those who needed food and supplies.

Her home's power and water were restored soon after Helene passed. That riddled her with guilt, "knowing that I have what I need, and others are still without running water, electricity."

"I just felt like I had to do something to help others," she said from the section of the church that's become the distribution center.

As a volunteer, she's heard repeated stories from those dealing with the loss of loved ones and homes. She's felt helpless to provide them assistance, acknowledging that recovery will take time.

"But there is strength in what we are able to do, providing food and water," she said.

There has been a collection of churches offering aid while first responders, charitable organizations and government agencies from around the U.S. and Canada have gathered here to assist with cleanup and recovery.

That makes Cason-Bond's heart swell, she said.

"We all come together to help those in need, whether it's here or out of state or out of the country, they've been coming here to just, just help, and it feels good," she said. "I just wish we could do even more."

In Harrison's neighborhood, residents are doing what they can for one another.

Teasing that her husband was worried about missing NFL games on Sunday, Harrison said she used the power outage to pass the time outside on her porch and connect with neighbors.

"We have great neighbors. We just be walking down, we talk to one another," she said. "They've helped one another. Yes, if you need water, anything. We give."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Shawn Raymundo, Asheville Citizen Times, 'Church community finds comfort in reverend's message, volunteerism', *Star, The* (online), 11 Oct 2024 A6 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C23EB45B3A8520>