

### Addiction recovery clients facing extra hurdles

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Jade Jackson; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 603 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE — Michael Roberts knows about the process of recovery. And so, the morning after Tropical Storm Helene he stepped outside his Haywood Road home and got to work, helping his neighbors remove downed trees in the neighborhood.

Amid the cleanup, he noticed a need for another kind of recovery.

"I saw just folks walking through the street going through withdrawals," Roberts said. "Or they were on substances. I know the feeling. When I was getting high there was no barrier stopping me from getting to that need. In my mind, my body needed it to survive."

After going through substance abuse treatment 26 times, the Asheville native has been sober for nine years. He now serves as the outreach director for Addiction Professionals of North Carolina, or APNC, and said efforts to keep centers open in Asheville began right after the storm so that people in recovery could still get resources. APNC serves as a statewide anchor for treatment and recovery resources.

The initial storm caused many treatment centers to lose current and potential recovery clients.

Usually serving 70 to 80 clients at any given time, Asheville Recovery Center is now working at less than half that capacity. The center said that perhaps 25 to 30 new clients missed out on its services because of Helene.

"There was no way initially to document or figure out where they were or if they were safe," CEO Nathan Hedrick said. "But by day three our recovery community here really came together. We thank APNC, and it was our staff here that really made sure we had outside resources, power, water and Wi-Fi."

There is some sense of normalcy back for clients and staff with the day-to-day operations of treatment picking back up, which is what APNC CEO Sara Howe said her organization wanted to see happen across WNC.

"Trauma is a high indicator of a substance use disorder," Howe said. "So, this disaster adds to the trauma that could lead somebody recovering back to addiction. You lose connection with clients in recovery in these type of disaster situations, which is why it was important to us to bring resources as soon as possible."

Initially, bringing in 60 pallets of water, APNC also had first aid kits and solar powered cellphone chargers distributed. Then they sent in safe medicine boxes for people struggling with drug addiction, such as Narcan and Naloxone. Daily emails were sent out after the storm to keep partners informed about where clients could get help.

Treatment center locations

Asheville Recovery Center, location: 9 Old Burnsville Hill Rd # 7

Katharos Sanctuary, location: 370 N Louisiana Avenue

Asheville Detox Center, location: 25 Choctaw Street

Carolina Recovery Solutions, location: 701 Brevard Road

Otterhouse Wellness, location: 40 North French Broad Avenue

Oasis Recovery Center, location: 191 Charlotte Street

Crestview Recovery Center, location: 90 Asheland Avenue

October Road Medicaid Asheville Addiction Treatment Center, location: 119 Tunnel Road #D

Next Step Recovery, location: 900 Hendersonville Road #203

Women's Recovery Center - Insight Human Services, location: 723 Fairview Road

Beyond Addiction, location: 70 Woodfin Place 105 A

Rise Recovery Asheville can be contacted via phone at (828) 484-6659 or email: RiseRecoveryAsheville@gmail.com

Ritual Recovery - Drug and Alcohol Rehab in Asheville, location: 100 Victoria Road

Middle River Asheville - Sober Living, Halfway House, location: 256 A Clayton Avenue

The Willows at Red Oak Recovery, location: 108 Executive Park

"Reconnection is the opposite of addiction," Michael Roberts said. "I've been out on the streets handing out Narcan and bottles of water. I tell people all the time that what helped me was love and compassion. That's the cure."

Jade Jackson is a public safety reporter for IndyStar assisting with Hurricane Helene coverage with USA Today Network. Contact her at Jade.Jackson@IndyStar. Follow her on Twitter @IAMJADEJACKSON.

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### Mitchell, Yancey county residents buck setbacks

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Johnny Casey; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 1638 Words Page: A11 OpenURL Link

BURNSVILLE - For many residents in Yancey and Mitchell Counties, waiting around for a road destroyed in Tropical Storm Helene to be fixed isn't an option, as they require basic necessities like food and water.

So in the interim, remote mountain communities have lived by a "Neighbors helping neighbors" mantra.

On Oct. 8, traffic was backed up along U.S. 19 crossing into Yancey County from Madison County. Numerous law enforcement from around the state and region manned the roadway as food, water, supplies and eager volunteers poured in from throughout the country.

The News-Record & Sentinel spoke with Yancey County Sheriff Shane Hilliard Oct. 8, who said the county death toll was at 14 as of 2 p.m. Tuesday. The sheriff said the county has recovered nine bodies and continues to look for another six bodies of victims who died in Hurricane Helene's destruction.

"We're constantly doing welfare checks to make sure, because you've got families from out of state that can't talk to loved ones," Hilliard said. "We're being that middle. Every day, there's more and more and more. But most of those people, we're able to account for."

Hilliard said he did not have an estimate how many residents were still unaccounted for.

Additionally, water and sewer service to the town of Burnsville are not operational, as the town's treatment plant was compromised, according to local officials.

According to Hilliard, phone service, which was often spotty even before Helene's devastation, continues to present obstacles for search and rescue/recovery teams.

"One of our biggest hurdles is people still can't call 911 or call to tell us if they need help. It's all face-to-face, person-to-person contact, pretty much," Hilliard said, adding that cell service around town has improved in recent days thanks to a number of Starlinks brought to town.

Communities hit hard, but 'Neighbors helping neighbors'

At the Burnsville Fire Department, where Gov. Roy Cooper met with local officials Oct. 8, U.S. 19 in Burnsville and down the road, the town almost resembled a war-torn area, as helicopters whirred from above, a field hospital was established at the fire department and makeshift food and supply tents lined parking lots.

Only a few city blocks down the hill and up the street from the Burnsville Town Square, numerous tents lined the perimeter of the Rose's Discount Store parking lot, where local residents had erected a supply distribution center for food, water and other supplies, as well as some emotional support in the way of trauma bonding.

The Enloes, including mother Roxanne and son Jesse, live along Roaring Fork Road in Yancey County, where, as with so many other Yancey and Mitchell County roadways, their road was destroyed in Helene's destruction.

"From Highway 19, it's about 10 minutes up a mountain road," Roxanne Enloe said. "The last mile or so is dirt and rock, and the residents have to maintain it. So we do, but it's in bad shape already. Now with this, we lost it completely."

Roxanne Enloe is from Miami, and remembers Hurricane Kate in 1985.

But Kate doesn't compare to Helene, Enloe said.

"It was bad, but nothing like this," she said. "We only lost power for three days. Here, they said it could be weeks or months before they get the electricity back on."

According to Jesse Enloe, the family has been using ATVs to bypass the roadways. But the property sits at 1,000 feet in elevation, and is "way out in the woods," he said.

Fortunately, all of the family's neighbors are accounted for.

"We've got ATV access to the next hollow," Jesse Enloe said. "Jim Creek's the one next to us, and the one's on either side of us we know are all accounted for.

"Our road is completely gone, but not a single house is damaged, thank God. So, we're a lot better off than a lot of folks. We just have to bum rides into town."

Roxanne Enloe said she was grateful the family had access to water with their spring water as well.

"Some people don't have water, so we're blessed with that as well," she said.

But many of their Roaring Fork neighbors are older, which adds to the urgency of the road repairs, Roxanne Enloe said.

The Enloes and nearby Roaring Fork neighbors have started a GoFundMe to help raise money for repairs to the road.

The Enloes were visiting the Burnsville Fire Department Oct. 8 to grab food and water.

"Thank the Lord this is open," Roxanne Enloe said. "It's been a real blessing. Because we have a generator, we're able to help our neighbors with insulin which they needed refrigerated when they lost power. We're blessed."

Yancey County Sheriff Shane Hilliard, Burnsville Mayor Russell Fox and numerous state and federal officials appeared alongside Cooper for appearances at the Burnsville Fire Department. The team also visited Spruce Pine Oct. 8, and Cooper told The News-Record & Sentinel he planned to be in Madison County Oct. 10.

Heather Sayer lives in Spruce Pine with her husband and two children.

"My driveway washed out. There's a 4-foot crater," said Sayer, who was picking up cookware at Rose's with her children in tow.

"But our house is fine. Just a lot of flooding, and a lot of trees down in the roadway. Trees are down everywhere."

Still, as has been the experience throughout Yancey and Mitchell Counties, neighbors helped neighbors in Sayer's Spruce Pine community to reassemble the road, she said.

"Locals fixed the road with their own equipment," Sayer said.

As for the makeshift supply distribution center, Sayer said she felt it was a vital resource for many.

"There's a line of people getting things that they need. We were OK. We were ready," she said, adding that she found out about the donations center on Facebook.

"But a lot of people weren't, which is why the line is so long. It's all been donated."

'Every day is a struggle'

Cheryl Crowe lived with her husband in the Bluff community of Hot Springs in Madison County, but moved to live with her son in Bakersville just days before Hurricane Helene, and is dealing with the loss of her husband, who died in August.

She moved in with her son on Thursday, Sept. 26, as Hurricane Helene was moving in.

"I still don't have my furniture from my house," she said. "Our son's whole yard is gone. It came in the house and ruined the carpet. It's got to be pulled up."

She said she wasn't sure if the home was going to be a total loss.

Crowe recalls watching the storm with her daughter on the family's patio, and being in disbelief.

"We saw this wall of water coming towards us. There's a creek that runs right through the property and in front of it. This wall of water was just coming towards the house, and we were in shock," she said. "Then, across the street, all these trees just started snapping.

"My son came and grabbed us and made us go inside. When we came back out, it was total destruction. Somebody's house was half in the creek and half in our yard. There was a dam that broke, and it just tore their house apart."

Amid all the chaos and moving around, Crowe said the process of grieving her husband has been interrupted.

"I really haven't had time to grieve because every day is a struggle just trying to make it through the day," she said.

"Every day, it's running around trying to find places like this to get what we need, because we have no power and no water. Mostly, it's just trying to survive. We've got a bunch of animals to take care of."

Relief efforts like the one at Rose's Discount Store in Burnsville have been a lifeline for people like Crowe.

The Rose's distribution center was started by Stephanie Johnson, who said Hurricane Helene left devastation which required her, her husband and their daughter to put in three days of working cutting trees at their home, located near the Bald Creek area of Yancey County.

"After that, we got to town, no internet, no water in town and no sewer, because the sewer system was compromised," Johnson said. "Everybody's doing great up in the holler, and everybody is OK in that holler. But we're still pulling people out from other hollers.

"They're still coming out."

When they do, Johnson said she and her team will be waiting for them with relief and supplies on hand.

The distribution center started Oct. 1, but later grew into a much bigger operation.

"First it started in my holler," she said. "My neighbors didn't have bottled water. That started it, and we were getting them going. I looked over and there was no help. We stopped at the gas station and there was a woman over there, a momma, and she was buying gas with quarters.

"I just couldn't take it."

Johnson, who is a local realtor, said she cannot go back to work until the people in her mountain community she loves so much, as well as the mountains themselves, can heal.

"These mountains are very important to me," Johnson said. "Like, my soul loves these mountains, and I cannot go back in them just yet, because I'll lose it. So, the best way to help was to just get food and supplies to them. We just started with one little trailer just trying to feed our little community. Then, my friends from Harrisburg and Charlotte started sending me stuff."

Johnson said Rose's has supported the team throughout its efforts.

"As long as I'm serving my community," she said. "I never imagined it would have turned into this."

To donate to assist Jesse and Roxanne Enloe and their Roaring Fork Road neighbors to help them rebuild their road, click here or visit https://gofund.me/5b745768.

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### Get your tetanus, COVID, flu shots

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Buncombe County Health and Human Services has warned that Western North Carolina residents helping to clean up the destruction left by Tropical Storm Helene may be at risk of tetanus. Stacey Wood, a representative for BCHHS said to "be prepared."

"If you get a cut or a puncture wound that is exposed to floodwater or the dirt it leaves behind, see a doctor," Wood said in an email.

Symptoms of tetanus

Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, is a serious bacterial infection that can be life-threatening. The NC Department of Health and Human Services recommends that everyone be vaccinated against tetanus - though anyone who was in contact with floodwaters should pay particular attention to immunization status and potential symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control provides a list of possible symptoms, which generally occur between three to 21 days after exposure:

Spasms of the jaw muscles or "lockjaw," which is often the first symptom.

Trouble swallowing.

Sudden, involuntary muscle spams - often in the stomach.

Painful muscle stiffness all over.

Seizures - jerking or staring.

Headache.

Fever and sweating.

Changes in blood pressure and heart rate.

Where to get vaccines

Local pharmacies and chain pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens offer Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) and Td (booster shot against tetanus and diphtheria) at many locations. Use scheduling options on pharmacy websites or call in advance to schedule immunizations. Also advised by the BCHHS are the fall 2024 flu shot and COVID-19 booster shot. You can locate COVID and flu boosters with the NCDHHS locater at covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vaccines. Your health care provider and some urgent care clinics can also provide immunization against tetanus, flu and COVID.

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### HOF NASCAR driver gives lift to relief efforts - Biffle's Operation Airdrop rescues stranded

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Greg Biffle started out willing to lend a hand, or a helicopter as the case happened to be, in the Hurricane Helene relief effort but ended up leading the charge.

The former NASCAR driver was asked by a friend if he would fly his helicopter to assist with a single-family rescue in western North Carolina on Sept. 28, which Biffle, 54, did. After witnessing the devastation, there was no turning back for Biffle.

The NASCAR Hall of Fame driver nominee was locked in like being in the middle of the Daytona 500.

"What started out to be helping one family that was stuck up in Banner Elk, which was the only thing I knew about, it's kind of taken on a life of its own," Biffle told The Tennessean Wednesday. "That family was at an Airbnb with a two young kids and didn't have enough baby formula and diapers because they were supposed to check out that day. So I thought, 'Maybe I'll go get them because if I don't who else is?' Not everybody has a helicopter and the means and the time on a moment's notice."

On that rescue attempt, which turned out to be unsuccessful because of low-lying clouds, Biffle was startled by what he saw below. After landing back at his shop in Mooresville, North Carolina, just north of Charlotte, Biffle posted on social media that he had been unable to rescue the family at Banner Elk but planned to try again the following day. The family did make it out on a bridge.

That's what thrust Biffle fully into the thick of what has turned into Operation Airdrop, a volunteer effort to provide disaster relief to those affected by the storm. As of Wednesday Biffle had flown nine days straight into the rescue areas.

"After I posted that first day I got like 4,000 messages in an hour and a half," Biffle said. "Messages like, 'I haven't heard from my parents. My brother's up there. My sister's there. My kids, my grandparents, my neighbors.' I don't think people knew the magnitude of it and neither did I. What I thought was one day of flying turned into a rescue mission of dire need."

Biffle and the others involved in the mission have flown food, water, insulin, baby formula, diapers, generators and other necessities to stranded individuals and families. More than 1 million people lost power and cell service during and after the storm.

Biffle's wife Christina has flown along on several of the missions and served as his navigator.

"These mountain areas are completely isolated," Biffle said. "Because there's not one road washed out. Every road is washed out for hundreds and hundreds of miles. It wasn't just one power pole that was knocked down, every power pole for miles and miles was knocked down. The roads are gone. The railroad is gone. This thing spans from South Carolina to Virginia."

The rescue operation Biffle is involved in started on Sept. 28 with two helicopters in the morning, eight by early in the afternoon and 20 by the end of the first day. The following day 35 helicopters were on board along with more and more volunteers.

The confirmed death toll from the hurricane reached 230 people earlier this week.

"What was reported to be 20 or 30 people lost their lives, I didn't say anything in those early interviews because what I saw was we've got big problems," Biffle said. "What you don't want to happen is to have casualties or people perish after the event because they're stranded. Those are preventable."

On many of his flights into the impacted areas Biffle said victims in need attempted to get his attention. One used a large mirror to alert Biffle.

Biffle planned to start an eight-day vacation three days after he was drawn into the rescue effort. He had a trip planned that he first decided to delay for a day and ultimately canceled after seeing the amount of work that was needed.

"The was that I was raised was you don't live people behind," Biffle said. "I recognized right away with all of the people texting me and messaging me that there were desperate people. I wasn't going to stop until I felt like I'd done everything I could within my means. I'm blessed. My schedule was open. There were things I was able to move around. I had my helicopter, which ironically I wasn't planning on buying but ended up buying five months ago. All the stars just lined up."

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### First responders face mental health struggles

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Shawn Raymundo; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 1699 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

As a frontline responder, Tim Zibelin acknowledges that it's hard to admit when "it's OK to not be OK."

Zibelin, an advanced emergency medical technician with Riceville's Volunteer Fire Department, has witnessed the destruction that Tropical Storm Helene wrought in Western North Carolina nearly two weeks ago.

"The amount of devastation is what really has got to me," he said Wednesday morning from the fire station off Riceville Road, just east of Asheville.

"I mean, you see people's lives uprooted, their homes destroyed, their livelihoods destroyed, businesses destroyed, and it's just, it's a complete loss," Zibelin added, trying to find his words. "And it's just — it will, it'll wear you down is what it will do."

Helene swept across the Southeast on Sept. 26 and 27, leaving a trail of death and ruin.

Among the more than 230 lives lost was a firefighter from the nearby Fairview Volunteer Fire Department.

Firefighter Tony Garrison, 52, died in the line of duty while attempting a rescue during a landslide Sept. 27.

That's a loss that Riceville Fire Chief Tom Kelly has felt personally as Garrison was a student in some of his classes. "Funny" was the first word that came to Kelly's mind when describing the fallen firefighter. "He was funny, just once you got him, got him to start talking or something," Kelly said. "He's just, for lack of better words in Appalachia, just a 'good old boy.'"

First responders in Buncombe County, like Kelly, Zibelin and the late Garrison, have risen to meet the demands of the communities that have needed for help in the storm's wake. They've worked long hours to try to help residents reach a semblance of normalcy.

But Getting to that point could take half a year, according to Kelly.

"Our abnormal is really abnormal," he said, later adding, "We need to get back to our routine, get back to normalcy — however we're going to redefine normalcy in the future — because we're looking at six months before this is behind us."

As far as coping with the disaster, Kelly said he's noticed the loss of human lives weighing on the members of his crew who are keeping to themselves. While he can go and talk to them, they largely stay away from the public to avoid questions about the worst things they've seen.

"On a normal day to day, (we) go to a house fire ... . Buildings do sometimes catch on fire, but they fix buildings every day. They make cars every day," Kelly said. "It's that human aspect of it, when somebody loses a loved one, or they lose several loved ones."

While facing both physical and mental challenges amid the ongoing relief and recovery efforts, local crews have received a wave of support and resources from across the nation. That's provided them with much-needed comfort, rest, and solace in a time of crisis.

North Carolina first responders working tirelessly

When asked how he's doing, Zibelin said, "physically, tired; emotionally, exhausted."

He's logged roughly 200 hours of work the past couple of weeks. After working for five straight days, Zibelin had a day off scheduled Thursday as the station's crew has begun working on a rotation — 24 hours on, 24 hours off.

"But you know, we've got a big support group here," he acknowledged, explaining that the department's chaplain is available to the firefighters every day to make sure they're OK.

Pointing to the Asheville-based Responder Support Services, Chief Kelly noted that North Carolina also has a strong contingency of mental health officials who provide counseling to first responders.

"I've asked them to kind of watch behavior," Kelly said of the counseling teams. "I know how people act in the fire service, doing this 36 years. But bringing in an objective set of eyes, rather than a subjective set of eyes, helps."

Rick Baker is the clinical director and founder of the outpatient mental health organization that works exclusively with emergency services personnel and their spouses in North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

One common theme among the first responders since the storm, Baker said, is a feeling of helplessness. They're finding it difficult to accept a situation wherein they're unable to fix the problems they're responding to. "Their job is to fix and get rid of problems," he said. "And there are a lot of problems, a lot of things that have occurred, a lot of things that have happened that they can't do anything about."

They're also seeing the same problems occur across entire communities, not just in a single incident.

"It's not like this was just a really bad day the community had. This is ongoing," he said. "So, there's a cumulative stress and cumulative trauma factor that they're dealing with. They're all seeing the same trauma with different faces attached to it, day after day after day."

The stressors of seeing their local businesses and infrastructure decimated also compound those feelings, according to Baker. Because of how close the disaster was to their front doors, they're about 30% to 50% more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder.

"All these compounding factors could cause a drastic increase in the PTSD rates in our responders," he said.

Road to healing

begins with talking

One of the first steps frontline workers can take to heal is talking to one another, Baker said.

Historically, the culture among emergency service workers is to bottle feelings up and just move on.

"We evolved a lot in the last 20 or 30 years. We know that that is an ineffective coping strategy," he said, encouraging first responders to talk "about what they're seeing and the impact of that, whether it's with their colleagues (or) with trained peers."

What's also important is that they get some downtime and take advantage of time off when it comes.

"Go rest," he advised. "Because if they go find another task to do somewhere else or for another agency, they're going to eventually burn out or get compassion fatigue, and then they're going to be really kind of impaired in how effective they can be in helping their community."

Helping hands from across

North Carolina, US Army

That's where crews from departments around the state have helped.

In the past week, firefighters from the Winston-Salem Fire Department and the Pittsboro Fire Department have assisted their Riceville counterparts, filling in service gaps and cleaning up the station, which was damaged during the storm.

According to Chief Kelly, the building was powered with a generator for two weeks, when the first storm rolled through. A couple of lightning strikes also knocked out the department's paging system. Because of flooding, the station had almost 14 inches of mud.

Pointing out one of the Winston-Salem firefighters, Kelly said "he came here to serve our community, yet he's going in here to clean. That's the heart of what the fire service does."

The department also is receiving a helping hand from the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division. Arriving to the station Wednesday, soldiers were deployed to provide humanitarian assistance and help clear debris, like fallen trees, from roads.

"We've linked in with the fire department here to be able to go out into the community, some of these back neighborhoods that have been kind of cut off a little bit more, and provide assistance, mainly through humanitarian support," said Capt. Spencer Old, company commander for Alpha Company, 2-502 Infantry, 2nd Brigade Mobile Combat Team from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

The frontline responders, Old said, have contributed many hours to the recovery efforts while getting fewer hours of actual sleep.

"We're here to try and assist them, supplement their efforts, so that way maybe they can get a little more rest and be able to assist, take some weight off their shoulders," Old said. "Whatever we can do, we're here to help them."

For some of those soldiers Wednesday, that included sweeping out the rest of the dirt from the station's interior and hosing the mud off the pavement.

Additionally, Buncombe County has provided supplies and Emergency Medical Services personnel.

That was a "big help," Zibelin noted. The ongoing assistance from county, state and federal agencies is a major step up from where the department was immediately following the storm.

"We really didn't have a lot of resources," he said. "At first, it was just five of us, pretty much. Nobody could get in; nobody could get out. So, we were just kind of gridlocked in here. And once we finally got some of those resources coming in, it really took a lot of weight off everybody's shoulders."

Expressing his gratitude to the Riceville community for continued support, Zibelin said he's inspired to see everyone band together to face the crisis.

"That's the high point," he said, "is just how well they've come together, a brotherhood and a camaraderie that I've not seen in 14 years of doing this."

One thing the community should know, Zibelin said, is that the fire crews aren't going anywhere and are available to continue providing help and resources. "We've got you," he said. "We're going to be here with you from Day One to day zero or to the completion."

Kelly echoed that sentiment and offered those who need the fire department's help to contact his cell at 828-620-1149 while the department's main phone line remains offline.

What mental health

resources are available?

First responders in need of mental health support can contact Responder Support Services at 828-333-5708 from Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The after-hours crisis line is at 828-209-8038.

For members of the general public seeking counseling and support, there are several local resources that Buncombe County and VAYA Health recommend. Those include calling or texting:

988 to speak with a trained mental health professional for mental health support.

1-800-985-5990 for the Disaster Distress Helpline, which is available in English and Spanish 24/7 for those affected by a natural disaster.

1-855-PEERS for North Carolina's Peer Warmline, which connects people to peers living in recovery from mental health or substance use issues.

1-855-587-3463 for Hope4NC, which is available to first responders and volunteers.

1-800-849-6127 for VAYA's Behavioral health crisis line.

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### Court: Pactiv suit can proceed

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Jacob Biba; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 338 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Attorney General Josh Stein's lawsuit against Pactiv Evergreen demanding repayment of \$12 million in state incentives after the company shuttered Canton's paper mill can proceed, a Wake County Superior Court judge ruled Oct. 10.

In May, Stein filed the lawsuit against the mill's Illinois-based corporate owner, arguing Pactiv Evergreen violated the terms of the incentives grant and calling for the \$12 million in state funds to be returned. The company shuttered the mill in May 2023 resulting in hundreds of layoffs, the Citizen Times previously reported.

On July 29, defendants Blue Ridge Paper Products LLC and Evergreen Packaging LLC — two previous owners that were part of deals that led to the 2020 merger with Pactiv — moved to dismiss part of Stein's complaint. In court filings, attorneys for the company argued that Stein's demand was inconsistent with contract law and North Carolina precedent, calling the move an "unenforceable penalty,"

In his Oct. 8 response, Stein wrote the defendants' belief that state law excuses them from having to repay those funds is "wrong on the law, not to mention the equities, especially in light of the hardships that the mill's closure have caused for its more than 800 former employees and for the people of Canton and Haywood County."

In an Oct. 10 statement following the court's ruling in his favor, Stein said he was "pleased that the court saw through Pactiv's baseless attempts to avoid paying back the state's money." The ruling came less than two weeks after Tropical Storm Helene ripped through Western North Carolina, including Canton and Haywood County, an area crushed by deadly floods just two years ago.

"The people of Canton have kept their heads up through the mill closing that devastated their economy last year and the hurricane that devastated their homes a few days ago," he added. "Pactiv owes the state this money so we can put it towards rebuilding and growing economic opportunities in Canton and Western North Carolina."

Jacob Biba is the county watchdog reporter at the Asheville Citizen Times. Reach him at jbiba@citizentimes.com.

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### VP Harris hosts campaign rally at Minges Coliseum

October 13, 2024 | Washington Daily News (NC) Author: Holly Jackson | Section: News | 298 Words OpenURL Link

Vice President and presidential candidate Kamala Harris hosted a campaign rally at East Carolina University's Minges Coliseum on Sunday, Oct. 13.

"It's good to be at ECU, and it's so wonderful to be back in North Carolina," Harris told the roaring crowd of supporters.

Sunday marked Harris' 19th visit to North Carolina since the start of her campaign. She spent Saturday in Raleigh packing diapers into boxes with personal care products that will be sent to western North Carolina, national news outlets reported. She also spent the day meeting with Black faith leaders, community leaders and elected officials at The Pit Authentic Barbecue in Raleigh, they reported.

She and former president/current presidential candidate Donald Trump are within one point of each other to win North Carolina, according to a poll published by the Wall Street Journal. WSJ reported 46% of voters would likely support Trump versus Harris' 45% of voters.

Before the campaign rally that afternoon, Harris spent the morning attending Koinonia Christian Center in Greenville where she spoke about Hurricane Helene victims in western North Carolina, according to the Washington Post.

Hurricane Helene devastated parts of western North Carolina in late September and killed more than 200 people across six states.

At the campaign rally, Harris said this election is about two, competing visions for the nation – "one is focused on the past, the other, ours is focused on the future." The past being Trump's vision for America.

Harris vision includes: bringing down the cost of living, investing in small businesses and entrepreneurs, protecting reproductive rights, national security, she shared on Sunday.

Harris and Trump are now in the homestretch to Election Day which is 23 days away. In North Carolina, early voting begins this Thursday, Oct. 17.

The post VP Harris hosts campaign rally at Minges Coliseum appeared first on Washington Daily News.

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# Sunday's letters: Wake Forest's cancelation of speaker contradicts a tradtion of freedom of speech.

October 13, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC) Section: C | 760 Words Page: 2 OpenURL Link

THE READERS' FORUM

WFU and free speech

As a graduate of Wake Forest University and administrator there 47 years, I was very disappointed when the Wake Forest administration recently canceled the scheduled lecture by a renowned Palestinian scholar. Luckily, Wake Forest faculty and students were able to bring the scholar to Winston-Salem for lectures at a Unitarian church and Winston-Salem State University.

Wake Forest has a rich history of promoting and demonstrating freedom of speech. As a student, I happily attended in 1962 a speech by Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King spoke in Wait Chapel despite pressure by North Carolina Baptists on President Tribble to prevent Dr. King from speaking on campus.

Additionally, lectures at Wake Forest were given by Gus Hall, president of the American Communist Party; George Lincoln Rockwell, president of the American Nazi Party; and Larry Flynt, publisher of Hustler Magazine.

Wake Forest subsequently received the prestigious Alexander Meiklejohn Award for Academic Freedom.

I very much hope in the future Wake Forest can live up to its rich history of freedom of speech.

Ross Arnold Griffith

Winston-Salem

A Trump endorsement?

The blaring, front-page coverage of JD Vance's town hall in Greensboro on Thursday, with a huge headline about Vance deriding storm response, might as well have served as a front-page endorsement for the Trump-Vance campaign. What were you thinking?

Finally, buried on Page 4 with more large color photos of the "town hall," which was really nothing more than a campaign rally, there is a paragraph noting that "U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican whose district includes some of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Helene, has set up a 'Debunking Helene Response Myths' web page. Edwards said via the release that while the FEMA response 'had had its shortfalls,' he wanted to 'dispel the outrageous rumors that have been circulated online,' including claims the hurricane was engineered by the government, that FEMA is running out of money and that FEMA workers are blocking supply trucks or seizing donations."

Trump himself has contributed to the lies surrounding the response to aiding victims of Hurricane Helene. Vance also noted that "situations like the Helene response required accountability which Trump was willing to provide. ..."

This is laughable! Trump has never taken responsibility for any of his actions that proved to be detrimental or false.

I understand that the folks who attended this event were Trump supporters. The headline and front-page coverage, however, imply that Vance and Trump can lie in your newspaper with impunity.

Martha Wishon

Lewisville

Let the veto stand

The N.C. legislature has allotted \$273 million out of the state's \$4.75 billion rainy day fund to finance recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. House Speaker Tim Moore admitted that this is just a "drop in the bucket" - that well over \$10 billion will be needed.

He also made it clear that the legislature will allot more money as it becomes necessary, but said lawmakers did not want to race ahead of federal funds that will soon be arriving to help North Carolina recover.

Bravo! Great use of the rainy-day fund. My only question is what about the private school voucher bill just passed and then vetoed by Gov. Cooper?

That bill uses \$460 million of taxpayer money, the lion's share of it going to private school vouchers to any and every person who applies, regardless of income.

The Republican majority in our legislature intends on overriding Cooper's veto. In light of the tragedy in western N.C., do we really need to funnel \$460 million to wealthy families to help them send their children to private schools? Let the veto stand and earmark those funds for Helene relief.

I urge everyone to text or email your Republican state representatives, urging them to stand down and allow the veto to stand. Use this money where it is desperately needed.

Gary Bolick

Clemmons

Let's make a deal

For the past few years, as the Journal has continued to become smaller, I've had friends tell me they will cancel. I always reply that the Journal needs our support, and we need local news.

A healthy democracy needs local reporters. The New York Times is not going to report on our local school board, our local county commissioners or our City Council. They will not tell us that our city plans to destroy thousands of healthy, mature trees on Winston Lake Golf Course.

I have usually succeeded in persuading my friends not to cancel. But now, Journal, you have tried me to my limit.

I'm ready to make a deal: If you bring back the L.A. Times crossword puzzle, I will not cancel my subscription.

Helen Etters

Winston-Salem

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'Sunday's letters: Wake Forest's cancelation of speaker contradicts a tradtion of freedom of speech.', *Winston-Salem Journal* (online), 13 Oct 2024 2 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
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# Handling storms when they hit, and when they don't - From the editor: Handling storms when they hit, and when they don't

October 13, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC) Section: A | 822 Words Page: 2 OpenURL Link

From the editor

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 27, I woke up to a nice surprise.

I was in Columbus, Ga., for the funeral and burial of my father, and that town had been directly in the projected path of Hurricane Helene.

When I went to bed on Thursday night, with Helene in the Gulf of Mexico making landfall in Florida, I didn't set my alarm because I expected to be awakened at 3 a.m. by trees falling on our rented house, which was set back in a pine forest.

Instead, Bess and I awoke Friday at 7:30 a.m., to the sun shining and birds singing.

My first thought was that we were in heaven.

But we were very much alive. Our best friends from across town called to say they were bringing over donuts and the kind of Southern sausage that you can only get directly from a farmer.

It was a beautiful morning.

I thought about that scene from the "Sun Also Rises," where Jake and Bill are fishing in Italy before the bullfights, and Bill says, "Oh, how should we know? We should not question. Our stay on earth is not for long. Let us rejoice and believe and give thanks."

It's one of my favorite moments in literature, a peaceful moment between friends before a whole lot of sadness and existential angst.

Meanwhile, my children were trying to make their way to Columbus for their grandfather's funeral after being scared by the computer weather models into spending the night in the eastern part of the state.

Which is exactly where the storm went.

My daughter and her husband were driving around fallen trees and squirming power lines in Augusta, and one of my sons was waiting for floodwaters to subside in Atlanta.

Ernest Hemingway wasn't exactly a praying man, and neither was his protagonist Jake or his buddy Bill, but I was in an attitude of prayer that morning.

I was praying for safety for my children and our other family members on the road.

And frankly, I was giving thanks for the bright sunshine we were having in the town where my father was born and died, on this day we were saying goodbye to him.

Later, I learned more about the devastation in Augusta and the terrible destruction and chaos in the mountains of

North Carolina, and like everybody I watched the death toll rise.

The image I can't get out of my head is from "Anguish in Ashe," a story our reporter Susie Spear wrote about storm damage in Ashe County. A man across the Virginia line watched his house floating away and in his despair took his own life.

"He said he was too old to start over and went to his truck and shot himself," said Lansing Fire Chief Jeff Venable, a friend.

Anybody who's lived any amount of time knows that life is a mix of storms and sunshine.

Hopefully you find the peace and strength to ride out the storms.

Hopefully you find the humility and grace to handle those bright days that seem too good to be true.

On Thursday night, my oldest son and his wife were in town and they suggested we take a drive and view the Northern Lights.

My mom has been staying with me and Bess since my dad died, and we all piled into the car and headed toward Bur-Mil Park.

We parked off Strawberry Road and walked along the Atlantic & Eamp; Yadkin Greenway, under a cover of trees, over a long wooden footbridge, into a field.

And that's when we saw the aurora borealis, a vast pinkish glow piercing the curtain of night.

Far away, it was a solar storm, but down here it didn't feel like one. We just stood there in the dark, thankful to be there.

Then we drove home.

"Now that was a fun adventure," my mother said.

Dimon Kendrick-Holmes is North Carolina editor for Lee Enterprises. Contact him at dimon.kendrick-holmes@journalnow.com.

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# Fifth Congressional District race gets heated - Retired newsman takes on Republican incumbent in Fifth Congressional District

October 13, 2024  $\mid$  Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: KEVIN GRIFFIN Staff Reporter | Section: A | 1580 Words

Page: 10 OpenURL Link

Age: 81

Job: Educator & amp; small business owner

Education: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, A.B. in English and M.A.C.T. in Sociology. UNC-Greensboro, Ed.D. in Curriculum and Teaching/Higher Education

Political/civic involvement: Served as U.S. rep since 2005, served in the North Carolina State Senate, served on the Executive Committee of North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry, elected to three four-year terms on the Watauga County Board of Education, confirmed by the United States Senate for a Presidential appointment to the National Advisory Council for Women's Educational Programs, served on the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Advisory Panel, the Board of Directors of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, Board of Directors of the N.C. Center for Public Research, the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Visitors, National Conference of State Legislatures' Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Child Care, Charter Member of the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History and the Foscoe-Grandfather Community Center Board.

Top priority if elected:

I'm running to serve and faithfully represent the hard-working North Carolinians of the Fifth Congressional District.

Every day I hear from people across the district who are fed up with the Biden-Harris administration's high inflation, big government policies and national security failures at our borders.

I plan to continue to build on my track-record of successfully fighting for my constituents, for standing up to the Biden administration, and enacting conservative solutions that actually work.

Today I am laser-focused on helping my constituents recover from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina and channel federal resources to where it is needed.

My constituents know that I work tirelessly to represent them in Congress, to solve problems and to fight for North Carolina values. I have a record that proves I take constituent service seriously and that I will not be outworked by anyone.

Age: 61

Job: Former Journalist and Newspaper Publisher

Education: Wofford College, Bachelor of Arts in English

Political/civic involvement: Board Member, Wilkes Recovery Revolution; Member, Wilkes Child Abuse Prevention Team' Member, Wilkes Prison Ministry

Top priority if elected:

My top priority is to represent working class people.

Costs are rising, wages aren't keeping up with inflation, and small businesses can't compete with corporations.

Meanwhile, Congress just continues the bidding of mega corporations and the richest among us. I'm running to tell Congress it's not about them, it's about you.

For the past two elections, all of Guilford County has been a part of the Sixth Congressional District represented by Democratic Rep. Kathy Manning.

That will change this year under the new maps adopted by Republicans in the N.C. General Assembly last year.

Now, Guilford County is split into three congressional districts, all of which are heavily Republican. The change in the map prompted Manning to opt out of the race for another term.

In terms of population for Guilford County and the city of Greensboro, the largest district is the Fifth Congressional District, which stretches west to the mountains and includes Rockingham, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes, Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga, Caldwell and Alexander counties.

An analysis by the nonprofit advocacy group Common Cause found Republicans have a 13-point advantage in the new district that will be used in this year's election.

Rep. Virginia Foxx, a Republican from Banner Elk, is seeking her 11th term representing the district. Foxx is known for conservative views and support for former President Donald Trump.

During the certification of the 2020 election in January 2021, Foxx voted against accepting electors from the state of Pennsylvania, citing election-law changes in Pennsylvania that she felt violated the Constitution.

Foxx's Democratic opponent is Chuck Hubbard, a retired journalist and newspaper publisher from Wilkesboro.

Hubbard has criticized Foxx as "a ruthless lawmaker who has worked to dismantle public education and workforce protections" while pledging that he will "prioritize our working families and small businesses, support public education, work to build an economy that works for all of us, and expand access to affordable healthcare" if he is elected.

Both candidates submitted responses to questions about their campaigns. Here is what they had to say:

Virginia Foxx

Why should the voters of the Fifth District choose you over your opponent?

It's simple. I have a strong, conservative voting record and a reputation of providing top-notch constituent services to folks in the Triad and across the Fifth Congressional District. My experience means I know how to get things done.

Plus, I've demonstrated my dedication to conservative values with common sense solutions that work for all North Carolinians. No one needs to wonder where I stand or whether I will fight for conservative principles. I have a clear and proven track-record as someone who won't back down from fighting for solutions that will make a difference in my constituents' lives.

Common sense solutions means things like my legislation, the SKILLS Act, which is helping workers build 21st century job skills, while slashing bureaucracy and wasteful spending.

The committee I chair also passed the first ever "Parents Bill of Rights" to ensure parents' rights are protected in

public schools. I am currently leading a successful major investigation into rampant antisemitism at college campuses - which has already resulted in the resignation of university presidents who had tolerated antisemitism and discrimination on their campuses.

There's also my very first bill, the HERO Act, which is now helping our military men and women by increasing their access to retirement savings accounts.

I'm an educator, mother, grandmother and small businesswoman, allowing me to understand many of the issues my constituents must grapple with. I am 100% committed to fighting for the North Carolina values we hold dear and solving our problems with conservative solutions to our tough problems.

What do you see as the greatest challenge facing the district and what solutions would you support to address the problem?

My constituents are fed up with the Biden-Harris economy, which is crushing average, hard-working North Carolinians, thanks to spiraling inflation and job-killing regulation. The Biden administration's policies have produced a punishing cost of living and a slowing economy, which are bleeding families in the Triad dry.

If elected, I will continue to fight for legislation to rein in wasteful federal spending. I will support legislation to restart using taxpayer-owned federal lands to safely produce American energy - which the Biden administration has basically banned, helping drive up energy costs.

The solution to reining in out-of-control government spending is to stop pumping out more inflationary "stimulus." That's why, in the 115th Congress, I voted for legislation to rescind \$15 billion dollars of previously authorized, but unused, funds from overfunded or expired programs.

I also cosponsored the Unauthorized Spending Accountability Act. This bill puts many government programs on a three-year pathway to sunset. It forces Congress to take responsibility for spending, rather than putting programs on spending autopilot-potentially saving 100's of billions of dollars per year.

How will you ensure you adequately represent your constituents in Guilford County and the Triad?

Excellent and responsive constituent service has always been a top priority for me and my dedicated staff.

I will continue to fight for my constituents - including those in the Triad - in Congress, while also fighting to ensure that any one of my constituents who deals with any federal agency or bureaucracy is treated with the fairness and respect due to every citizen.

Most importantly, I will never stop listening to the people I represent. The voice of the people of the fifth district matters to me. When I travel the district and talk with folks I meet, their stories of success, hardship or struggle serve to inspire me to work tirelessly on their behalf.

That's what motivates me to tackle tough problems like our border security and immigration crisis, or repairing the Biden-Harris administration's failed policies that caused the cost of living to spiral out of control for regular folks living in the Triad.

The truth is, we can't afford another four years of Biden-Harris policies. So I'm working hard to ensure we get back to focusing on growing our economy, keeping inflation in check and securing our border. By addressing these issues with conservative solutions that empower people, we can make life more prosperous and more free for everyone in the Triad.

Chuck Hubbard

Why should the voters of the Fifth District choose you over your opponent?

I spent 40 years at the Wilkes Journal Patriot as either a reporter or a publisher.

For the last 20 years, I have watched Virginia Foxx harm my community by tearing down public education and workplace protections as Chair of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Foxx's voting record speaks for itself: she continues to vote against the interests of the district she is supposed to represent. I can't sit back and watch this happen any longer.

My intimate knowledge of this district and its struggles positions me to represent my community in a completely different way.

What do you see as the greatest challenge facing the district and what solutions would you support to address the problem?

I will do everything in my power to combat rising prices and the high cost-of-living.

The federal minimum wage is still \$7.25. This is unacceptable. We need to push for an increase to a livable standard.

Additionally, I will be supporting bills like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which has helped North Carolina receive investment funds across the counties in the fifth district.

The creation of quality, livable wage jobs will be a priority.

How will you ensure you adequately represent your constituents in Guilford County and the Triad?

I will continue to show up in my community and make myself available to my constituents.

I will listen. I will be a legislator for the people. I will reject political theater, which has been central to my opponent's tenure.

#### kevin.griffin@greensboro.com

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October 13, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Charlotte, North Carolina Page: 12 OpenURL Link

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