

FEMA workers going door to door in NC

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News| 1160 Words OpenURL Link

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) teams are providing resources to western North Carolina.

FEMA teams are going door to door to make sure people and structures are safe and to sign people up for federal assistance after the remnants of Hurricane Helene devastated the area.

FEMA Media Relations Specialist Nate Custer said the teams are marked with official FEMA identification badges and carrying tablets to sign people up on the spot.

FEMA spokesperson Jann Tracey added that agents are accompanied by local officials.

Custer said the agency is currently in response mode. During this stage, the agency is conducting search-and-rescue operations, getting utilities up and running and getting roads passable.

Custer is assigned to provide information for Catawba, Burke, McDowell and other western North Carolina counties.

Tracey is providing information about Alexander, Caldwell and northwestern North Carolina counties.

"We work closely with faithbased organizations, community partners," Custer said. "FEMA administers and is in charge of the various federal agencies, but we're only part of the equation. We don't come in and, so to speak, run the show. We're invited in and requested in by the governor.

"We work closely with state emergency management and local emergency management. We have an element that works with voluntary organizations. Often there are partnerships and task forces created to solve some of these long-range housing problems.

"There's going to be an awful volume of these this time around," Custer said.

What is FEMA doing in western North Carolina?

Tracey said FEMA comes in when local and state officials need assistance.

If a need cannot be met by local and state officials, FEMA jumps in to meet the need, using resources from all over the country.

"FEMA and the state work hand in glove," Tracey said. "Even before a disaster hits, we're trying to anticipate needs and get resources where they are needed."

Custer said FEMA is in all of the 27 federally declared disaster counties and in lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina in some capacity.

Custer said the teams going door to door are essential for making people aware of resources available to them.

"In a typical disaster, communications are an issue, and it's worse in this one," Custer said. "Usually there are some cell phone outages, but nothing like this in how we're (having difficulty) getting the word out to people."

Custer continued, "A lot of people are in a state of shock. They might not be aware they need to register with FEMA.

If they register with their local emergency management or Red Cross, that does not get them into the FEMA system."

A release from Oct. 6 from the White House said there are more than 1,000 FEMA staff in North Carolina with more arriving daily. The release said there are 1,500 military personnel in the state assisting with disaster response.

Over 1,200 search and rescue personnel are in the area. Teams have rescued more than 3,200 people as of Oct. 6.

Tracey said FEMA has contributed over 5 million liters of water and 7 million meals since the disaster began.

How can people apply for assistance?

Custer said people can apply for assistance by calling 800621-3362. Those able to access the internet can also apply for assistance by going to disasterassistance.gov.

FEMA also has an app that can be downloaded and used to apply for assistance.

Custer said FEMA will soon open disaster recovery centers.

Tracey said recovery centers would likely be in every county included in the federal disaster declaration.

Custer said individuals do not have to live in a county where a disaster center is located to use a center.

Staff members at disaster recovery centers will be able to help people who have previously applied for assistance and sign people up for aid.

One disaster center is currently open in North Carolina. The center is located at A.C. Reynolds High School in Asheville.

FEMA's website said the deadline to apply for assistance in North Carolina is Nov. 27.

What do you need to apply for assistance?

- "•Proof of ownership of a residence "
- •A list of people permanently living at a location "
- Social Security number "
- •Estimated annual income "
- Insurance information, if available

Custer said it takes about 10 minutes to provide this information over the phone.

More information is coming for people who have lost a driver's license and other documents, Custer said.

"That happens in virtually all these situations. Key documents get swept away," Custer said. "There's avenues people can use to recover documents."

Who can apply for FEMA assistance?

U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals and qualified non-citizens are eligible to receive assistance according to FEMA's website.

Applicants will also need to provide a Social Security number to prove their identity.

What happens after applying for assistance?

Custer said the time to process an application varies.

"We have already approved more than \$37 million in housing and other types of assistance for over 28,000 North Carolina households," Custer said on Oct. 8.

On Oct. 9, FEMA's website said nearly \$60 million in housing and other assistance had been approved for almost 52,000 North Carolinians.

After applying for FEMA assistance, applicants will receive a letter explaining what type of grant they have been awarded or advising them their application is incomplete and more information is needed.

If someone is not satisfied with the grant they received, an appeals process exists. Custer said specialists at disaster recovery centers can assist applicants with the appeals process.

FEMA's website also says appeals can be made online through accounts registered with disasterassistance.gov.

Custer said FEMA may call applicants from any number, so if someone has applied for assistance they need to answer their phone even if it is from an unknown number.

Does FEMA help with unemployment?

Custer said those out of work due to the disaster may apply for disaster unemployment.

"There is disaster unemployment," Custer said. "It is mostly funded by FEMA. but it is run by the state unemployment office."

What does FEMA pay for?

Custer said the \$750 many applicants have received is for food, medicine, diapers and other essential needs.

FEMA can also pay for emergency home repair if a home is repairable.

FEMA also pays for temporary housing.

FEMA may also assist with providing funds for equipment used for work or school, such as tools or computers, on a case-by-case basis.

Does FEMA assistance have to be paid back?

Custer said FEMA assistance does not have to be paid back because they are grants.

Custer said FEMA aids individuals. The Small Business Administration (SBA) provides loans to businesses, homeowners and renters to deal with home and personal property losses.

People can apply for FEMA grants and SBA loans.

Are conspiracy theories hurting FEMA?

"There's things out there like FEMA is confiscating items or supplies, there's no truth at all to that," Custer said,

referring to a rumor that FEMA is taking donated items and not disbursing them to affected communities. "We always say, particularly for people outside the affected area, a cash contribution is the most effective way (to help)."

Custer said people should give to the Red Cross or other established organizations.

FEMA website combatting misinformation

FEMA has created a website to combat misinformation related to Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.

Visit fema.gov/disaster/current/ hurricane-helene/rumor-response to view FEMA's responses to specific rumors. © Copyright 2024, Hickory Daily Record, Hickory, NC

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Biffle 'should get Medal of Freedom'

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: BRIAN LINDER pennlive.com| Section: News | 432 Words OpenURL Link

The heroic efforts of NASCAR driver Greg Biffle in the wake of Hurricane Helene are not going unnoticed.

In fact, ESPN's Marty Smith, seems to have a pretty good idea about what should await Biffle when this is all over.

"Former NASCAR driver Greg Biffle should receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his ongoing and ceaseless heroic efforts in western North Carolina, using his helicopter and coordinating w/ others to save lives," Smith wrote on X. "Go to @gbiffle to see his amazing effort. Thank you Greg."

For those that missed it, Biffle, who is also a pilot, has been using his personal helicopter to fly emergency relief missions to deliver supplies to victims of the storm in western North Carolina.

Biffle has shared some of his runs on X, and the guy has flown into some tight spaces to help save people.

"Trees. Canyons. Power Lines," he wrote in a post on X along with a video of him landing in a narrow strip of open grass in an otherwise heavily wooded area. "Glad this little beast of a helicopter can make it to the areas unreachable by larger aircraft."

Biffle shared a second video explaining the landing in the tight space that shows folks on the ground using a mirror to signal to the helicopter.

"The mirror that caught our attention well over a mile away," he wrote. "Only way we were able to find someone stranded in the mountain at bottom of steep canyon. 6 attempts to land due to difficulty but we got there – got him a chainsaw, Epipens, insulin, chicken food, formula, gas, 2 stroke oil, and sandwiches premade from Harris Teeter before we left."

Biffle is also reportedly dropping off Starlinks to the victims so they can access the internet.

Many in NASCAR have pitched in to help, but Biffle's effort has been amazing.

The 54-year-old was named one of NASCAR's 75 Greatest Drivers in 2023 and is up for induction into the NACAR Hall of Fame.

Not alone

Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing also flew their helicopters to areas in western North Carolina.

JGR collected water and non-perishable food items at its race shop in Huntersville to be delivered by one of the team's haulers. JGR posted on social media that it is continuing to accept financial donations online, which should be titled as "Hurricane Relief."

Hendrick's aviation team also had been flying out to western North Carolina to support hurricane relief efforts since Sept. 29 and planned to continue as long as the critical needs exist. HMS has been working with organizations like Samaritan's Purse and Atrium Health to distribute resources to the people.

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BRIAN LINDER pennlive.com, 'Biffle 'should get Medal of Freedom'', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29E6EA66DDC30



HURRICANE MILTON POUNDS FLORIDA; AT LEAST 8 KILLED

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 96 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Milton made landfall Wednesday night in Siesta Key near Sarasota, about 70 miles south of Tampa, as a Category 3 storm, bringing misery to a coast still ravaged by Helene. The storm pounded cities with winds of over 100 mph after producing a barrage of tornadoes, but it spared Tampa a direct hit. St. Petersburg recorded over 16 inches of rain. Milton then barreled into the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday, leaving at least eight people dead and over 3 million without power. Above, a crane lays across 1st Avenue South on Thursday in St. Petersburg.

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Staff Writer, 'HURRICANE MILTON POUNDS FLORIDA; AT LEAST 8 KILLED', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29E6EB1DE72F0



Hickory could dethrone North Iredell and 4 more things to know about volleyball postseason

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Jason Koon | Section: Girls | 950 Words OpenURL Link

With volleyball conference tournaments beginning Monday, here are five things to know going into postseason play.

Hickory could dethrone North Iredell

Nobody has beaten the Red Tornadoes volleyball team this season except for North Iredell.

The Raiders have done it twice. The first came in straight sets on Aug. 26. The second match, three weeks later, went down to the wire. The Raiders won 3-2 in five sets.

Since that match, Hickory players have taken out their frustration on the rest of the conference. The Red Tornadoes have won seven straight matches and 18 of 19 sets to finish the regular season at 18-2, 12-2 in conference play.

Head coach Jason Stephens said he does have lofty goals for this year's team in the postseason. For right now, though, he is just focused on the next game.

"The next game is always the biggest game of the year," he said. "We'll talk about (North Iredell) when we get there. We've got to get there first."

Hickory will face West Iredell in the first round of the tournament on Monday. If Hickory can win that game and their second round game on Tuesday, the Red Tornadoes may have a third shot at North Iredell.

Stephens said depth and camaraderie have been the biggest reasons for the team's success this season.

"They've got a really good chemistry on the court," Stephens said. "We're deep, too. There are girls who really helped us out early, and I could put more people in the rotation."

Saint can play with anybody

With the regular conference season concluding Wednesday night, St. Stephens and Foard are deadlocked with the fifth-best record in the conference. That doesn't mean the Indians won't be a factor in next week's conference tournament.

Saint is a tough team to beat when they are on. And they were on Wednesday night in the regular season finale against Hickory.

The Red Tornadoes came into the match on a tear, having won their last 15 straight sets. St. Stephens ended that streak in the opening set of Wednesday's match.

The Indians jumped out to a big lead early and held on to take the set 25-16. They nearly took sets two and four as well. The Indians came back from a big deficit to cut the Hickory lead to 19-17 before Hickory put them away. The Red Tornadoes barely got out of set four with a 25-23 win.

It's been something the Indians have been doing all season. The Indians have notched straight sets wins against Maiden and South Caldwell, a convincing conference win over East Lincoln and they took North Iredell to the wire on Sept. 11. But the Indians have also had their share of disappointments, including losses to Foard, North Lincoln and East Lincoln.

Hickory and North Iredell are clear favorites, but the conference tournament is not going to be a coronation. If the Red Tornadoes or the Raiders stumble, Saint could easily spoil the party. St. Stephens will visit East Lincoln Monday in the first round.

The playoffs will be delayed

The NCHSAA has given volleyball teams an extra three days to play out their schedules in the wake of Hurricane Helene. This won't make any meaningful difference for the Western Foothills Athletic Conference teams. The tournament starts Monday evening as originally scheduled. Hickory will host West Iredell on Monday, and Fred T. Foard will visit North Lincoln.

For the Catawba Valley Athletic Conference, the tournament has been shortened to a one-day event with just the top four teams on Wednesday. Games are scheduled for 4 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Maiden High School.

Maiden and Bandys are red hot

The Catawba Valley Athletic Conference tournament looks like it is going to be a two-team race. Bandys is ranked No. 13 in the 2A West Region with a record of 18-7, while Maiden checks in at No. 14 with a record of 17-5.

Since Sept. 14, the Trojans have rattled off 11 straight victories, eight of them in straight sets.

The key for the Trojans has been the team cohesion the players have developed. Bandys doesn't have one star player but functions as a unit.

The Blue Devils have only dropped five sets in conference play this season. Three have been to Bandys.

"As the year goes, they have learned how to work with each other," said head coach Marsha Davis. "We also have more power hitters this year. Our goal is to get as far as we can in the state playoffs. We have to play as a team and cut down on our errors."

Newton-Conover could make a splash in the tournament. The Red Devils are ranked No. 20 in the region with a 10-4 record in conference play. Newton-Conover is 13-4 overall.

Hickory Christian takes crosstown rivalry

The last time Hickory Christian Academy won the season series against University Christian was in 2019. This year, Hickory Christian broke that streak with two regular season wins. Depending on the playoff draw it's possible the teams would meet again. If that happened, HCA would still win the season series 2-1.

Hickory Christian got a 3-1 win over the Barracudas in their first meeting on Sept. 9. They got them again in a convincing 3-0 (25-18, 25-11, 25-16) win on their home court a week and a half later. MaryElla Cook had eight kills, eight digs and four service aces in the match.

On the season, she is third in the conference in kills and seventh in aces while her teammate Mary Katherine Baucom is second in aces and Daisy Miles leads the conference in assists.

For University Christian, Larkyn Gercken is fourth in kills and sixth in aces while her teammate Mackenzie Haworth is second in assists. And Haworth is the only senior in the group, meaning this rivalry has the potential to get more interesting next year.

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NET BATTLES

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: JASON KOON jason.koon@lee.net | Section: Net Battles | 1111 Words OpenURL Link

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Jason Koon is the Sports Editor for the Hickory Record and can be reached at jason.koon@lee.net.

This week's high school soccer and volleyball scores

This week's soccer scores
Thursday's games
Lincolnton 10, Maiden 1
Alexander Central 8, Freedom 0
Wednesday's games:
Hickory 5, St. Stephens 0
Fred T. Foard 2, Statesville 1 (OT)
Hibriten 3, South Caldwell 2
Maiden 4, East Burke 3
Bandys 8, West Lincoln 1
Lincolnton 4, Bunker Hill 0
Alexander Central 5, Freedom 0
West Caldwell 1, Newton-Conover 0
Tuesday's games:
Bunker Hill 3, East Burke 2
Christian Family Academy 3, University Christian 1
Monday's games:
Bandys 3, Bunker Hill 2
Newton-Conover 5, Maiden 0
Hickory 3, North Lincoln 2
Fred T. Foard 2, West Iredell 1 (OT)
St. Stephens 5, North Iredell 0
This week's volleyball scores
Thursday's games
Maiden 3, Newton-Conover 1
Bandys 3, Bunker Hill 0
Wednesday's games

Hickory 3, St. Stephens 1

Fred T. Foard 3, Statesville 0

Maiden 3, West Caldwell 0

Newton-Conover 3, East Buke 0

Alexander Central 3, South Caldwell 1

Tuesday's games:

Maiden 3, Lincolnton 0

East Burke 3, Bunker Hill 1

Monday's games:

Hickory 3, North Lincoln 0

North Iredell 3, St. Stephens 1

Fred T. Foard 3, West Iredell 0

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JASON KOON jason.koon@lee.net, 'NET BATTLES', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29E6DDAE58B38



Helene misinformation is a disservice

October 12, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 191 Words OpenURL Link

To the editor:

I do not understand what is accomplished by putting misinformation, borderline lies, on social media about Hurricane Helene recovery. If you want to know what's out there, read "Helene fact check: Here are the rumors and the reality in Western North Carolina" by Chantal Allal and Joe Marusak in the Charlotte Observer. To me the rumors are a disservice and disrespectful to the people affected by Helene and those many people on-site to help. There are neighbors helping neighbors, volunteers, charitable organizations and local, state and federal agencies already there 24/7. There are three postings that are coming from politicians. The first is that Helene was manmade and was directed to those areas in the Southeast that tended to be Republican. The second is that FEMA had diverted funds and now doesn't have enough to help with recovery. The third is that the government agencies are not responding. I'm sure some would call the newspaper article fake news. I wonder if people posting these ideas on social media ever thought about helping. Possibly donating time, goods or money. One final thought, was Hurricane Milton manmade too?

Bill Untch

High Point

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A constant stream of lies

October 12, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 250 Words OpenURL Link

To the editor:

Thomas Jefferson said that a free press is more important than a government. Donald Trump tells us that our free press is the enemy of the people.

Donald Trump told us not to believe what we see or what we hear ... but only what he tells us. I believe what I see and hear.

Donald Trump promised that Mexico would pay for his hateful border wall. Mexico did not pay for what was constructed.

J.D. Vance says that Donald Trump saved the Affordable Care Act. My eyes and ears told me that Donald Trump despised and tried to kill Obamacare. Without John McCain in 2017, the law would have been repealed.

Donald Trump and J.D. Vance say that they have no connection to Project 2025. Yet Trump acolytes wrote that document.

Donald Trump says that the Joe Biden and Roy Cooper administrations have done little or nothing to help the North Carolina victims of Hurricane Helene. That is a steaming mound of composting material.

Donald Trump claimed that the Georgia governor could not get Joe Biden on the phone to ask for hurricane relief. The governor said that Biden and FEMA have been very helpful to Georgia.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene claims that the Biden administration is controlling the weather ... and sending hurricane damage to Republican regions. Seeding clouds might induce rain ... but certainly not a hurricane. (Google it!) The last time I checked, only someone who said, "I alone can fix it," would make such a brazen claim.

Jody McGhee

High Point

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Hurricane Helene-related unemployment claims surge

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal | Section: News | 388 Words OpenURL Link

North Carolina experienced last week the first phase of an expected Hurricane Helene-related surge in new weekly state unemployment claims.

The U.S. Labor Department reported Thursday a total of 11,474 new claims were filed for the week that ended Oct. 5. That's up from 2,941 in the previous report, or by 290%.

The Labor report doesn't provide a regional breakdown by state, but it's highly likely the bulk of the new claims are from North Carolinians whose employment was directly or indirectly aff ected by Helene-related damage.

The new filings are likely to push the number of North Carolinians receiving state unemployment benefits to more than 30,000. There were 18,333 North Carolinians receiving benefits for the week that ended Sept. 28.

North Carolina was fifth in the nation in the number of new unemployment claim filings, up significantly from the 15th to 18th range since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared over in March 2023.

Other states with severe Helene-related damage did not experience a similar uptick in new claims as North Carolina, although sharply higher.

Florida's new claims jumped 69.4% to 9,377, while Georgia's was by 17.4% to 4,675, South Carolina's was by 83% to 2,504 and Tennessee's was by 72.5% to 4,367.

State of emergency programs

Residents in four northwest N.C. counties — Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes — have been declared eligible for federal disaster unemployment assistance benefits.

The eligibility is a byproduct of the Biden administration's declaration of a state of emergency in N.C. from the devastating rainfall and flooding caused by the remnants of Helene.

The disaster unemployment assistance covers individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of Helene. Business owners and self-employed individuals affected by the storm also may qualify for benefits.

Benefits have been made retroactive to Sept. 29 and may last for up to 26 weeks.

There are 23 other counties, along with the Cherokee Indians of N.C., that have been approved: Alexander, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swaim, Transylvania and Yancey.

Eligible individuals have until Dec. 2 to file an application for disaster unemployment assistance at des. nc.gov or the DUA Hotline at 919-629-3857.

Individuals must first apply for state unemployment benefits. For those determined to be ineligible for or have exhausted regular state benefits, they may be eligible to make a federal disaster unemployment assistance claim.

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RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal, 'Hurricane Helene-related unemployment claims surge', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F825FCC1360



Former Greensboro school may shelter Helene victims

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: KEVIN GRIFFIN Staff Reporter | Section: News | 445 Words OpenURL Link

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will soon be taking control of the former American Hebrew Academy in Greensboro for potential use in Hurricane Helene recovery eff orts.

The agency confirmed the plans in a statement.

"As part of our eff ort to ensure that every available resource is mobilized, FEMA will soon sign an agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services to transfer the Greensboro Facility in North Carolina, previously operated by HHS, to FEMA," according to the release. "The Greensboro facility will be another resource to ensure that FEMA has access to a wide array of assets and resources should they be needed for the recovery."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services had earmarked the property at 4334 Hobbs Road for use as a facility housing migrant teens without parents or guardians.

However, the site has not been used for that purpose so far. Las week, officials such as Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan raised the possibility of using the site as a potential shelter for people displaced by Helene.

U.S. Rep. Kathy Manning, who has also been advocating for the site as a possible resource in the recovery, said in a statement Wednesday that she was pleased the agencies were coming to an agreement.

"In this moment of urgent need for food, health services and housing for our neighbors in western North Carolina, I am fully committed to mobilizing resources swiftly and ensuring they reach all those impacted by this unprecedented storm," Manning said via the statement.

It is not clear how many people the site might hold as a shelter, though it was set up to accommodate 800 residents and 1,500 workers when it was slated to serve as the migrant teen center.

When asked about the possibility of the site being used as shelter, some neighbors said they had not heard about that possibility.

One neighbor who lives near the property who declined to give his name said he felt it would be an inappropriate use. The neighbor said the site was suitable for use as a school but not much other than that.

"Anything beyond that, especially anything that requires special services or special care especially with either younger populations or older populations, it's not suited for that in the middle of a residential district," the neighbor said.

However, at least some of the neighbors were more supportive of the idea of the site being used for hurricane response.

Melba Brown said she had not heard about the site being possibly used as part of the storm response but that she would be in favor of the idea.

"I think it would be a great idea for people that don't have anywhere to go from the hurricane," Brown said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

KEVIN GRIFFIN Staff Reporter, 'Former Greensboro school may shelter Helene victims', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F8221EDB310



Foundation offering relief grants for nonprofits

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 250 Words OpenURL Link

On Wednesday, the Gateway Wellness Foundation announced emergency relief for nonprofits who have been impacted by Hurricane Helene.

"At Gateway Wellness Foundation, we recognize that our nonprofit partners are critical to our region's relief and recovery eff orts, and we are proud to partner with the Dogwood Health Trust to provide an initial disaster relief grant opportunity to support your Hurricane Helene emergency response eff orts," reads an announcement from Gateway.

Gateway Wellness Foundation is providing emergency relief to those aff ected by Hurricane Helene in the form of grants to nonprofit organizations in Burke, McDowell, Polk, and Rutherford counties.

Funds may be used to provide direct assistance to individuals aff ected by Hurricane Helene and/or support the applicant organization in recovering from or responding to Hurricane Helene. Grant funds are intended to cover the costs of providing emergency relief services to individuals or eligible organizations aff ected by the storm.

Grants will be accepted and awarded on a rolling basis.

Please submit only one request for funding at this time.

The recommended maximum grant request is \$25,000. Requests in the range of \$5,000-\$10,000 are more likely to be fully funded.

Organizations applying for a grant must be:

- A community-based nonprofit designated by the IRS as a tax-exempt 501©(3) organization, a faith-based organization, or a public agency serving individuals and families that were affected by Hurricane Helene.
- Serving the following counties: Burke, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford.

If you have any questions or connectivity is an issue, please contact Sarah Morse: s.morse@gatewaywf.org.

Gateway's Disaster Relief Grant Opportunity webpage: gatewaywellnessfoundation.org/hurricane-relief-eff ortsgrants/.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

FROM STAFF REPORTS, 'Foundation offering relief grants for nonprofits', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F826BEC9930



MAKING PROGRESS

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: CHRISSY MURPHY cmurphy@morganton.com| Section: Making Progress | 841 Words OpenURL Link

HURRICANE HELENE AFTERMATH

Crews across western North Carolina are working to make communities accessible about two weeks after Hurricane Helene whipped through the state. One major project is reopening a bridge to Baxter International in McDowell County. The plant produces much of the country's IV solutions.

Nathan Moneyham, division construction engineer for the N.C. Department of Transportation's Division 13, said damage to roads in western North Carolina was significant, but crews are making improvements. Division 13 includes McDowell, Burke, Mitchell, Rutherford, Buncombe, Madison and Yancey coun-

"We're working every day to get as much open as we can," Moneyham said.

Tim Anderson, division engineer, said NCDOT has identified about 450 bridges or large pipes in the division that were damaged in the storm.

Anderson said the department's 2,100 employees along with contractors have been working to clear major state roads and make repairs to damaged roads and bridges, including in the North Cove area of Marion.

"We were able to open up several of our large primaries, including I-40 across Old Fort Mountain, early on," Anderson said. "We've got a whole lot left to do. It's going to take some time to pull together our contractors, get some of those larger repairs designed and get those executed and get folks to work."

On Wednesday, crews were working on a temporary bridge on Pitts Station Road off U.S. Highway 221 over the North Fork of the Catawba River to give residential community access to their homes and allow tractor-trailers to access the Baxter Healthcare facility that uses Pitts Station Road as its access point.

During Helene, flood waters washed out the foundation of the original bridge and toppled its supports, Moneyham said.

Baxter makes about 74% of the saline bags for hospitals in North America, Anderson said.

"When the bridge was compromised, they couldn't get their inventory out," Anderson said. "They sustained some damage inside they're working on, but they've got to be able to get that equipment and get those tractor-trailers out so they can serve the nation."

Baxter was forced to limit how much IV fluids hospitals can order in the wake of the storm, according to press releases from Baxter International.

Moneyham said Baxter worked with NCDOT and a contractor to build a temporary bridge to get into the business until a more permanent solution was built.

In a release Wednesday, Baxter said it has eased some allocation limits for products but is still limiting how much customers can buy at once. The company is monitoring stock levels and ramping up production at other facilities, the release said.

Baxter said it hopes to restart production at the North Cove facility in phases and get customers back to 100%

allocation on some IV products by the end of the year. The company is already working to restore the manufacturing plant.

On Oct. 7, Baxter said it had not found any structural damage to the North Cove facility, power and water was restored and cleanup was in progress. The company expects to have a production plan in the next two weeks, the release said.

"We will spare no resource — human or financial — to restart operations and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," said Baxter CEO Joe Almeida.

NCDOT is working on a longer-term, temporary bridge until permanent repairs can be made, Moneyham said. He said the temporary structure would be in place for about a year to a year and a half while a permanent bridge is built. NCDOT hopes the temporary bridge on Pitts Station Road will be ready in about a month, he said.

Anderson said NCDOT employees have been adapting to the challenges throughout the storm. When the power went out, NCDOT offices had generators. When cell services went down, staff in Raleigh made it possible for western North Carolina employees to use satellite phones instead.

"It's just been a Herculean effort by our folks and the entire community," Anderson said. "Our staff in Raleigh all the way to the governor, they've been here since day one. Supporting us there, supporting us here in the field, and without that, we wouldn't be where we are at this moment. I just can't say enough about what they do for us."

He said NCDOT is making emergency repairs first, then moving to long-term, temporary repairs, and finally making permanent repairs. There isn't a timeline yet for how long repairs could take.

"It's a process, and it does take time," Anderson said.

While repairs are underway, Anderson said people should only travel when it's essential in the hard-hit areas of Burke, McDowell and other mountain counties.

"There's a lot of folks wanting to help and a lot of folks bringing help, and that's great to see the community outpouring from across the state and across the Southeast. It's nothing short of inspiring to see how much folks care," Anderson said. "But keeping that travel to essential travel only so that our dump trucks can go up and down the road and folks can get back to life. Especially on the one-lane roads, ... extra traffic is not very helpful."

Check www.drivenc.gov for updated road closures and traffic conditions.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

CHRISSY MURPHY cmurphy@morganton.com, 'MAKING PROGRESS', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F820D56A088



Some school bus routes see temporary changes

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 1411 Words OpenURL Link

McDowell County Schools students returned to class Wednesday for the first time since the remnants of Hurricane Helene hit the area. Some school bus routes have changed due to the storm.

"Due to the effects of Hurricane Helene, our transportation department has implemented temporary changes to our usual bus routes," the school system said.

The school system said the transportation department and emergency personnel have assessed the routes to makes sure the routes are safe.

"We understand these changes may create challenges for some families. If you have concerns about transportation or need assistance, please contact your child's school," the school system said. "We are committed to supporting our students and families during this transition and will return to normal routes as soon as safely possible."

our students and families during this transition and will return to normal routes as soon as safely po
Schedules
Eastfield Elementary
Bus 186 Normal route
Bus 182 Normal route
East McDowell Middle School
Bus 181 normal route
Bus 184 normal route
Bus 192 Normal route
Bus 196 Normal route
Bus 197 Normal route
Bus 200 Normal route
Bus 204 Normal route
Bus 223 Normal route
Bus 225 Normal route

Bus 228 Normal route with the exception of White Pine Drive and Lawing Road. The stop for White Pine will be at Mud Cut Road and White Pine Drive intersection. The stop for Lawing Road will be at Bethel Church Road and Lawing Road intersection.

Bus 229 Normal route with the exception of Walker Road and Landis Lane. The stop will be at NC 226 S and Walker

Road. Bus 238 Normal route Glenwood Elementary Bus 207 Normal route with the exception of White Pine Drive. That stop will be at Mud Cut Road and White Pine Drive intersection. Lawing Road has low hanging lines and the bus will not travel. The stop for Lawing Road will be at Bethel Church Road and Lawing Road. Bus 212 Normal route Bus 216 Normal route with the exception of Burma Road W. stop will be at Shady Lane and Burma Road W. intersection. Bus 217 Normal route Bus 230 Normal route with the exception of US 64. Stop will be at Fortune Road and US 64 intersection. The bus will not travel Walker Road and Landis Lane. The stop will be at NC 226 S and Walker Road. Marion Elementary Bus 185 Normal route Bus 178 Normal route with the exception of Mountain Street. This stop will be at the intersection of Holly Street and Mountain Street McDowell High School/MAI/ MEC/Summit Academy Bus 171 There will be a community stop at TJ's Discount at 8136 US 221 N. at approx. 8:40 a.m. pick up and approx. 3:45 p.m. drop off. Bus 179 Normal route Bus 181 Normal route Bus 184 Normal route Bus 192 Normal route Bus 193 Normal route Bus 196 Normal route Bus 197 Normal route Bus 198 Normal route with the exception of Clear Creek Road past Refuge Baptist Church. The stop will be at Refuge Baptist Church.

Bus 200 Normal route

Bus 201 There will be a com]munity bus stop at Living Waters Tabernacle Church at 344 Moffitt Hill Church Road at approximately 8:20 a.m. pick up and approximately 3:45 p.m. drop off.

Bus 202 Normal route with the exception of Westwood Drive. The stop will be at Nix Creek Road and Westwood Drive.

Bus 204 Normal route Bus 209 There will be a community bus stop at the store (West Court Food Center) beside of North Cove Church of God at 14698 US 221 N at approximately 8:30 a.m. pick up and 4 p.m. drop off. The bus will still run Tom's Creek Road and US 70 W and Riverside.

Bus 214 There will be a community bus stop at Crooked Creek VFD at 4503 Bat Cave Road at approximately 8:20 a.m. pick up and 4 p.m. drop off.

Bus 219 Normal route with the exception of Henry McCall Road, Lytle Mountain Road, Greenlee Road. There is a community bus stop at Greenlee Baptist Church at 5967 US 70 W. at approximately 8:30 a.m. pick up and 3:50 p.m. drop off.

Bus 221 Normal route with the exception of Maple Drive, Golf Course Road, Wildlife Lake Road, Silvers Welch Road and Bethlehem Road. There will be a community bus stop at Salem FWB Church at 407 Salem Church Road for these students at approximately 8:20 a.m. pick up and approximately 4:30 p.m. drop off. Also, the bus will not travel Burma Road W. This stop will be at Ashworth Road and Burma Road W. intersection.

Bus 222 Normal route

Bus 223 Normal route

Bus 224 There will be a community bus stop at Bethlehem Baptist Church at 2839 Old Fort Sugar Hill Road at approximately 8:25 a.m. pick up and approximately 3:50 p.m. drop off.

Bus 225 Normal route Bus 226 Normal route

Bus 227 There will be a community bus stop at Old Fort Elementary School at approximately 8:25 a.m. pick up and approximately 3:45 p.m. drop off.

Bus 228 Normal route with the exception of White Pine Drive and Lawing Road. The stop for White Pine will be at Mud Cut Road and White Pine Drive intersection. The stop for Lawing Road will be at Bethel Church Road and Lawing Road intersection.

Bus 229 Normal route with the exception of Walker Road and Landis Lane. The stop will be at NC 226 S and Walker Road.

Bus 238 Normal route

MHS/EMMS Exceptional Children's Routes

Bus 210 Normal route

Bus 231 Normal route

Bus 233 Normal route

Bus 234 Normal route with the exception of US 221 N. There will be a community bus stop at the store (West Court Store) beside of North Cove Church of God at 14698 US 221 N. The driver will be in contact concerning times.

Nebo Elementary

-Bus 174 Normal route

-Bus 206 Normal route

-Bus 208 Normal route
-Bus 215 Normal route
North Cove Elementary
Bus 173 Normal route
Bus 235 Normal route
Bus 203 There will be a community bus stop at the store (West Court Food Center) beside of North Cove Church of God at 14698 US 221 N. at approximately 9:05 a.m. pick up and 3:09 p.m. drop off.
Bus 175 will not run.
Pleasant Gardens Elementary
Bus 189 Normal route with the exception of Clear Creek Road past Refuge Baptist Church. The stop will be at the church.
Bus 191 Normal route with the exception of Henry McCall Road. The stop will be at Greenlee Baptist Church.
Bus 205 Normal route
West Marion Elementary
Bus 188 Normal route Bus
220 Normal route with the exception of Westwood Drive. The stop will be at Nix Creek Road and Westwood Drive intersection.
Bus 218 Normal route with the exception of Tight Run Road. The stop will be at Montford Cove Road and Tight Run Road West Marion Elementary Exceptional Children's Routes
Bus 211 Normal route
Bus 232 Normal route
Bus 236 Normal route with the exception of Lackeytown Road. That one stop will be at Dollar General at 792 Bat Cave Road.
Bus 237 Normal route
West McDowell Middle
School Bus 171 There will be a community stop at TJ's Discount at 8136 US 221 N. at approximately 8:40 a.m. pick up and 3:45 p.m. drop off.
Bus 179 Normal route
Bus 193 Normal route
Bus 198 Normal route

Bus 201 There will be a community bus stop at Living Waters Tabernacle Church at 344 Moffitt Hill Church Road at approximately 8:20 a.m. pick up and 3:50 p.m. drop off.

Bus 202 Normal route with the exception of Westwood Drive. The stop will be at Nix Creek Road and Westwood Drive.

Bus 209 There will be a community bus stop at the store (West Court Store) beside of North Cove Church of God at 14698 US 221 N at approximately 8:30 a.m. pick up and 3:50 p.m. drop off.

Bus 214 There will be a community bus stop at Crooked Creek VFD at 4503 Bat Cave Road at approximately 8:20 a.m. pick up and 3:50 p.m. drop off.

Bus 219 Normal route with the exception of Henry McCall Road, Lytle Mountain Road, Greenlee Road. There is a community bus stop at Greenlee Baptist Church at 5967 US 70 W. at approximately 8:30 a.m. pick up and 3:50 p.m. drop off.

Bus 221 Normal route with the exception of Maple Drive, Golf Course Road, Wildlife Lake Road, Silvers Welch Road, and Bethlehem Road. There will be a community bus stop at Salem FWB Church at 407 Salem Church Road for these students at approximately 8:20 a.m. pick up and 4:30 p.m. drop off. Also, the bus will not travel Burma Road W. This stop will be at Ashworth Road and Burma Road W. intersection.

Bus 222 Normal route

Bus 224 There will be a community bus stop at Bethlehem Baptist Church at 2839 Old Fort Sugar Hill Road at approximately 8:25 a.m. pick up and 3:45 p.m. drop off.

Bus 226 Normal route Bus

227 There will be a community bus stop at Old Fort Elementary School at approximately 8:25 a.m. pick up and 3:45 p.m. drop off.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

FROM STAFF REPORTS, 'Some school bus routes see temporary changes', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F82329756F8



Kindness, compassion and cooperation getting McDowell County back on its feet after storm

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 453 Words OpenURL Link

Thank you to all who have shown kindness and compassion to your neighbors during the past 12 days.

Hundreds of people from Marion, all parts of McDowell County, many other cities and counties from eastern and piedmont North Carolina, and from other states have volunteered in many places and in many ways.

Our overall condition in Marion and in McDowell County is much better, much sooner, than we expected a week ago. A lot of this is due to the tireless work of all the volunteers.

You may see EMS ambulances and firetrucks with the names of dozens of diff erent cities or counties. If you see a volunteer with a diff erent city or county logo on their shirt or jacket, or a member of the National Guard, please thank them for coming to help us.

A team of 60 people from FEMA is already here and has been here for almost a week. (FEMA provides financial, equipment and people support. FEMA is not "taking over" and they are not taking ownership of any land or any other property of any kind. They are providing us with needed help.)

Teams of specialized search and rescue personnel from many states are here. People from many churches have provided food, distributed supplies and off ered prayers and other help.

Chainsaw teams still are hard at work. The left-behind debris will be picked up throughout McDowell County as a result of a contract between McDowell County and the state.

Each day brings more progress but it will still take a very long time to do the remaining work. As of Wednesday morning, there are still 2,519 Duke Energy customers in McDowell County with no electricity. On Sunday, Sept. 29, there were 18,263 Duke customers with no power. The areas with the most damage to the power lines and systems are N.C.

Highway 80, Old Fort and Little Switzerland. There still are places in Marion with no power.

There has been unflinching cooperation between and among leadership and employees of Marion, Old Fort, McDowell County, our public schools, McDowell Tech, Mission McDowell Hospital, the sheriff 's office, police departments and many churches. The McDowell County EMS, led by William Kehler, are strong, skilled, talented public servants. Each agency is working tirelessly with each other to help all the people, businesses and industries of our county. It is the cooperation of all these groups that has produced the great progress of improvement we have seen.

Thank you for your continued patience and compassion for each other and especially for those who suff ered huge losses from Hurricane Helene.

Editor's Note

On Wednesday, Marion Mayor Steve Little issued a statement about how the local community is faring after Hurricane Helene swept through as a tropical storm late last month.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Kindness, compassion and cooperation getting McDowell County back on its feet after storm', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F8285EE2488>



Biffle 'should get Medal of Freedom'

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: BRIAN LINDER pennlive.com| Section: News| 402 Words OpenURL Link

The heroic efforts of NASCAR driver Greg Biffle in the wake of Hurricane Helene are not going unnoticed.

In fact, ESPN's Marty Smith, seems to have a pretty good idea about what should await Biffle when this is all over.

"Former NASCAR driver Greg Biffle should receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his ongoing and ceaseless heroic efforts in western North Carolina, using his helicopter and coordinating w/ others to save lives," Smith wrote on X. "Go to @gbiffle to see his amazing effort. Thank you Greg."

For those that missed it, Biffle, who is also a pilot, has been using his personal helicopter to fly emergency relief missions to deliver supplies to victims of the storm in western North Carolina.

Biffle has shared some of his runs on X, and the guy has flown into some tight spaces to help save people.

"Trees. Canyons. Power Lines," he wrote in a post on X along with a video of him landing in a narrow strip of open grass in an otherwise heavily wooded area. "Glad this little beast of a helicopter can make it to the areas unreachable by larger aircraft."

Biffle shared a second video explaining the landing in the tight space that shows folks on the ground using a mirror to signal to the helicopter.

"The mirror that caught our attention well over a mile away," he wrote. "Only way we were able to find someone stranded in the mountain at bottom of steep canyon. 6 attempts to land due to difficulty but we got there – got him a chainsaw, Epipens, insulin, chicken food, formula, gas, 2 stroke oil, and sandwiches premade from Harris Teeter before we left."

Biffle is also reportedly dropping off Starlinks to the victims so they can access the internet.

Many in NASCAR have pitched in to help, but Biffle's effort has been amazing.

The 54-year-old was named one of NASCAR's 75 Greatest Drivers in 2023 and is up for induction into the NACAR Hall of Fame.

Not alone

Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing also flew their helicopters to areas in western North Carolina.

JGR collected water and non-perishable food items at its race shop in Huntersville to be delivered by one of the team's haulers. JGR posted on social media that it is continuing to accept financial donations online, which should be titled as "Hurricane Relief."

Hendrick's aviation team also had been flying out to western North Carolina to support hurricane relief efforts since Sept.

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BRIAN LINDER pennlive.com, 'Biffle 'should get Medal of Freedom'', *McDowell News, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C29F82562F65C8



HURRICANE MILTON POUNDS FLORIDA; AT LEAST 8 KILLED

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 96 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Milton made landfall Wednesday night in Siesta Key near Sarasota, about 70 miles south of Tampa, as a Category 3 storm, bringing misery to a coast still ravaged by Helene. The storm pounded cities with winds of over 100 mph after producing a barrage of tornadoes, but it spared Tampa a direct hit. St. Petersburg recorded over 16 inches of rain. Milton then barreled into the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday, leaving at least eight people dead and over 3 million without power. Above, a crane lays across 1st Avenue South on Thursday in St. Petersburg.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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FEMA workers going door to door in NC

October 12, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com | Section: News | 1270 Words OpenURL Link

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) teams are providing resources to western North Carolina.

FEMA teams are going door to door to make sure people and structures are safe and to sign people up for federal assistance after the remnants of Hurricane Helene devastated the area.

FEMA Media Relations Specialist Nate Custer said the teams are marked with official FEMA identification badges and carrying tablets to sign people up on the spot.

FEMA spokesperson Jann Tracey added that agents are accompanied by local officials.

Custer said the agency is currently in response mode. During this stage, the agency is conducting search-andrescue operations, getting utilities up and running and getting roads passable. Custer is assigned to provide information for Catawba, Burke, McDowell and other western North Carolina counties.

Tracey is providing information about Alexander, Caldwell and northwestern North Carolina counties.

"We work closely with faith based organizations, community partners," Custer said. "FEMA administers and is in charge of the various federal agencies, but we're only part of the equation. We don't come in and, so to speak, run the show. We're invited in and requested in by the governor.

"We work closely with state emergency management and local emergency management. We have an element that works with voluntary organizations. Often there are partnerships and task forces created to solve some of these long-range housing problems.

"There's going to be an awful volume of these this time around," Custer said.

What is FEMA doing in western North Carolina?

Tracey said FEMA comes in when local and state officials need assistance.

If a need cannot be met by local and state officials, FEMA jumps in to meet the need, using resources from all over the country.

"FEMA and the state work hand in glove," Tracey said. "Even before a disaster hits, we're trying to anticipate needs and get resources where they are needed."

Custer said FEMA is in all of the 27 federally declared disaster counties and in lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina in some capacity.

Custer said the teams going door-to-door are essential for making people aware of resources available to them.

"In a typical disaster, communications are an issue, and it's worse in this one," Custer said. "Usually there are some cell phone outages, but nothing like this in how we're (having difficulty) getting the word out to people."

Custer continued, "A lot of people are in a state of shock. They don't know what's going to happen the next day. They might not be aware they need to register with FEMA. If they register with their local emergency management

or Red Cross, that does not get them into the FEMA system."

A release from Oct. 6 from the White House said there are more than 1,000 FEMA staff in North Carolina with more arriving daily. The release said there are 1,500 military personnel in the state assisting with disaster response.

Over 1,200 search and rescue personnel are in the area. Teams have rescued more than 3,200 people as of Oct. 6.

Tracey said FEMA has contributed over 5 million liters of water and 7 million meals since the disaster began.

"When people don't see someone in a FEMA shirt distributing, that doesn't mean it wasn't contributed by FEMA," Tracey said.

How can people apply for assistance?

Custer said people can apply for assistance by calling 800621-3362. Those able to access the internet can also apply for assistance by going to disasterassistance.gov.

FEMA also has an app that can be downloaded and used to apply for assistance.

Custer said FEMA will soon open disaster recovery centers.

Tracey said recovery centers would likely be in every county included in the federal disaster declaration.

Custer said individuals do not have to live in a county where a disaster center is located to use a center.

Staff members at disaster recovery centers will be able to help people who have previously applied for assistance and sign people up for aid.

One disaster center is currently open in North Carolina. The center is located at A.C. Reynolds High School in Asheville.

FEMA's website said the deadline to apply for assistance in North Carolina is Nov. 27.

What do you need to apply for assistance?

- " Proof of ownership of a residence "
- A list of people permanently living at a location "
- Social Security number "
- · Estimated annual income "
- Insurance information, if available Custer said it takes about 10 minutes to provide this information over the phone.

More information is coming for people who have lost a driver's license and other documents, Custer said.

"That happens in virtually all these situations. Key documents get swept away," Custer said. "There's avenues people can use to recover documents."

Who can apply for FEMA assistance?

U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals and qualified non-citizens are eligible to receive assistance according to FEMA's

website.

Applicants will also need to provide a Social Security number to prove their identity.

What happens after applying for assistance?

Custer said the time to process an application varies.

"We have already approved more than \$37 million in housing and other types of assistance for over 28,000 North Carolina households," Custer said on Oct. 8.

On Oct. 9, FEMA's website said nearly \$60 million in housing and other assistance had been approved for almost 52,000 North Carolinians.

After applying for FEMA assistance, applicants will receive a letter explaining what type of grant they have been awarded or advising them their application is incomplete and more information is needed.

If someone is not satisfied with the grant they received, an appeals process exists. Custer said specialists at disaster recovery centers can assist applicants with the appeals process.

FEMA's website also says appeals can be made online through accounts registered with disasterassistance.gov.

Custer said FEMA may call applicants from any number, so if someone has applied for assistance they need to answer their phone even if it is from an unknown number.

Does FEMA help with unemployment?

Custer said those out of work due to the disaster may apply for disaster unemployment.

"There is disaster unemployment," Custer said. "It is mostly funded by FEMA. but it is run by the state unemployment office."

What does FEMA pay for?

Custer said the \$750 many applicants have received is for food, medicine, diapers and other essential needs.

FEMA can also pay for emergency home repair if a home is repairable.

FEMA also pays for temporary housing.

We've got about 1,400 people in 125 hotels in North Carolina, Custer said.

FEMA may also assist with providing funds for equipment used for work or school, such as tools or computers, on a case-bycase basis.

Does FEMA assistance have to be paid back?

Custer said FEMA assistance does not have to be paid back because they are grants.

Custer said FEMA aids individuals. The Small Business Administration (SBA) provides loans to businesses, homeowners and renters to deal with home and personal property losses.

People can apply for FEMA grants and SBA loans.

Are conspiracy theories hurting FEMA?

"There's things out there like FEMA is confiscating items or supplies, there's no truth at all to that," Custer said, referring to a rumor that FEMA is taking donated items and not disbursing them to affected communities. "We always say, particularly for people outside the affected area, a cash contribution is the most effective way (to help)."

Custer said people should give to the Red Cross or other established organizations.

Custer also said well-intentioned deeds may not be helpful.

"People get a pick-up, get a few neighbors, get a few supplies in a truck and head on down to western North Carolina," Custer said. "That's difficult with the roads, they're not sure where to go, there's a problem in not knowing exactly where to drop those (donations off)."

Can people apply to work for FEMA?

Custer said people can apply, but FEMA is not at the point where they have requested additional aid workers.

Billy Chapman is a reporter with the Hickory Daily Record. wchapman@hickoryrecord.com

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Disaster brought out the best in Haywood: Many helping hands sprang into storm relief

October 12, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Carol Viau | Section: Hurricane Helene | 4010 Words OpenURL Link

There are stories big and small about how people in Haywood County came out to help each other in the wake of Helene's destruction. In the powerless days and dark nights of late September and early October, folks here came together to offer help, supplies and solace. Here are a few of their stories.

Toddlers to grandparents, Fugates reach out

For the Fugates of Waynesville, jumping into action was natural for the entire family, from grandparents Cindy and Larry to the youngest grandkid, 21 months old.

Monday, Sept. 30, was granddaughter Novella Brown's birthday.

"We couldn't give her a party due to the disaster," Cindy said. "It was Novella and (cousin) Dewayne Fugate who came up with the idea to go help folks, instead."

The grandparents and five cousins — toddler up to age 12 — booted up, driving around, looking for people who needed help. First stop was the Sara and Jerry Roten's residence and thrift store, Thrifty Treasures, in Clyde.

"We didn't see any vehicles there helping at that house and that's where we started, helping clean out the flooded property, bagging everything and dragging the trash bags to the curb for pick up," Cindy said. "We didn't know them personally before this, but we know them now."

Even toddler "Lil Larry" dragged the trash bags as he could. Cindy said his efforts to help put a smile on many faces.

"After that we picked up and delivered food, clothing, water and other supplies for nine, 12 hours a day," Cindy said. "At New Beginning Baptist Church, we filled backpacks with personal items and food for those who have nothing left."

How did this family get motivated in such meaningful ways?

"We weren't taught to sit around while people suffer," said Cindy. "We are taught by our core family values. I'm so proud of our 'baby grands.' We haven't stopped yet."

The Fergusons give folks all-important boots

Linda and Wendell Ferguson, owners of Work Boots & More in Waynesville, have been a Haywood County fixture for 21 years with a loyal following of boot-loving buyers.

They sprang into action after the storm, knowing the special value of rubber work boots for people deeply affected by the devastation and the workers helping with relief.

The store gave away all the rubber boots it had in stock, Linda said. Then various sales reps the store works with began reaching out to the Fergusons asking how help.

The result was a big donation of men's, women's and children's rubber work boots from Rocky brands, socks from Carolina Mills, hoodies from H&S Brown and taboggan hats from Chippewa Boots. The store lined up the rubber boots outside the store and posted availability on Facebook for storm victims or workers who might need them.

"Come get them for whoever may need them," the store posted on Facebook.

When the rubber boots went fast, the store got another rubber boots donation, which went just as quickly.

Linda estimates they gave away more than 100 pair of rubber boots and have received an outpouring of thanks from the community.

One community recipient of the free items posted this on Work Boots & More's Face Book page: "Our family is so incredibly grateful for those boots. We were able to outfit our family of four so that we can make way to finish our efforts in salvaging what's left of our things. This has been a tumultuous journey that we could not achieve without the help of our community, and businesses like yours."

Unnamed heroes to the rescue

In the Lake Logan area of Canton, a landslide buried Little East Fork Road.

"It was like 10 of the largest dozers in the word had been side-by-side, pushing the whole mountain down at once," said Kevin Ensley, who has a family farm in the area.

The slide landed on the road and in the creek, diverting the creek to a new channel, which crossed over the road itself. It was impassable — cutting off residents who couldn't get in or out.

A neighbor and business owner stepped up in a huge way. Declining to be named, he said he did what he did "out of goodness, love and a service heart."

"He was in his backhoe trying to get that debris away so water could get back in the creek bed and then went on to cut a one-lane tunnel through the debris so people could drive through," Ensley said. "He was a life saver. There were elderly folks up there with health issues, and they couldn't get out if they needed to."

With \$400,000 damage to his own property, the unnamed neighbor said he didn't think twice about jumping in to help with heavy equipment.

"So many have it worse because of the storm, including loss of life," he said.

The neighbor has been volunteering daily in the Lake Logan area; since he lives there, he knows what needs to be done. When The Mountaineer received an offer of help from an industrial maintenance tech in Georgia who was supposed to be camping this week in the Sunburst area, the newspaper put him in touch with the unnamed hero.

Hot meal collaboration

For Nathan Lowe, owner of Southern Porch in Canton, relief that the Canton flooding mercifully stopped two blocks from the restaurant turned into action, doing what the restaurant does best, cooking and serving good meals.

Southern Porch, along with Canton's Grateful Table and the Lunch Box Café, were mobilized by Beverly Banks, self-professed "food mover." Banks was the impetus behind 505 Main Street, the free-market community pantry in downtown Canton that was started October 2021 in the wake of Tropical Storm Fred. Through her years of volunteerism, Banks had contacts in Tallahassee, Fla., working with an arm of World Central Kitchen (WCK).

"I reached out to them, and within 24 hours they (WCK) were here, independently of the big food distribution the organization is doing in Asheville," Banks said.

Together with her army of 40 volunteers and the three Canton restaurants, Banks said they served more than 3.700 hot meals in the week after Helene.

"Fortunately, Southern Porch only lost power for seven, eight hours in the storm; we had thousands of (dollars in) inventory of perishable items that survived," Lowe said. "So we cooked whatever we had on hand, offering good meals from pulled pork, to pimento cheese and mac, pot roast and mashed potatoes. The House of Raeford Farms reached out to us and sent 400 chicken breasts, which became baked-chicken orders to go."

Southern Porch fed Town of Clyde first responders and employees for several days and offered Starlink and Wi-Fi to anyone who needing a place to connect.

Lowe said he's gotten messages of thanks from folks who benefitted from the meals, some saying, "It was the best meal we've gotten all week." Helping in this way also lifted the spirits of the restaurant's staff — "they wanted to work," he added.

Action in the face of devastation

Felisha and Hunter Wyman are community-focused in their approach to business and life. Their Dog House pet shop in Canton is a total loss; nothing in the shop was salvageable.

"The water level was at 14 feet inside the building, and 12 inches of mud covering the whole floor," said Felisha. "All foods were contaminated with the water. The display racks were bent or broken. It was a huge loss, but we feel blessed that the Dog House in Waynesville and our Woof Street Bistro food truck were both safe."

The Wymans, who actively support their four-legged friends, care deeply about the community and their customers. They turned their personal business loss into positive action, putting their food truck in service.

"Many of our customers lost so much, and we felt it was important to help any way we can," Felisha said.

The couple's Woof Street Bistro truck, often participating in community events, went into flood relief mode, cooking and offering free hot food at various Haywood stops, from Cruso Community Center to the parking lot at The Dog House in Waynesville.

"We have fed about 600 people so far (through Oct. 8) and expect to do another 150 today at The Dog House Waynesville and 200 tomorrow at WPTL radio in Canton," Hunter said. "It has been extremely heartwarming to speak with people hit hardest by the flood and see them out trying to help others. We've had grown men get food (at our truck) for their families and break down to tears because they hadn't had hot food in over a week."

Cataloochee Ranch and the Swag make impact

Maggie Valley's Cataloochee Ranch staff jumped into action, taking the Ranch's Hitch food truck to the Maggie Valley fire department for three days, serving hot food to first responders and anyone needing a meal.

"We wanted to support the efforts of the heroes within our community," said Terry Spalding, Cataloochee Ranch general manager. "Approximately 500 black Angus smash burgers were served, thanks to executive chef Jeb Aldrich and the team."

The Ranch and its sister property, the Swag, went further. With reopening of the two properties, management committed to donate 100% of revenue (not just profits) from October stays to local recovery efforts.

"While supporting rebuilding, it also supports our local farmers and suppliers who need to sell their crops and services to keep afloat," Spalding said. "We are proud to work with an amazing team — many of whom are volunteering to serve those in greater need."

Proprietors Annie and David Colquitt demonstrated their support of the community by donating \$1,000 per employee (198 total staff) to the nonprofit of the staff member's choosing for recovery aid. They also made a

personal commitment of \$2 million in donations to recovery efforts, divided between The North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund, World Central Kitchen, Haywood Christian Ministry, United Way of Haywood County, and Samaritan's Purse.

"Annie and David's commitments to the employees, plus their personal commitments, are simply inspiring," Spalding said.

"There are so many organizations doing great work," the Colquitts said in announcing the donation. "In the coming weeks and months, we will highlight other organizations as well. We invite you to join us and so many others around the country in supporting our beautiful region and the people who make it special."

Sarge's feeds Haywood's dogs and kitties

Sarge's Animal Rescue Foundation continued its pet rescue mission in a big way by giving pet families supplies for furry friends after Helene blew through. Members of the community jumped in, donating pet food and other items to Sarge's for distribution.

"We were incredibly lucky that Sarge's facility didn't sustain damage," said executive director Jessie Metcalf. "In the wake of so much disruption around, we're really trying to step up for our community."

About 20 volunteers, staff and board members helped collect supplies, bagging and loading food at the Sarge's Waynesville Adoption Center. Sarge's went "mobile" into Cruso, Bethel, Canton, Fines Creek and Waynesville distributing pet supplies, including crates, carriers, bedding, leashes, collars, cat litter, disposable litter boxes, cleaning supplies and water.

Board chair Windy McKinney helped drive the Sarge's van and deliver the estimated 1,000 pounds of donated pet food.

"Our volunteers at Sarge's really came through," McKinney said. "They bagged and loaded food and helped people find the right food for their pets."

Sarge's set up pre-bagged food for the community to pick up at its Waynesville location and plans to continue its efforts to bring food to those who need it.

"There is so much generosity coming from right here in Western North Carolina, including several churches and organizations bringing donations," Metcalf said.

Plus, Sarge's has announced a joyful fundraiser, the "Howl-O-Ween Dog Costume Contest," to be 10-11:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 26, at the Waynesville Historic Courthouse steps. Grab a costume for your pup — or make a donation of your choosing at Sarge's Adoption Center and use one of theirs.

"We wanted to be able to do something fun and festive for the fur babies," Metcalf said.

Funds raised from the \$10 per dog entry fee will go to missions in the area helping animals with foods, medications, boarding and foster supplies after Helene.

Hurricane veteran comes home to help

Haywood County native, now New Orleans, La., resident Caleb Hensley, knows a thing or two about storm relief efforts, having been through hurricanes Katrina, Ida and more.

By trade, he's a building contractor and musician who enjoys helping educate folks about filing insurance claims. By heart, he just wants to help people.

When he saw the videos of the flooding in Waynesville's Frog Level on Facebook, he said his heart sank. Hensley's mother lives near there, just above Charlie's Corner. He asked Facebook friends for donations to load up his trailer with supplies, then headed to Haywood County.

"Initially, I came to check on my family," Hensley said, "but then it turned into something much more. After seeing they were OK, I drove to Candler to check on my sister. Along the way, there was no cell service, no communication so people didn't know where to get supplies. People were stuck with little gas. I filled up a tank for an elderly couple in their 80s who felt they couldn't leave their house because they didn't have fuel to make it to a station."

He believes it's important to go out to where the people are who are in need. Hensley spoke Spanish at a trailer park he encountered and was soon surrounded by people needing necessities.

Through Facebook posts of his daily stops, people donated cash, which he handed out as needed, since "green cash was in short supply." Longtime Haywood friend Dave Partin loaded up a truck with baby supplies; he and Hensley roamed the neighborhoods of Haywood, giving out necessities.

Hensley said he would love to help organize a seminar here to help people navigate the process of filing FEMA claims, if anyone requests help.

"I'm just a guy who's been through multiple disasters who came to check on his family, but I'm grateful to be a small part in helping people and being of service," he said. "I've seen the best in people through this disaster, and I know how good they can be."

In Cruso, country club serves community

On the edge of Cruso, Springdale Resort and its Rocky Face Tavern used Facebook to reach out to their community, including first responders, rescue crews, linemen and anyone working in the area, inviting them for a free lunch at the Village Grill snack bar.

"We have been serving the Cruso community and all first responders since Monday after the flood," said Curt Davis, resort manager. "To date, we have served more than 650 meals from the Village Grill Snack Bar."

The resort is reminding folks that "these mountains bring comfort, even in the storm," and shared information on distribution sites for supplies.

"In the wake of this tragedy, Springdale is accepting donations and those wishing to donate to our community relief fund may call 828-235-8451," Davis said.

Thankfully, the road to Springdale is open and cleared.

Balsam Range, Laurel Ridge team up to help

Haywood County's own bluegrass sensation, the multi award-winning Balsam Range, always is ready to help the community. Proud of their Haywood roots, band members love spreading the good word about the Western North Carolina mountains with the joy of music.

With typical "Grit and Grace," as in the band's song, they made music in an "Evening of Hope" fundraiser for post-Helene needs at Laurel Ridge Country Club, Waynesville.

"After the devastation of Hurricane Helene that affected so many, we all were looking for ways to help," said Duane Page, Laurel Ridge general manager. "At the end of the season, we already had a pre-scheduled Oct. 4 concert with the band. Together we agreed that we would only move forward with the event if we could turn it into a fundraiser to support our community."

Many Laurel Ridge members who would normally come to the concert were scattered, due to the storm. Even with lower attendance, the Balsam Range concert raised \$13,000.

Balsam Range and Laurel Ridge will divide the funds raised to support their individual charities and causes.

"There is so much devastation," said Balsam Range member Tim Surrett, who has been getting the word out about the local situation via his radio show on Canton's WPTL.

Surrett said the station used a Starlink antenna to broadcast much-needed flood information, "with a little music to give listeners an uplifting break" from the aftermath of the storm.

Balsam Range is kind of a roving troubadour for WNC, spreading word of mountain life. Now, Surrett said, the band has to use alternate driving routes to get to upcoming shows, since both Interstate 40 going into Tennessee and Interstate 26 into Virginia were closed due to the storm. But Haywood's favorite band is keeping the dates they can and letting people know about the situation in WNC. Surrett said they are sorry about the cancelation of the Haywood Arts Council's October concert in Maggie Valley, but "it didn't seem right, having a festival here now."

Drive-by water heroes much appreciated

Donna Trantham from Clyde contacted The Mountaineer with an uplifting story of a small, but meaningful gesture from a group of four young men.

"I was driving home from work on Friday through Clyde and these boys stopped me and ask if I needed water," Trantham said. "They were driving their own truck, knocking on doors, distributing water and other supplies."

While she tried to offer them gas money for their kindness, she said they wouldn't take it.

"These boys right here were a guardian angel," Trantham said. "It made me cry knowing what these young men were doing for Haywood County."

Darren Nicholson Band goes on a mission

Canton resident and noted musician Darren Nicholson and his band are on a mission — getting into action with post-storm relief.

"This is an extremely stressful and traumatic time for so many in our region," said Nicholson, whose band has gone out into hard-hit areas offering a helping had and who set up a GoFundMe page to receive donations from his Face Book and music fans.

"We are extremely grateful and blessed, so watching so many in our community in need, that put us immediately into action," he said. "The Bluegrass community, Western North Carolina and friends around the world have given me so much over my lifetime. Here's an opportunity to carry that forward and to be of service to others."

While Nicholson took a chainsaw to clear trees from driveways, band members Kevin Sluder delivered water, Richard Foulk delivered necessities, and east Tennessee residents Aynsley Porchak worked at a distribution center while Avery Welter worked as a first responder. Nicholson's wife and often vocal contributor, Jennifer, picked up donations from local resources.

To date, the GoFundMe page has raised \$18,500; Nicholson has issued a challenge to try to go over \$20,000 in donations. With the funds, he and band members personally purchase and deliver groceries and necessities, posting results on Face Book.

"One hundred percent of this money is going back into the community," he said. "We are buying supplies — mostly hazmat cleanup suits, gloves, paper products, generators, consumables and clothes— and delivering them.

Nicholson said most of the supplies purchased have been from local merchants, including Sav-Mor, Hometown Hardware and Flying Pig, all in Canton.

"We are trying to help folks, while also supporting local businesses," he said.

Nicholson, always community-minded, did the same thing in 2021 after tropical storm Fred, when he was able to deliver more than \$14,000 worth of groceries and supplies through his personal fundraising campaign.

"This community supports us and it's our obligation to support our community," said Nicholson. "When a catastrophe occurs, it's the human response to go in to fight or flight mode. These kind of situations can bring out the absolute worst in people, and it can also bring out the very best in people. Those good qualities are the solution."

Volunteerism steps up at Pigeon Center

The Pigeon Community Multicultural Development Center in Waynesville has been a community fixture with its mission "to strengthen harmony among the residents of our county," fostering inclusiveness.

After Helene hit, the Pigeon Center mobilized immediately, checking on Haywood folks, then opening its doors to fill needs from cleaning supplies, hot meals, food boxes and other essential things people needed, including financial information.

Even with spotty internet, the Pigeon Center started posting a daily schedule of what was available at the center and welcoming volunteers.

"Sometimes we just relied on what we could do on paper and pencil, making the runs on foot," said the center's executive director Lin Forney. "We're trying to get our neighbors what they need. We've had a ton of beautiful, wonderful volunteers from all over, plus people have brought things from Raleigh, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Durham, South Carolina and Georgia. They have brought us all kinds of supplies Haywood County folks needed right now."

Waynesville resident Ann Simmons works at the Haywood County Board of Elections, but when internet was down post-storm and office work couldn't be done, she used her time to volunteer in relief effort. Simmons chose the Pigeon Center after seeing a post on Facebook.

Simmons said she did whatever was needed at the Pigeon Center, from unloading trucks to finding resources for people who had downed trees — and she helped spread the word about relief effort at the center. Simmons daughter, Emily Wheeler, of Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, heard the word and secured donations for the center from her residence, then drove a truck up here with supplies.

After her experience at the Pigeon Center, Simmons posted on the center's Facebook page: "I felt honored to be there with you all today. What a true blessing to the community you and the center are."

"Thank you to all the volunteers who have dedicated hours, days and weeks to help," Forney said. "They took people, cooked, stored, sorted and received, organized, repackaged and coordinated — All to make sure people are fed, safe and have what they need."

'Small stuff' matters

Some of the most appreciated help was on 'the small stuff.' From personal experience, much appreciated help was given by neighbors during the subdivision's five-and-a-half-day power outage, including Tuscola High School special education teacher Ben Garner, who helped my husband, Paul, unload and set up a new grill when our old one wouldn't work. It's noteworthy that Garner is now deployed as senior enlisted leader for the N.C. National Guard,

assisting all of Western N.C. As we brag on him, he is quick to brag on the troops, saying they are doing "a great service."

There were neighbors who helped in other ways, one couple forwarding cash so we could get a new grill to cook. Another neighbor alerted us that gas trucks were at Ingles in Canton, so we could fuel up. Neighbors walked the development talking to neighbors, exchanging information; in the days of darkness, there was no other way to communicate.

A shout-out goes to Town of Clyde staff, sending maintenance employees door-to-door in our subdivision to advise folks to reserve water in buckets in case the subdivision supply ran out. The Clyde staff came back to give people the boil-water order and to let us know when it was rescinded.

The maintenance employees told me about cell reception and a Wi-Fi hot spot on Paragon Parkway in Clyde — and which stores had power.

A stranger helps

Being "power-less," I went looking for a store to plug in electronic devices. Jumping for joy, I saw Valé 243 Italian Kitchen with its door open. Owner Valerio Vuotto's staff was welcoming and gracious, letting me charge the electronics.

That lead to a stranger helping me after I offered her a seat. While waiting for a carry-out order, Clyde resident Susan Shumolis told me she retired as Pisgah High School's librarian.

She was visibly moved when I told her about my junior high homeroom teacher — a librarian — who nurtured my interest in the media, making me editor of the school newspaper, leading to what I do today.

While electronics were being charged, she asked if my household didn't have a portable charging station, like the Halo charger she used. I was clueless, and she offered to lend me her Halo, since she had power.

"I was wondering what I could do this day to reach out to people," she said. "I wanted to personally help someone close to home."

Shumolis drove home, bringing the portable charger back to Valé 243, then treated me to a pizza to take home. It lifted my spirits. — Carol Viau

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Maggie Valley couple opens home for neighbors to connect to outside world

October 12, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Paul Nielsen| Section: Life | 446 Words OpenURL Link

MAGGIE VALLEY — The welcome sign in front of the Maggie Valley home of Jeff and Caitlin Nichols was still up 11 days after Hurricane Helene ravaged the region.

But this was not your ordinary welcome sign. Instead, it read: "Free Wi-Fi" while listing the network name and password for the couple's Starlink satellite system.

The Nichols' welcome extended far from their own dead-end street about a mile up off of Soco Road. The couple put out numerous signs saying "Free Wi-Fi" on street signs directing people to their home.

In the days following the storm, "the most we had at one time was 10 or 12 people," Caitlin said. "There were people checking in with family, people checking in at their work."

"It was pretty solid the first few days," Jeff added. "... We had a lot of people here on Oct. 1 because they had bills to pay."

Sandra Rowland lives within walking distance of the Nichols and said using the couple's internet in the days following the storm was a "Godsend."

"Communicating is our life blood," Rowland said. "I'm dependent, we all our, on social networks. Just to be able to communicate, to say you are alright, to hear, 'Do you need anything?' was a Godsend. They (Nichols) welcomed everyone."

The couple had as many as 50 different neighbors making a connection to the internet at one point before most of those people had their own internet restored over a week after the storm hit.

Some arrived by car, but many made the journey by foot.

"Some people came on four-wheelers as well," Caitlin said.

As good hosts do, the Nichols tried to make their neighbors welcome by putting out lawn chairs and erecting a canvas tarp for some protection from the elements.

The Nichols live in Maggie Valley seasonally, spending nine months out of the year working outside the country. They were scheduled to arrive back at their home for their three-month stay the day the storm hit. But they were delayed by Helene, arriving two days later on Sunday, Sept. 29.

The couple were in Mississippi visiting Jeff's family in the days before Helene came ashore. Jeff called Maggie Valley neighbors after the storm moved on and learned that people had power, but no one had internet.

So the couple stopped at a Best Buy in Mississippi and bought a Starlink system. They also brought a generator, loaded their vehicle with jerry cans of extra fuel and plenty of food and water to bring with them from Mississippi.

"We didn't want to be a drain on local resources," Caitlin said.

Jeff Nichols acted as tech guru for some of his neighbors.

"We showed a lot of older people how to turn on Wi-Fi calling," he said.

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Swimmers hit the pool again

October 12, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 415 Words OpenURL Link

Smoky Mountain Aquatic Club's short course season is back on track after Hurricane Helene paused training.

Helene devastated many areas along Richland Creek, but fortunately, the storm spared the Waynesville Recreation Center. The facility reopened with limited hours on the Monday after the storm.

"The town staff have been incredible throughout the aftermath of the hurricane" said John Ammons, chair of SMAC's non-profit board. "We know all the town employees had their own personal challenges to face after the storm and we are so thankful they were able to open so our athletes and others could maintain some normality during a tough week."

It is important for competitive swimmers to maintain a consistent practice schedule. This is particularly true in October, when short course season is ramping up. Missing a week or more of practice can derail a swimmer's progress for months and even increase their risk of injury when they return. That's why it was so important for the swimmers to have a little time in the pool, even if the practices weren't quite as demanding as they usually are.

"There was definitely a little more Marco Polo and Sharks and Minnows than a normal practice," said Head Coach Dan McGuire. "We had all ages in the pool during our limited hours so we couldn't have practices tailored to specific training groups. Still, it was great for the younger and older swimmers to spend some time together in the water and build some bonds and forget about Helene for a little while."

The Waynesville Recreation Center expanded its hours of operation this week, now opening at 8 a.m. and closing at 8 p.m. on weekdays.

"We're just thankful we can continue to serve our members during this difficult time" said Luke Kinsland, Waynesville's Parks and Recreation Director. "The department has a lot of challenges ahead with many of our facilities after the flooding, but thankfully the Rec. Center is not one of them."

This season, SMAC will host two local meets at the Waynesville Recreation Center and attend away meets in Asheville, Greensboro, Greenville, Kingsport and, for qualifying swimmers, national level championship meets at locations to be determined. In addition to the two sanctioned USA Swimming meets at home, SMAC has multiple intrasquad meets scheduled this fall and winter at the Rec. Center.

Registration remains open to swimmers age five and older. Space is limited, so if practice groups fill, the team will offer a wait list.

For more information or to register, visit www.gomotionapp.com/team/smacnc/page/home. Specific questions may be emailed to smacwnc@gmail.com.

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Tuscola football earns dominant win in first game since Helene

October 12, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Tyler Norris Goode | Section: Sports | 676 Words OpenURL Link

For a few hours Friday night, there was a break from debris piles, curfews and all the other awfulness Helene left behind in Haywood County.

Inside C.E. Weatherby Stadium, friends and classmates reunited with hugs and handshakes.

And after a sluggish first quarter, Tuscola pulled away and treated the home crowd to a 37-7 victory over visiting East Henderson.

Junior quarterback Jett Bartley tossed three touchdown strikes and rushed for another score, and senior Cooper Williamson rushed for a touchdown and 95 yards to lead the Mountaineers.

"It's big for our community," Tuscola coach Jonathan Crompton said. "You see the kids out here. You see their families and the cheerleaders and all the fans. Trying to get back to normalcy is a huge thing for our community. And obviously being able to get out here and get a win helps. It's always going to be a trying time when a tragic event happens, but our families and communities handled it well — helping each other."

Regardless of the game's outcome, Mountaineers' fans in the student section were just thrilled to see each other at an official school activity after more than two weeks away.

"It's just awesome to see familiar faces and know that everyone's OK," said Tuscola student Sofia Wijewickrama.

Hunter Sollie, a senior, added: "Being able to come out here, see our friends, check on everybody, see a football game - I think it's good for everybody. It's good for the community."

Schoolmate Meredith Bradshaw also appreciated the evening's significance.

"I've never been so happy just to see everybody and hug everybody and know that everybody's OK," Bradshaw said. "While we're at a football game and we're cheering on the boys, this game is just a little bit bigger than that."

The Mountaineers' players understood that, too. Nearly a month had passed since their last game, a 34-point rout of Swain County on Sept. 13, and they now get only a short break before taking on first-place Franklin Tuesday night at C.E. Weatherby Stadium.

But Tuscola fought through some rust - and any temptation to look ahead — while putting away East Henderson early in the third quarter.

On the second play after halftime, Bartley connected with speedy sophomore Isaiah Hyatt on a perfect 44-yard scoring strike down the left sideline to push Tuscola's lead to 23-0. Williamson then scored from 10 yards out less than six minutes of game-time later to further seal the outcome.

Meanwhile, Tuscola's defense pitched a shutout until the final two minutes — and senior linebacker Walker Bolden came up with a key third-quarter pick.

"We knew a game like this can be known as a trap game," Tuscola junior linebacker Bryson Haynes said. "We could get upset. But our coaches preached to us, and the preacher who came to the game and preached to us said that we just needed this as a county. We just needed a win to bring everyone back into normal a little bit. And I'd say

that's what really drove us to get the victory tonight."

In the opening quarter, the teams combined for more penalty yards (60) than they gained offensively (33). The only points on the board after 12 minutes came when East Henderson bungled a punt attempt on its opening drive, and a hard hit by Tuscola's special-teams unit knocked the ball out of the end zone for a safety.

Neither team was able to change the tally until Bartley found sophomore Bo West on the left side of the end zone for a 10-yard touchdown pass with 5:12 to go before halftime. Senior Christopher Wells tacked on the first of his five successful extra-point kicks to put the Mountaineers up, 9-0.

Bartley's other scores were a six-yard run right before halftime and a 70-yard pass to West after the game was well in hand in the fourth quarter.

East Henderson didn't get on the board until senior Lex Burns hit junior Isaac Schulz on a 5-yard pass with 77 seconds remaining in the final period.

The Mounties return to action on Tuesday with another home game. They'll host Franklin, who took down North Henderson 45-6 on Friday.

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