

‘It threw us back’: People living in public housing in Asheville cope in post-Helene life

BY RYAN OEHRLI
roehrli@charlotteobserver.com

ASHEVILLE

Since Helene struck, Kyesha Nelson and TJ Wilson have been making long walks across Asheville because her baby needs special milk.

To avoid the worst of Helene, they had left their home in the Fairview area to stay with Wilson’s mother in Hillcrest, one of the city’s public housing communities.

“I just have to get my baby somewhere I can walk around,” Nelson remembered thinking. Her six-month-old, Tykwon, was born prematurely.

But Hillcrest has no power or running water, a common struggle for people in Asheville and Western North Carolina since the historic storm.

They don’t have a car. Without the city’s bus system running, people

without transportation — including those living in low-income housing like Hillcrest — are on foot in Asheville’s winding, hilly roads.

“When you have smaller children, walking is not always the best thing you can do,” Nelson said. “Or the safest.”

A COMMON ISSUE

In a Sept. 28 notice, the city said buses had been redirected to relief efforts. ART — or Asheville Rides Transit — brought 578 people to shelters, that notice said.

“The service also continues to face power outages, road conditions, and staffing shortages,” it said. All services are suspended “until further notice.”

The city later announced that on Monday the bus system will “begin operating a modified schedule on select routes where road conditions have improved.”

In West Asheville’s



Cicely Rogers of Asheville, N.C. is stuck at her apartment with no water or electricity on Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024

Pisgah View Apartments, Cicely Rogers is dealing with “more stress” without a way to get around town, she said.

She has family in the area, but not nearby. Amboy Road flooded early, making it a challenge for them to get to her, she said. And she’s not even sure what the roads are like where her sister lives in Buncombe County.

Water is the chief concern for many because many in the city are without fresh water. Asheville Mayor Esther Manheimer has warned that it will take some time, at least weeks, for it to return.

Pisgah View had power Thursday, drawing in family members, said Tykerria Robinson-Williams. Her focus was stocking up as much water as she could, unsure

how long necessities would be hard to come by.

She worried how far back the storm would set the people living in Pisgah View.

“We really can’t afford to leave our homes behind. We weren’t doing too good before, so now... it threw us back 10 more steps when we’re trying to get 10 steps ahead,” she said.

Friends, family and neighbors have been helping each other across the region.

“Really, I’m just counting on my friends to look out for me,” said Reggie Moore, who lives in Deerview, another public housing community that’s close to Aston Park. He’s worried about older people there, who can’t get out.

“I think they need a bit more help than what they’re getting,” he said.

One such woman, who asked not to be named, said she relies on the bus system. Even if she walked downtown, she might not find an ATM with cash or a store that’s stocked, she said.

‘WE ALL NEED TO PULL OUR PART’

Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder said the county has been working with community

partners to distribute food to public housing communities.

“Community paramedics have been on the ground since this began, taking water to our housing authority areas,” Pinder said.

Some residents told The Charlotte Observer about food and water being dropped off, and even a food truck cooking hot meals.

Lolita Ray also rides the bus. She’s lived in Hillcrest for about five years. Without it, she’s relying on her daughter for rides to and from Sam’s Club, where her daughter works.

Water cases rested at a neighbor’s front door Friday. Ray put them there. And she spent her morning cleaning up trash on the streets in Hillcrest. The trash irked her.

“Right now, we all need to pull our part and come together,” she said.

By the afternoon, there was some new and much-needed relief at Hillcrest. The community center filled with donations, and water stacked high outside. Residents carried out diapers, snacks, water and more.

Observer staff writer Jeff A. Chamer contributed.

Ryan Oehrli: @oehrli

Concord Mills to get several new stores, an NC coffee shop and a children’s play area

BY CATHERINE MUCCIGROSSO
cmuccigrosso@charlotteobserver.com

A North Carolina coffee roaster, several retailers and a children’s play area are the newest additions to Concord Mills.

Mean Mug, a Salisbury-based coffee roaster, is open beside Rack Room Shoes across the hall from

Irish retailer Primark near Entrance 3, mall property owner Simon said Monday in a news release.

Founded in 2015, Mean Mug has two stores in Salisbury, and shops at Carolina Place in Pineville and Northlake Mall in Charlotte, according to the company.

Other stores expected to open by the end of year at

Concord Mills are:

- Cavender’s Boot City, a western wear and fashion retailer, will open near Entrance 5.
- HEYDUDE show store will open next to Oakley.
- Hi Level Fashion a men’s clothing, shoes and accessories shop with brands like G-Star, Lacoste, Psycho Bunny, Jordan Craig and Tim-

berland will open next to DTLR.

- BoxLunch, a specialty retailer with merchandise from apparel to home goods, will open next to Kids Foot Locker. For every \$10 spent, Box-Lunch provides a meal to person in need through Feeding America on behalf of local food banks.
- Kids Jungle Play-

ground, a store where children can play, learn, exercise and have birthday parties near entrance 6.

Other store openings this year at the mall include: DTLR streetwear and sportswear retailer; Lacoste Outlet men’s clothing, footwear and accessories; MINISO selling cosmetics, stationery, toys and kitchenware; Royal Reflections nail salon; Pandora jewelry; and Pics & Prints, photo studio.

Concord Mills mall, off Exit 49 in Concord about

14 miles northeast of uptown Charlotte, opened in 1999. It’s the largest outlet mall in North Carolina with 188 stores, a 24-screen AMC/IMAX movie theater and a Sea-Life Aquarium.

Owner Simon, based in Indianapolis, also owns SouthPark mall and Charlotte Premium Outlets.

Catherine Muccigrosso: 7043585198, @CatMuccigrosso



WE OFFER **MORE** THAN OTHER SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES.

MORE FOR YOUR MONEY • **MORE** PEACE OF MIND
MORE AMENITIES AND SERVICES



Learn **MORE** reasons to choose retirement living at Windsor Run.® Call 1-800-436-6551 or visit **WindsorRunCommunity.com** for your FREE brochure.

Windsor Run
BY ERICKSON SENIOR LIVING®

Matthews
WindsorRunCommunity.com

