

Scan the codes and enjoy our content at
MORGANTON.COM



LOOKING FORWARD
Silver Creek restaurant, Ingles clean up from flooding as local businesses begin to recover.



IN THE AFTERMATH
Morganton hospital ER seeing storm-related injuries after Hurricane Helene.



WANT TO READ MORE COMICS?
Point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the link.

Boone begins to dig out

SCOTT SEXTON
Winston-Salem Journal

BOONE — Little by little, one shovel and armful of debris at a time, stunned residents and business owners continued Monday the arduous, heartbreaking task of digging out from the devastation left by Tropical Storm Helene.

Some, such as James Simmons, the owner of the Penn Station East Coast Sandwich Shop on U.S. 321, knew what had happened and what it was going to take to rebuild.

“I was in the store the whole time,” he said of the worst of the flooding. “If I had any idea, I wouldn’t have stayed. I would have jumped ship.”

Others knew what likely had happened but didn’t realize the extent of the damage until they saw it for the first time Monday morning.

“I don’t think a lot of people understand how widespread this is,” said Dan Stewart, the owner of the Dolbier Floor Care and Restoration company.

Helene dumped more than a foot of rain in some parts of the North Carolina mountains in a few hours Friday. Rainfall estimates in some areas topped more than 2 feet since last week.

Flash flooding and swollen creeks and rivers killed at least 60 in NC, some who drowned and others crushed by falling trees. The overall death toll across the U.S. Southeast has reached at least 121 people across six states.

More than 200,000 lost power and water service in the state. Tens of thousands were cut off from loved ones by floodwaters, downed trees and roadways completely washed away.

In and around Boone, surrounding communities in Ashe, Avery and Alleghany counties were still trying to get out.

Heavy-duty trucks hauling skid-steers, tractors and backhoes moved up U.S. 421 and 321 along-side electric company crews from all over the United States.

Churches and students from Appalachian State University — those who remained behind — stepped in to help whenever possible.

“We had kids from App who belong to our church walk over this morning to see what they could do,” said Pastor John Mark Brown of the Brushy Mountain Baptist Church just outside town limits. “God does things for us even through the hardest times.”

While Brown spoke — he was assembling a brand new generator pump to try and move standing water — two men, random strangers from Concord, pulled in.

“Could you use a skid steer?” Chuck Griffin asked the pastor. “We got one down the road. We’ll



Debris is visible near U.S. 321 and Winkler Creek in Boone.



Dumpsters that floated away in the floodwaters of Hurricane Helene are jammed under a bridge on US 321 in Boone on Monday.

bring it up to you.”

A few minutes later, Griffin explained that he and a few coworkers loaded the heavy earth mover up and drove to Boone knowing that people could use help.

That was evident all over town Monday. Traffic lights, electric service and water appeared to have been restored to a lot of the town by mid-morning.

A water distribution center had been set up at Watauga County High School and Samaritan’s Ministries set up a large tent filled with oxygen machines so people who require assistance breathing would have somewhere to go if they lost power.

“The support from the community has been amazing,” Stewart said. “I’m thankful for the safety of our people.

“But the news, for the next week or two, will not be as nice. We’re going to see the ugly side of it.”

Simmons, while stranded in his store, saw some of the ugliness firsthand — first from what Mother Nature had wrought and then from mankind.

Stormwater, he said, rapidly filled a creek branched off from the Watauga River nearby.

It quickly flooded the parking

lot, pooled in low spots and created eddies and a swift current capable of moving large objects.

Indeed, the water swept an industrial dumpster behind his restaurant into the creek and smashed it against the concrete supports supporting a bridge on US 321.

A few minutes later, a shipping container the size of a railroad car floated into his parking lot from a Wal-Mart at least 100 yards away.

“See the scrapes there?” he said, pointing to gouges in the metal a foot from its top. “It crashed into my building. I’m lucky it only hit the corner.”

At one point during the night Friday, Simmons said he watched something more sinister: Several people smashed the lock off the container to rifle through its contents like scavenging hyenas. And despite — or perhaps because of — witnessing firsthand the craven opportunism of common thieves, he nonetheless considered himself fortunate.

“We’re blessed,” he said. “A lot of people lost homes or loved ones. This can be fixed. People can’t be replaced.”

Stewart echoed that sentiment. One of his sons, he said,



Johann Perez of National Catastrophe Restoration, Inc. (NCRI) removes sheet rock from the First Horizon on US 321.



A crew at the Walmart on U.S. 321 in Boone cleans up the silt left from flooding during Helene on Monday.



WALT UNKS PHOTOS, WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

Pastor John Mark Brown assembles a water pump to remove flood water from the parking lot at Brush Fork Baptist Church in the Vilas community north of Boone.

was trapped in his Avery County home for the better part of the day Saturday, caught behind a road filled with broken trees and downed power lines.

It took several hours and a small army of men with chainsaws to cut a way through.

“It’s closer when it’s personal family,” he said.

Further down in a small strip of shops and offices tucked into one of Boone’s main commercial arteries, State Farm agent Adam Jackson set up a pair of laptops and phone chargers under a red popup tent.

Jackson, despite having to move sodden carpet and furniture from his own office, knew he had to find a way to answer calls from distressed homeowners that he knew would occupy the coming days and weeks ahead.

“I want to be helping other people as fast as I can,” he said. “I have to fix myself a little before I can really do that.

“You have to put your own oxygen mask on first.”

ssexton@wsjournal.com
336-727-7481
@scottsextonwsj

THE NEWS HERALD

3078 U.S. Highway 70 East,
Unit 1, Morganton, NC 28655
Contact us directly: Phone: 828-437-2161

NEWSROOM

• **Sports Editor:** Justin Epley
828-432-8943; sports@morganton.com
• **Have a story idea?**
email: news@morganton.com
Letters to the editor: editor@morganton.com
• **Newsroom:** 828-437-2161, Option 2
news@morganton.com

The News Herald is open by appointment only.
Email or call to schedule an appointment.

CORRECTION POLICY

The News Herald prints corrections and clarifications when needed. To bring a question or correction to the staff’s attention, call 828-432-8939.

ADVERTISING

• **Katie Murphy**, N.C. Vice President of Sales
kmurphy@ncmediagroup.com
• **John Pendley**, Senior Sales Manager
jpendley@ncmediagroup.com
• **Tiffany Hovis**, 704-431-0212
thovis@ncmediagroup.com

LEGALS AND PUBLIC NOTICES

434-978-7202; legals.northcarolina@lee.net

CLASSIFIEDS

434-978-7202; Classifieds.northcarolina@lee.net

RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING

Bradley Walsh, 828-304-6940
bwalsh@chickoryrecord.com

OBITUARIES

Obituaries can be emailed to
obituaries.ncc@lee.net or
faxed to 828-324-8179.
For information about our policies,
call 1-888-220-4265.

SUBSCRIBER CUSTOMER SERVICE

828-432-8970; custservice@morganton.com
Monday-Friday: 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
Holidays: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Subscription, billing or delivery inquiries
828-432-8970 or custservice@morganton.com

IDENTIFICATION

The News Herald (ISSN 8750-3980), a Lee Enterprises Newspaper, is published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 3078 U.S. HIGHWAY 70 E. MORGANTON, NC 28655. Periodicals Postage Paid at Morganton, NC. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PO BOX 2795, MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23116.

PRICING

The Morganton News Herald is a Lee Enterprises Newspaper and is published online daily, and three days per week in print (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays).

The subscription price includes all applicable sales tax, and a Print + Digital subscription includes postage for mail delivery. To avoid delivery charges, call 828-432-8970 to arrange pickup of your paper at a local office. We reserve the right to change your subscription rate at any time. Contact 828-432-8970 or email custservice@morganton.com for additional information.

SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS

All subscription offers available at morganton.com, including those advertised through our email promotions, on-site messaging, social media, and any external means of promotion, are valid for new subscribers only. You must not have been a subscriber in the past thirty (30) days to register for a new subscription offer. You understand that delivery and billing will continue beyond the initial order period unless you cancel your subscription as detailed in the next paragraph. Rates may change after introductory offer period. There is a non-refundable one-time account set up fee of \$6.99 for all new subscribers.

AUTO-RENEWAL, CANCELLATION, REFUND, AND SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL POLICY

If you register for EZ Pay or debit banking (ACH) payments, your Digital Only or Print + Digital subscription service (your “Subscription”) will automatically renew. On the last day of your current term (your “Renewal Date”), your Subscription will automatically renew for the same length of time, at the then-current Subscription rate, which we may change in our discretion, unless you choose to cancel more than twenty-one (21) days before your Renewal Date (your “Cancellation Date”). YOU MAY CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION BY EMAILING US WITH THE SUBJECT LINE “CANCEL” AT custservice@morganton.com OR CALLING US AT 1-828-432-8970. YOU MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO CANCEL ONLINE DEPENDING ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTION – PLEASE CHECK YOUR SETTINGS IN YOUR ACCOUNT DASHBOARD TO SEE IF THIS OPTION IS AVAILABLE TO YOU.

Prior to the Cancellation Date, we will send you a notice reminding you about the renewal of your Subscription. Subscribers who prefer

to receive paper renewal notices in the mail will be charged \$6.99 for each renewal notice; this fee is waived for subscribers who sign up to receive their renewal notices via email. If you wish to receive renewal notices via email, please contact us at custservice@morganton.com or call 1-828-432-8970.

IF YOU DO NOT AFFIRMATIVELY CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION BEFORE YOUR CANCELLATION DATE, YOU WILL BE CHARGED FOR AN ADDITIONAL TERM FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION YOU INITIALLY SELECTED AT THE RATES IN EFFECT AT THE TIME OF RENEWAL.

If you have provided us with a valid credit card number or an alternate payment method saved in your account, and you have not cancelled by your Cancellation Date, your Subscription will be automatically processed up to fourteen (14) days in advance of your Renewal Date, and the payment method you provided to us at or after the time of your initial Subscription purchase will be charged.

We reserve the right to change your Subscription rate at the next renewal period. If you are not satisfied with your Subscription rate or service, you may cancel your Subscription at any time. No refunds will be returned if remainder of the Subscription term is under thirty (30) days. The refund amount of any balance over \$25.00 will be returned minus an early termination fee of \$25.00. No refunds for Digital Only subscriptions are provided.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Print subscribers get the benefit of newspaper home delivery by mail as well as digital access. All subscriptions are subject to the Cancellation, Refund and Renewal Policy described

above, and all EZ Pay or ACH subscriptions are also subject to the Auto-Renewal Policy, as well as the additional terms and conditions set forth below.

All Subscriptions include unlimited digital access, but there may be links to content on other websites owned by our parent company that can be accessed only through an additional payroll. In such cases, your Subscription to content behind a separate payroll will be governed by any additional terms that are associated therewith. To access these benefits, you must first provide your email address, register with morganton.com/services, and activate your account online. To activate your digital account visit morganton.com/activate. You can manage your account at morganton.com/services.

We may, in our sole discretion, change features of your subscription, including without limitations frequency of and media/platform for delivery. We will notify you of any material changes to your subscription prior to your next renewal and sent to you before your subscription renews with those changes. YOUR CONTINUED SUBSCRIPTION FOLLOWING SUCH CHANGES CONSTITUTES YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHANGES. IF YOU DO NOT AGREE TO ANY CHANGES, YOU MUST CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION.

VACATION POLICY

Print Vacation holds up to thirty (30) days will continue to bill at regular rate while full digital access is maintained. Extended vacations of thirty-one (31) days or more will not incur charges and all Subscription benefits will be suspended during that time.