October 2, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) | Charlotte, North Carolina | Page 1



EDITION READERS GET MORE
Subscribers have access to this

additional bonus content online at

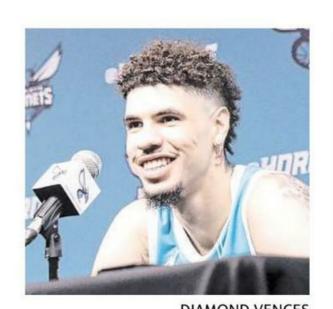
charlotteobserver.com/edition



Find expanded coverage of the vice presidential debate between JD Vance and Tim Walz.

In today's paper

star LaMelo Ball says his focus is on staying healthy. 1B





charlotteobserver.com

FOUNDED 1886 VOLUME 155, No. 253 FACEBOOK.COM/THECHARLOTTEOBSERVER TWITTER.COM/THEOBSERVER

READ BY **1 MILLION+**IN PRINT AND ONLINE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2024

\$3.00

The Charlotte Observer

CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM



KAITLIN MCKEOWN kmckeown@newsobserver.co

Jared Resnick hugs Suzanna Vogel outside of Old Orchard Creek General Store as community members clean up the damage from Hurricane Helene on Monday, Sept. 30, 2024, in Lansing, N.C. Vogel traveled to Lansing from Carrboro to help with cleanup efforts.

Lansing residents help one another after Helene's wrath

BY JOSH SHAFFER
jshaffer@newsobserver.com

In just a few hours, Big Horse Creek sent a 10-foot wall of water into the tiny mountain town of Lansing, destroying its row of quaint brick art shops, antique stores and cleverly named pizza parlor — Pie on the Mountain.

Hurricane Helene roared through Lansing's section of the popular Virginia Creeper Trail and left it strewn with mud, tree trunks and a Winnebago-sized camper turned upside-down in the wa-

All along Lansing's main street, the shopkeepers pulled out soaking walls and floorboards already reeking with mildew, and they offered their canned goods and water bottles for all needy

"This area has been devastated," said Jeff Pierce, a volunteer at the fire department, "Something we've not seen since the 1940s. You're familiar with Carter-Finley Stadium. Two of those, 40 feet high. That's how much water."

As rescue crews cut trees off roads and cleared branches and strips of sheet metal off bridges, the larger world began to see the extent of ruin in North Carolina's northwest corner.

'CASKETS FLOATING IN THE RIVER'

While repairing a broken gas line in Boone, Steve Calhoun recalled the worst he'd seen in Ashe County since Friday.



KAITLIN MCKEOWN kmckeown@newsobserver.c

Community members sort canned goods outside of CJ's Market while cleaning up following damage from Hurricane Helene on Monday, Sept. 30, 2024, in Lansing, N.C.

"Caskets floating in the river," he said. "People in the water and nobody can get to them. Houses in the road. Cars in trees."

The water has receded, but locals do not expect all the area's power to be restored for months. The roads to many remote areas, including west of Lansing, are too washed out for crews to reach.

They worry about those still missing,

unaccounted for in the chaos.

In Lansing, the Squirrel and Nut got walloped only four months after it opened. It sold local and vintage art, including pieces made by Lora Young, who spent Saturday, Sunday and Monday

grilling donated food.
"A lot of us don't have power," she

SEE RESIDENTS, 15A

Helene takes massive toll on Chimney Rock, Lake Lure

BY MARTHA QUILLIN
mquillin@newsobserver.com

CHIMNEY ROCK
For a while on Friday

For a while on Friday morning, it looked as if Chimney Rock and Lake Lure had been spared the worst of Hurricane Helene.

And then worse than the worst happened, as a wall of water came rushing down the Broad River, wiping out most of the structures along Main Street —

day mor

"I've never seen concentrated damage like we've seen here," said Chris Murray, an emergency manager in Pamlico County who came to help lead teams of rescuers as soon as Rutherford County could send an S.O.S. "There's

and Main Street itself — in the Village of

Chimney Rock, and straining the dam

nothing left."

"The village? There's just nothing left."

'NOT SO BAD' AT FIRST

For a couple of days, the wreckage left the two communities as isolated as they

were a century ago.

Townspeople and visitors awoke Friday morning after a restless night to more of what they had seen the day before: tree branches falling in heavy rain and wind as the remains of what became Tropical Storm Helene cut through Western North Carolina. Power had been out since Thursday.

Tracy Stevens had left her house in Chimney Rock Thursday night and gotten a room at the Lake Lure Inn, which had a generator and was staying open through the storm. The two towns, both popular tourist destinations, are

SEE HELENE, 15A



We're dedicated to delivering the journalism you rely on. Discover the stories that matter to you inside. Subscribers, explore more stories and features like puzzles and games at charlotteobserver.com/edition.

CUSTOMER SERVICE 800-532-5350 charlotteobserver.com/customer-service





Displaced Mountain Island Lake residents can't go home

BY JEFF A. CHAMER
jchamer@charlotteobserver.com

Storm recovery efforts continued in Mecklenburg County on Monday after people in about 100 homes were displaced following flooding near Mountain Island Lake and the Catawba River last week.

Efforts will go on for the next few weeks, said Paige Grande, a spokesperson for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Emergency Management, but residents will not be able to return home until the damage to their home has been assessed and repaired.

And that will depend on how long it

"We're still waiting on the waters to recede in order for it to be safe to begin to do initial assessments and damage reports so that we can make sure that we are getting people what they need," Grande said.

If some homes only saw flooding in the basement, for example, residents won't have to wait very long. But if damage is more extensive, and water damaged multiple floors of a home or electrical wiring, then the wait will be much longer

"We're prioritizing safety at this time, so working with residents individually to determine when they are safe to move back," Grande said.

Power had been mostly restored in

Mecklenburg County.

Duke Energy also tracks lake levels, and said normal full pond at Mountain Island Lake elevation is 96 feet. The company reported Sunday morning that Mountain Island Lake was at 103.6 feet. The company pushed water through its system and into South Carolina after Helene hit on Friday morning, which threatened to increase flooding.

Grande said because a local and state emergency was declared, money will be available to people and will be able to get financial assistance to help with home repairs. But may take a while because heavily-damaged western North Carolina

is being prioritized, she said.
On Saturday, residents gathered at the end of Harwood Lane on Mountain Island Lake alongside first responders from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and the Charlotte Fire Department watching the water rise.

Multiple residents said they were not prepared for flooding this bad. Susan Covington, a resident of Lake Drive, called the flooding a catastrophic event.

"I'm so sad. I'm devastated. I had just bought my house in 2018 and spent the year remodeling when the last flood happened. I moved in in 2019 and lived in the house for three weeks when the flood happened in June," she said. "We

SEE FLOODING, 15A