



AROUND BURKE

Storm recovery

Interstate 40 East and West-bound is now open up Old Fort Mountain for emergency and necessary travel. Travel will be slow so expect substantial delays still.

The Burke County Relief Center is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Food, clothing, hygiene items, and more are available. The center is at the Foothills Higher Education Center, 2128 S. Sterling St., Morganton.

If you need volunteer assistance or would like to volunteer, call Burke County's volunteer hotline at 828-764-7068.

West Union Art Studios will be serving a homemade veggie and meat chili/stew for the Burke community on Wednesday, Oct. 2, from noon until the hot meal runs out. If you want a free meal or charge your device, they will be happy to serve you at 113 W. Union. Attendees are welcome to bring a container for anyone who cannot come themselves.

Burke County's shelter at Oak Hill United Methodist Church remains open. The church is at 2239 N.C. 181, Morganton.

Phifer YMCA is opening its doors to anyone who needs a shower, to charge their cellphones, etc. There are no fees. No exercise or swimming activities are taking place.

Burke County Public Schools are closed through Oct. 4. Thursday, Oct. 3, and Friday, Oct. 4, are optional teacher workdays. A decision on next week is expected Thursday.

The Burke County Courthouse will close early at noon on Wednesday, Oct. 2, and all District Court criminal sessions have been canceled all week. The Clerk's Office will be open for filings only.

The City of Morganton garbage collection returned to its normal schedule on Tuesday, Oct. 1, and will continue on track for the rest of the week. Crews are working to get to houses as soon as possible while some are blocked off.

Athletics through the schools and recreation centers are suspended.

New Dimensions Charter School is closed through Oct. 4. Thursday, Oct. 3, and Friday, Oct. 4, are optional teacher workdays.

Western Piedmont Community College is closed through Oct. 4. The campus is being

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Special Edition • Hurricane Helene Coverage



ALLEN VANNOPPEN / THE PAPER

Morganton Limbwalkers Tree service clears a mammoth old Oak tree that fell on a residence in Morganton.

Hurricane Helene impacts, recovery efforts

By **ALLEN VANNOPPEN**
Publisher

Everywhere you turn you see impressive progress in Burke County's painful recovery from the devastation from Hurricane Helene. Roads are being cleared, utilities are being restored, businesses are opening. River waters are receding. It is a process that will continue for weeks, perhaps months. begins what will be a slow recovery of its entire infrastructure as a result of the historic and catastrophic damage from Hurricane Helene.

And, everywhere you turn, you see increasing examples of neighbors helping neighbors, of volunteers in droves from near and far, providing invaluable assistance night and day to hundreds of hurricane victims.

Shelters and makeshift, roadside humanitarian aid stations are distributing water, food, and necessary supplies. Restaurants across the county are feeding utility workers and are supplying food to shelters.

Unbelievable statistics and stories are

USEFUL CONTACTS

- For current weather conditions in Morganton, go to the NC School Science and Math — Morganton weather station.
- City of Morganton — 828-438-5277
- Duke Energy — 1-800-POWERON (1-800-769-3766)
- Rutherford Electric — 1-800-228-9756
- Town of Drexel — 828-430-1794
- Blue Ridge Energy — 1-800-448-2383
- Mountain Electric — 828-733-0159
- Burke County 911 Admin — 828-437-1911

beginning to emerge as the recovery progresses. For example, at one point, water at Freedom High School's football field was up to the goal post cross bar. That's 10 feet above field level.

The recovery will be long, but steps for-

ward will be rapid. The Paper will be updating its website continuously with developments as they occur.

HERE IS WHAT WE KNOW

Duke Energy reports that 59% of its 22,830 customers in the county remain without power. Rutherford EMC reports that 40% of its 20,689 customers remain without power. Combined, 21,998 customers of the 43,519 customers served by both utilities are without power.

Burke County Schools report 11 campuses have power and water; 12 do not. Food replacement shipments are due Thursday to replace spoilage. Decisions about school opening next week are pending.

Morganton has begun lifting boil water advisories for areas served by the Kathy Road, Piney Road and Glen Alpine tanks. Other cleared-to-drink areas include Valdese Ave., Dale Circle, Astro Drive and the Salem water tanks.

See **HELENE**, Page 5A

BURKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Reports: 11 campuses with water and power, 12 without

By **CHARDA PEARSON**
Education and Business Reporter

The board of education met today at noon for a virtual emergency called board meeting to discuss BCPS updates and possible reopening strategies as the county attempts to regain footing from the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Chairman Seth Hunt began the meeting by addressing what he described as an "unprecedented disaster" that prompted a local, state, and federal declaration of emergency.

"In decisions that are put before us, please be considerate that we have to use what is considered our best judgment and quite frankly, situational management," Hunt said.

Superintendent Dr. Mike Swan announced that 11 campuses with water, power, and internet while 12 remain without. BCPS has purged all food from campuses county-wide.



Hunt

Swan

According to Swan, BCPS expects a food shipment to arrive Thursday, Oct. 3. Food will be stored at the 11 campuses with freezer storage and distributed to the remaining 12 campuses when power and water are restored.

In the event that schools open Monday, Swan said schools will do a simple lunch menu.

"Food preparation is paramount for us and the health department has not given us any indication as far as when the boil advisory will be lifted."

See **SCHOOLS**, Page 5A



BILL POTEAT / THE PAPER

The interior of the American Red Cross shelter set up at Oak Hill United Methodist Church.

Shelter from the storm

Red Cross provides safe haven in Burke

By **BILL POTEAT**
Editor Emeritus

Christy Beckerman's face is a collage made up of equal parts fear, exhaustion, and frustration.

The last five days have been a living, wakeful nightmare for Beckerman and her family — her husband, a 10-year-old son, and a 16-year-old son.

During the height of Tropical Storm Helene's assault on West Asheville, a tree fell on the Beckerman home, literally opening it to a deluge of

rain and to the lashing of a furious wind.

Terrified, the family loaded a few necessities into their car and set off for a relative's home in the small Tennessee town of Erwin, north across the Smoky Mountains from Asheville.

Helene had other plans. The ferocious storm flooded some roads, felled gigantic trees across others, and forced the Beckermans into a long, circuitous, and seemingly unending journey that in the end deposited them at the Red Cross Emergency Shelter set

See **SHELTER**, Page 5A

THE WEEK AHEAD



WEDNESDAY
Humid
HIGH: 83°
LOW: 66°



THURSDAY
Partly sunny
HIGH: 78°
LOW: 64°



FRIDAY
Brief showers
HIGH: 78°
LOW: 62°



SATURDAY
Sunny
HIGH: 79°
LOW: 59°



SUNDAY
Sunny
HIGH: 75°
LOW: 57°



MONDAY
Pleasant
HIGH: 76°
LOW: 47°



TUESDAY
Sunny
HIGH: 71°
LOW: 45°

BURKE

FROM PAGE 1A

used as a staging area for Duke Energy recovery crews. **Morganton City Hall will reopen** to the public on Wednesday, Oct. 2. City of Morganton Recreation Centers will open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. All City parks are closed until further notice.

Valdese Town Hall is open for regular hours.

The joint groundbreaking of the EMS Base and Animal Shelter for Burke County will not take place as originally planned on Oct. 4.

Burke County Board of Commissioners' pre-agenda meeting scheduled for Oct. 1 is canceled. The commission will hold its regular meeting at 6 p.m. on Oct. 15.

Duke Energy expects all Burke customers to have power by the end of the week.

Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation hopes to have the bulk of its customers reconnected to power by the end of the week, but it could take weeks before some customers can turn on the lights.

The following convenience sites are open and operating during normal business hours, 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- 3836 N.C.18 South, Morganton
 - 3251 U.S. 64, Morganton
 - 1679 N.C. 126, Morganton
- (Note: This location is currently without power and can only accept bagged trash at this time.)
- 2350 U.S. 70, Connelly Springs

Burke County is beginning debris cleanup efforts following the recent storm. Do not bring debris to the landfill. To ensure the process is efficient and in line with federal guidelines, the County is adhering to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) standards for debris removal.

Important instructions for residents:

- Do not bring debris to the landfill: To avoid disposal charges, residents should not transport storm debris to the landfill. The county has contracted with a hauler to manage debris collection directly from residential areas.

• Debris collection process: Our contracted hauler will be tagging debris and coordinating pickups throughout the county. You do not need to be present for pickup. They will make two to three passes through affected areas to ensure all debris is collected.

• Debris separation: Residents are requested to move storm debris to the back of the curb at the right of way and separate it into three distinct piles:

1. Vegetation (tree limbs, branches, etc.)
 2. White goods (appliances like refrigerators, washing machines)
 3. Building materials (construction debris, wood, drywall)
- By keeping the debris sorted into these categories, we can ensure faster and more efficient pickup. Please be patient as the County works to manage the cleanup. Due to the large volume of material, there may be some delays.

Crews from throughout region powering up Burke

By **MARTY QUEEN**
Senior Reporter

Motorists traveling west into the mountains on Interstate 40 in recent days have seen them, spilling out of the Piedmont and points farther east, answering calls for help in the wake of Hurricane Helene's generational destructiveness.

Endless caravans of bucket trucks, trailers loaded with heavy equipment, work vehicles bearing the insignias of cities all over the state: Greenville, Wilson, New Bern, Maiden, Granite Falls, Garner.

They're headed for counties like Burke.

Still more have come here from out of state. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of workers from power companies, "folks from all over the state and nation," according to Burke 911 Assistant Director Chris White.

Burke and the counties west of here were hit much harder by Helene than their more easterly counterparts as the storm barreled north out of the Florida Panhandle.

As a result, resources in those counties are taxed to the hilt. At times like these, extra manpower is vital.

We'll take all we can get. White, the county's public information officer for the Hurricane Helene event, isn't certain how many folks from elsewhere are working on restoring power across Burke County.

But four of them, along with two bucket trucks and a line truck, were situated on East Meeting Street near the intersection of White Street Tuesday after lunch, stringing copper power cables and replacing four shattered poles.

The crew came from the City of



FOR THE PAPER

Nick Kanipe of the City of Newton tightens a power line on East Meeting Street Tuesday afternoon. Kanipe is one of many out-of-towners who have come to Burke County to help local crews get power up and running again.

Newton, 30 miles from downtown Morganton.

Thirty feet up in the bucket, Nick Kanipe was working hard to tighten the line he and his teammates had just strung.

"We came up here with Maiden," said supervisor Andrew McKarahaer. "We're just trying to help out the people. It's just getting the wires up and getting the poles in the ground. It's been a horrible thing

that's going on."

Their efforts are making a difference: Monday saw the number of customers without power drop from 64% to 53% countywide.

Cody Lawing said he's glad he and his crew could help.

"I know if I didn't have power, I'd want it back on just as bad as they do, so we're trying to work the hardest we can," Lawing said.

They would likely be working the rest of the day in the same spot, McKarahaer said. Line work can be tedious and time-consuming.

The crew had already put in about 40 hours over the weekend, getting households hooked back up to power in their own city.

"We got all the people in Newton back on and decided to come up here and asked if they needed some help," McKarahaer said. "We've seen a lot of lines down, trees and poles broken, and people without power. It's going to be a lot of work, so they'll just have to bear with us."

Monday, White said he had heard reports of line crews catching flack from residents when they closed off portions of roads and streets, but the families in houses along the cordoned-off block of East Meeting Street beamed smiles of gratitude as they watched the work from their front porches.

"We try to help out as much as we can as long as our stuff is good," Jacob Schellenberger said. "We'll always go out and try to help someone else."

It wasn't the first time Newton and Maiden lent a helping hand. On July 10, a fierce, summer thunderstorm disrupted electrical service in Morganton, and both Newton and Maiden sent folks to

See **POWER**, Page 5A

Foothills Regional Airport central hub in hurricane rescue and relief efforts

By **ALLEN VANNOPPEN**
Publisher

Using Foothills Regional Airport as a base of operations, U.S. Army National Guard aviation teams from five states rescued 39 people, 12 dogs, and one cat from hurricane ravaged western North Carolina during flights Monday and Tuesday.

UNC Health helicopters flew physicians into the airport on Tuesday so they could provide medical services in Banner Elk.

State Highway Patrol helicopters with crews from North Carolina and South Carolina joined the search and rescue efforts based at Foothills airport, which straddles the Burke and Caldwell county line.

Owners of small airplanes — Pipers, Super Cubs, and single-engine bush airplanes — congregated between flights at the airport to ferry emergency supplies to areas inaccessible by car.



ALLEN VANNOPPEN / THE PAPER

U.S. Army National Guard rescue helicopter refuels at Foothills Regional Airport during search and rescue operations

N.C. Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson landed at the airport Tuesday morning with pallets of bottled water and other supplies.

It's all part of the daily flurry of aviation activity to search, rescue, aid, supply, and survey areas and people hit hard by what is being called the one of the worst

hurricanes in history of the region.

Aircraft large and small fly in emergency supplies. The water, chain saws, food, and other staples are stored in one of the protected hangers in the field.

See **AIRPORT**, Page 5A



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FOR THE PAPER

The City of Morganton's electric crews with the help of neighboring personnel restore power throughout the city.

Outages decline daily as Burke County residents await full restoration

By SAYDIE E. BEAN
Municipal and Courts Reporter

The number of Burke County power outages decreases each day; however, thousands of residents wait for service to return.

As community members are powering through, various electric providers are working hard in the county to return power and inform their customers of their progress.

Public Information Officer Jonelle Sigmon reported that Morganton crews are working in the following locations:

- Old N.C. 18
- Mount Home Church Road
- Dale Circle, off of Enola Road
- Willowbrook Drive
- Alexander Avenue

The City is aware that some power customers are still in the dark in downtown Morganton and assures that lights will be back on as soon as possible.

You can track where power crews are deployed on the City's social media and Hurri-

cane Helene alerts page. You can read more of what's being done at <https://www.morgantonnc.gov/electric-services/page/hurricane-helene-alerts-and-updates>.

"We will try to keep you updated with new locations when we are told. We understand that your neighbor may have power, but due to the nature of the circuits, you may still be without power. Please be patient as we continue to make repairs," Sigmon said.

As of 8:12 a.m. on Tuesday, there are 3,500 power outages in Morganton out of their 8,529 customers.

Duke Energy reports that 59% of its 22,830 customers in the county remain without power. Rutherford EMC reports that 40% of its 20,689 customers remain without power. Combined, 21,998 customers of the 43,519 customers served by both utilities are without power.

Saydie Bean may be reached at 828-445-8595, ext. 2011, or saydie@thepaper.media.

Public Safety leads welfare checks, outreach efforts in Helene's aftermath

By SAYDIE E. BEAN
Municipal and Courts Reporter

Morganton Public Safety has been an unstilled presence during the aftermath of Hurricane Helene through welfare checks, responding to disasters, and spreading important information to the public.

As their department is out in the field, Chief Jason Whisnant and Captain Josiah Brown provided updates on the behind-the-scenes of what they have been doing.

FINDING LOVED ONES

Phone services continue to be sparse which leaves residents concerned and unaware of what is happening with other family members and friends.

"We have completed numerous 'welfare checks' at private residences from families worried about their people who haven't been in touch with anyone. So far all have been accounted for. We do not have any reports of missing persons at this time," Whisnant said.

If you want to check in on a loved one, you can call N.C. 211 which is part of the State Emergency Response Team that can be used in natural/public disasters. They can be reached at 2-1-1 or 888-892-1162.

HOMELESS POPULATION

Today was scheduled to be the clearing out of the homeless encampment behind the wooded area behind Morganton

Heights Shopping Center. This has been postponed, Whisnant and Brown confirmed.

"The cleanup crew at Morganton Heights was out doing an assessment this morning to determine when they could start the clean up," Brown said.

On the subject of the City's homeless population, known individuals are being checked on by MPS officers during this troubling time.

"We are sending PSOs into our known homeless camps to check the welfare of those people as we are worried about them from this weather disaster," Whisnant said.

Responding to their needs, Burke County United Ministries are there to help as they accept donations.

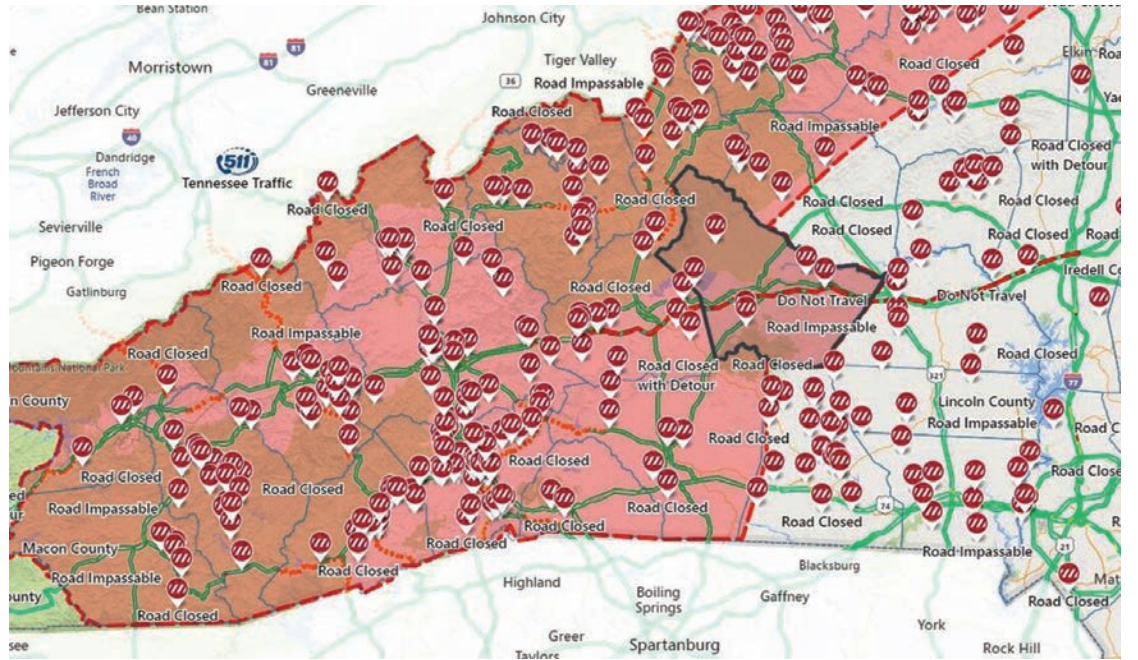
Their soup kitchen will be open from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and their food pantry will be open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. They will make modifications based on what individuals can accept.

BUCM is accepting donations of the following items:

- Small-sized pants
- Tents and tarps
- Water
- Non-perishable food items, preferably ready-to-eat foods with pop-top cans
- Monetary donations

You can monetarily donate to BUCM at <https://www.bucm.net/donate-now> or visit them at 305-B W. Union St. in Morganton.

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FOR THE PAPER

The map shows the road closures throughout Burke County, outlined in grey. The red area represents the dangerous conditions in western North Carolina.

Road closures in Burke County

By SAYDIE E. BEAN
Municipal and Courts Reporter

The impact of Helene is forcing some Burke County residents to use their GPS to find new routes to get around. Some roads in the county remain closed, four days after the storm.

The N.C. Department of Transportation has declared that western N.C. is experiencing shortages of gas, power, food, water, and poor communications. Local roads remain closed at this time and nonessential travel is prohibited. All access points from the state to

Tennessee via interstates 40 or 26 are closed.

NCDOT's DriveNC.gov website has a listing of known closures. The list, however, is far from comprehensive. Communication outages have left some communities unable to provide updates.

Here is a list of road closures and reported end timeframes in Burke County:

- East Union near Kirksey Drive and near Meeting Street — until further notice
- Amherst Road, multiple trees and poles blocking a road — until further notice
- 300 block of Walton Road, blocked off by a tree — until

further notice

- Oakland Avenue near Enon Drive, trees in the roadway — Oct. 10

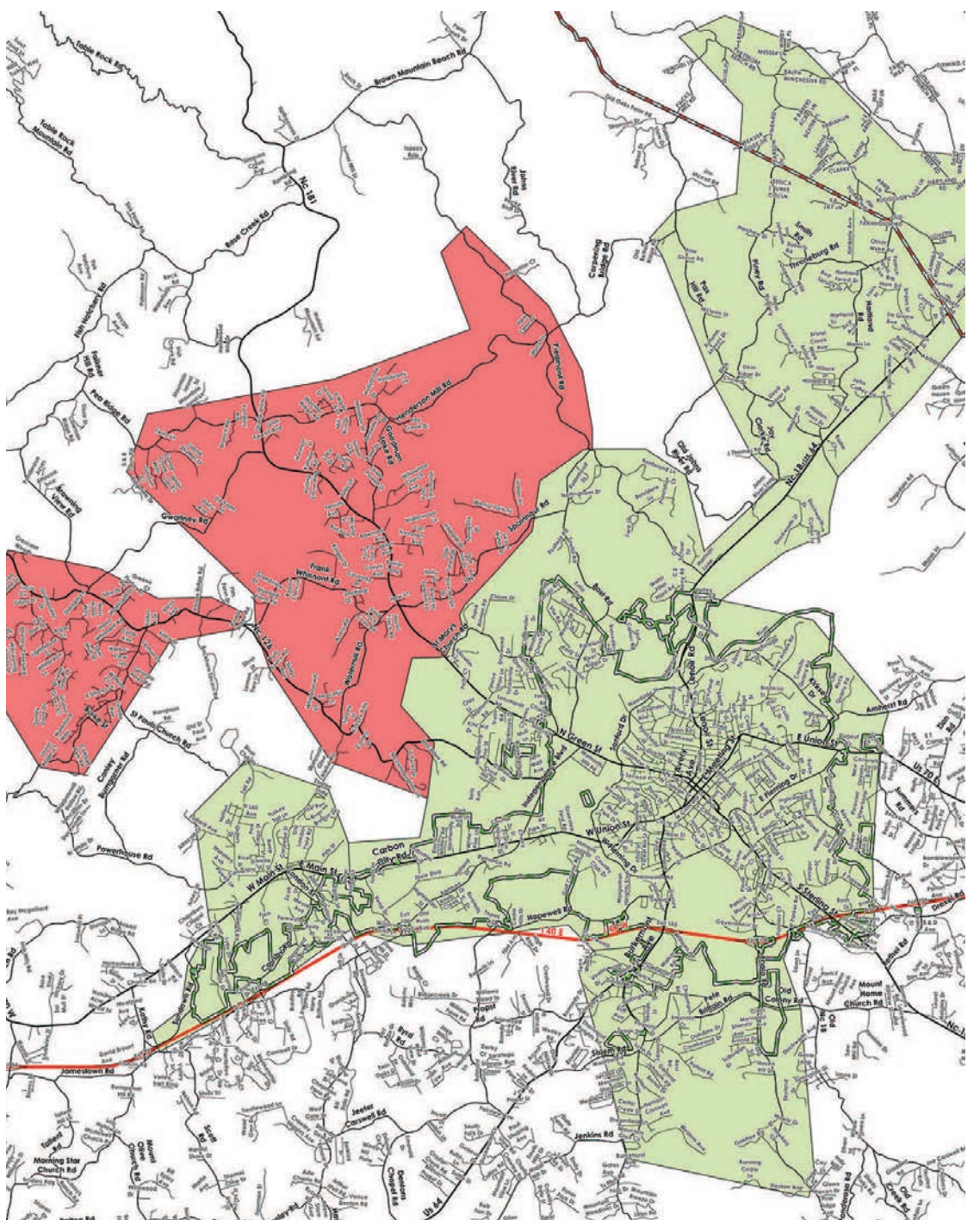
- Clark Loop near Morris Loop, due to pipe failure — Nov. 30

- Rose Carswell near U.S. 64, due to bridge failure — Nov. 30

- N.C.126 near Benfield Landing, due to structural damage — Nov. 30

- Fish Hatchery Road near Kayga Road, the road is impassible — Oct. 10

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CITY OF MORGANTON

Morganton lifts most water boil advisories. Green areas indicate safe water. Red areas still have boil-before-drinking advisories.

Burke areas starting to lift boil advisory

By SAYDIE E. BEAN
Municipal and Courts Reporter

The boil advisory has been lifted in some parts of Burke County, but not all of the county is in the clear.

The City of Morganton announced that the following areas that are served by these tanks have been lifted:

- Glen Alpine
- Kathy Road
- Piney Road
- Astro Drive
- Salem
- Dale Circle
- Valdese Avenue

If you are near one of these areas and unsure of your water status, the City still advises residents to boil

your water.

Residents can view a boil advisory map on their Hurricane Helene alerts page at <https://www.morgantonnc.gov/electric-services/page/hurricane-helene-alerts-and-updates>.

Due to damage from Hurricane Helene, Public Information Officer Jonelle Sigmon said that a sanitary sewer overflow occurred at the Lost Corner Pump Station on Monday, Sept. 30. The sewer spill began at 3:30 p.m. and ended at 5:30 p.m.

Around 2,400 gallons was discharged into the Wilson's Creek.

The neighboring Town of Valdese is still under a boil ad-

visory until water samples pass testing standards, Mayor Charlie Watts reported.

"The water samples pulled must stay in the incubator until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning," Watts said on Tuesday afternoon. "As soon as we have results that pass testing, we will be sure to send alerts out."

The water plant had a booster pump that had trouble building pressure, but after a quick turnout using a towable air compressor at 9:30 p.m. on Monday night, the water plant employees brought the bump back to standards.

Saydie Bean may be reached at 828-445-8595, ext. 2011, or saydie@thepaper.media.

High school, middle school sports' resumption still largely up in the air

EBHS football game will be played Saturday

By PAUL SCHENKEL
Sports Editor

The timeline for high school and middle school sports' fall seasons to resume is unclear after Tropical Storm Helene caused significant flooding and wind damage across Burke County and all of western North Carolina on Sept. 27.

Burke County Public Schools announced over the weekend that schools would be closed the first three days of this week, then on Monday announced the closure would extend to Thursday and Friday as well, postponing all local high school and middle school events for the entire week.

The East Burke and Draughn high school football teams were set to host homecoming games last Friday which were pushed back a day to Saturday, Sept. 28. EBHS then postponed its contest to Monday before it was postponed again, this time indefinitely.

Homecoming festivities had already been pushed back to Oct. 4 in Valdese and Oct. 18 in Icard, but Draughn has also announced that its homecoming game will not be played this week, with no homecoming date yet re-established.

Both of those football teams, plus Freedom, were scheduled to have games this Friday, Oct. 4, and those games will all be postponed. However, EBHS on Tuesday announced that its varsity football game scheduled for last week at Newton-Conover would be played this Saturday, Oct. 5, at 3 p.m., with the schools' JV matchup set for Monday night, Oct. 7.

EBHS athletic director Chip Watts said that both the Newton-Conover at Lincoln and West Lincoln at Maiden football games postponed on Sept. 27 would be played Wednesday night, Oct. 2.

The Cavaliers are members of the eight-team Catawba Val-



Freedom High School's football field and field house flooded as a result of Hurricane Helene aftermath.

SOCIAL MEDIA / FOR THE PAPER

ley 2A Conference, which based on its geography, figures to be far less impacted than the other three conferences of which county schools are members. The league spans Gamewell and Icard to Catawba and Lincoln counties to the south and east.

"Us and West Caldwell were affected worst in the conference," Watts said, "and probably West Caldwell a bit worse than us. But we're reaching out to other schools (outside the conference), and it's awful. Avery County is a mess with mudslides and roads out. We've reached out to Pisgah and Tuscola (in Haywood County) to offer them whatever we can as neighbors, host a game here if they want to later in the season or whatever it may be.

"... It's so sad. We're talking about people who have lost their homes, their businesses, people who have died. The mountain schools were so horribly affected."

The other three local leagues — the Mountain Foot-hills 7 1A/2A (Brevard, Hendersonville), Northwestern 3A/4A (Ashe County, Watauga), and particularly the Western Highlands 1A/2A (Avery, Madison, Mitchell, Mountain Heritage, Owen, Rosman) — each feature schools in higher elevations that suffered greater

impacts from the storm.

There was no information available from Draughn on Tuesday as to how and when the WHC plans to resume fall sports; DHS athletic director Eric Shehan could not be reached for comment.

The NWC issued a statement Tuesday saying that there would be no athletic events all week, until at least after Saturday, Oct. 5.

"How this affects the remaining conference schedules will depend on decisions from the NCHSAA (Board of Directors) and local school systems," the statement read.

The MF7 — which also contains three schools in Rutherford County, which was affected by flooding from Lake Lure and along the Broad River — also has not announced when sports might resume.

Patton athletic director Lee Crawford said early discussions have not centered around sports resuming.

"I've talked to some of our ADs in the conference but nothing about rescheduling yet," he said. "Our conference is all in the biggest impact zone so right now our biggest concern is recovery for those communities."

Crawford and Watts said they hoped to have more information Wednesday and as the week progresses, and Freedom

AD Rob Scott was scheduled to talk with The Paper on Tuesday afternoon.

The NCHSAA on Monday announced that its board of directors would convene via video conference on Wednesday to discuss potential changes to its fall sports' championship schedules to accommodate the areas affected in the western part of the state.

"We know this storm has brought significant challenges and hardships," said NCHSAA commissioner Que Tucker. "While we know everyone (across the state) was not impacted, it is difficult to plan without at least having our western board members at the table to give personal perspectives. Until such time, the NCHSAA staff cannot answer the questions being posed relative to finishing regular seasons as well as the impact on all playoffs.

"To any of our 'impacted' colleagues who can access this email, please remember that you are not alone during this difficult time. We stand with you and are here to support you in any way we can. As you assess needs, whether it's assistance, resources, or simply someone to talk to, please do not hesitate to reach out to us."

Also locally, North Carolina School for the Deaf has announced that its 80th annual

homecoming festivities planned for this Saturday, Oct. 4, were canceled.

At the middle school level, all five of Burke County's schools and both McDowell County schools make up the Foothills Athletic Conference. FAC 2024-25 president Mitchell McGuire, who is AD at East Burke Middle, said that as of Tuesday morning he had only spoken with ADs at Heritage and West McDowell and not the other four schools (East McDowell, Liberty, Table Rock, Walter Johnson).

"I think everyone would like to try to reschedule (the games postponed last week and last week) and get back to normalcy as soon as possible," McGuire said. "The issues are we're already halfway through seasons with not tons of wiggle room to add playing dates at the end, and if we reschedule contests between now and then with more games per week than normal, finding officials may be tough especially for soccer.

"Doug (Webb, AD at Heritage) and I talked about maybe playing some football games on Saturdays. We do have the option to play two football games per week in extreme circumstances, and I would certainly say this falls under that. This is unprecedented. I've never seen anything like this."

McGuire said Heritage and EBMS received minimal storm damage. However, the Walter Johnson baseball, football, and softball fields sustained flooding from the Catawba River, and McGuire said that West McDowell's practice football field and baseball field experienced some flood damage as well, noting that "McDowell and parts of Burke are far worse than what we've got" in the eastern end of the county.

McGuire said one possible plan moving forward might be canceling all FAC fall postseason tournaments and simply getting in as much of teams' regular-season schedules as possible.

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Cable, internet, cell service restored in some areas but spotty

By CHARDA PEARSON
Education and Business Reporter

Cellphone and internet service have slowly started to pick up after several dead zones throughout the county. Severe flooding broken power lines had left thousands of residents with no access to contact families to report their safety.

It has been reported that cellphone, cable and internet providers are currently working vigorously to restore services. Burke county's top cellphone providers are Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile.

A report from T-Mobile was released yesterday that stated North Carolina and South Carolina crews had limited site access to restore 132 sites and position 149 portable generators in the last 24 hours. According to the company, yesterday, trucks were headed to Asheville and Cherokee.

Verizon wireless has issued a statement that they will waive domestic call, text, and data usage for postpaid consumers (customer who pays for their mobile services after they have used them, rather than paying in advance) impacted by the storm in Burke from Sept. 28 to Oct. 5.

According to Verizon, customers do not have to take any action to take advantage of the offer. Any overages for those whose billing cycles have already closed will be automatically credited back.

For prepaid customers using Straight Talk, Tracfone, Wireless, Simple Mobile, Walmart Family Mobile, Net10, GoSmart, and Page Plus, Verizon will extend service end dates to Oct. 5.

CoMPAS Cable released a statement regarding cable outages:

"Currently we are working to restore all services as quickly and safely as possible. We do not have

Did You Know?

Hotspots provide internet service directly from a device (cellphone or portable hotspot) allowing users to connect to Wi-Fi using cellular data if coverage is available.

Hotspots can be used to connect computers, phones, and other devices. Portable hotspots can be purchased at department and office stores.

On smartphones, the mobile hotspots are located under the settings tab, under the personal hotspot or connections tab. Check with your mobile provider to see if a personal hotspot is included in your cell phone service.

To access personal hotspot on your mobile device:

- Go to Settings tab
- Click Personal Hotspot
- Find the available network on the desired device
- Connect to the network

any estimated times for repair at this time. As power is restored, we then are able to start our repairs and will do so as quickly as possible.

"If power has been restored and you still do not have service it could be equipment between your house and our head-end facility, which still does not have power. If you have questions, you can reach our office at 828-438-5353 and press 0 to speak with someone. We appreciate your patience as we work diligently to restore your services."

Churches extend love, aid in wake of Hurricane Helene

By SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN
Arts & Entertainment Editor

In Christian theology, charity (a translation of the Greek word *agapē*, also meaning "love") is most eloquently shown in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ.

And in this time of dire need, in the fallout wrought by Hurricane Helene, many Burke County churches are living out their faith by extending the hands of love to others.

Some local churches are serving as collection and distribution centers for water and other supplies. Others are coordinating shipments from their respective denominations, as parishioners across the nation open their hands and hearts to render aid to Burke County and western North Carolina.

Offers of help from local churches run the gamut from free meals for anyone in need to necessities such as water, diapers, and baby formula. Some Burke churches are also opening their doors, allowing the public access to free Wi-Fi and providing outlets for charging electronics.

The Morganton First Church of God is offering free meals for those without power, every day (at least through Thursday, possibly longer). Breakfast begins at 9 each morning and they are also providing an evening meal at 5 p.m. The church is at 675 Summers Road.

Regan Pompeo, pastoral assistant at Morganton's Mission Church, said the 221 Herron St. location is providing a place to act as a charging station, water (when they can), and lunch. The church is open from 9 a.m. to noon and from 3-6 p.m. each day.

"A huge thank you to ... the whole community at Mission Church for providing hot coffee (my first cup in days), lunch, water, games, and lots of love and light in a time when it is desperately needed," Bianca Moses wrote on Facebook. "The

church is open 9-12 all week. They'll be providing a place to charge phones, lunch, hot coffee, and water.

"Thank you for making my mama so happy! She loved her meal," Moses wrote. Abernethy Memorial United Methodist Church will be serving free sandwich lunches on Wednesday, Oct. 2, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at their 960 Malcolm Blvd. location in Rutherford College. They will also have places available for charging devices.

Grace Episcopal Church Interim Rector Rich Biega said the King Street Church has power, water, and internet capability. "There is good news," Biega reported on Facebook. "If you need to use the internet, charge your electronic appliances, or just hang out in a lighted environment, don't hesitate to come here.

"If no one is in the parish hall, come to the rectory, because Betsy and I are both on site," he added. "Please believe me — this is not an inconvenience for either of us."

Burkemont Baptist Church, located at 4668 Burkemont Road, Morganton, has emergency kits available, along with toilet paper, hygiene items, diapers, and non-perishable foods.

Thrive Church, 215 Pete Brittain Road in Morganton, served a free community meal on Oct. 1, from 4-8 p.m. The meal included soup, grilled cheese, and a drink, and will be available to anyone in Morganton who needs a warm meal, while supplies last.

The Rock Church at 4806 U.S. 64 in Morganton, is serving free meals from 3-5 p.m. this week. Ashly Brooke Benton wrote on Facebook, "I just want to brag on The Rock Church-Morganton for a minute.

"Today they prepared a hot meal to serve to anyone who was able to make it out to their diner (FOR FREE). Afterward, they delivered the leftovers around town to those who needed it along with bottles of water," Benton added.

