

## WCU prepares for Hurricane Helene

By Hannah Butler

This story was written on September 26, the day Hurricane Helene arrived in Western North Carolina.

As the tropical bands of Hurricane Helene approach Western North Carolina, classes are canceled Thursday, Sep. 26, and Friday Sep. 27.

By the time the storm reaches Cullowhee it is expected to be a tropical storm, which can be defined by the National Weather Service as a tropical cyclone that has maximum sustained surface winds ranging from 39-73 mph.

Due to the expected inclement weather, students are taking advantage of the four-day weekend but are also being urged to keep off the roads and stay aware of their surroundings. Residents of Cullowhee should stay alert and aware of the possibility of landslides and flash floods.

Flooding is anticipated in parts of campus with as much as 10-15 inches of rain, and winds are expected to reach 40, possibly even 50 mph.

Due to its Adverse Weather Policy, WCU is exercising caution and operating under Condition Level 2 (Suspension of Non-Mandatory Operations). Typical examples of mandatory operations include law enforcement and public safety, direct patient care, operating high risk or sensitive research facilities, critical student support services, facility operations and campus utilities.

Despite the hazardous weather, some resources on campus are still accessible to students and faculty. Catamount Cafe will continue its normal operating hours, as will Brown Dining Hall,

providing campus residents with a safe way to access food, avoiding the risk that comes with driving in dangerous conditions.

While taking precautions is important, some students such as Sophomore Owen Lackey, have found unique ways to ride out the storm. Lackey and his friends, as well as several other groups around campus, spent the stormy day sliding down the rain-soaked hills on campus. With trash bags cut with holes for their heads and arms, students are taking dish soap and sliding down steep hills on campus in the rain.

"We wanted to take advantage of this unexpected weather," Lackey said.

For the Appalachian Mountains tropical storms are a rare occurrence. For those bored in their dorms, it was essential to get creative and find fun in a safe manner on campus.

Information on campus emergency updates can be found at [Campus Emergency Updates](#).



# Letter from the Editor

By Marrah Ste. Marie

Dear reader,

I hope everyone reading this and their loved ones are safe and recovering from the recent tragedy that struck. As a team, we chose to open this edition with a story written before the hurricane hit Western North Carolina to show that despite weather forecasts, no one could expect the true impact of Hurricane Helene. Like many of you, my heart broke as I became more aware of the devastation that struck this beloved community.

This hurricane truly created an unprecedented time that eerily reminded many of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inside everyone was the familiar urge to shy away and hide inside. However, people fought that urge and came together in such a beautiful way that really defined Appalachian culture. I hope as you read the stories in this edition you can mourn those who have lost while still seeing the beauty of unity. However, we are not done. It has been over a month since Hurricane Helene first made landfall, but Western North Carolina is still hurt. Inside this edition we have included resources that accept donations and volunteers.

When the internet returned to Cullowhee and life slowly began to resume, The Western Carolinian met to discuss whether we would do an edition about Hurricane Helene. There was apprehension about whether it was too soon and if we would be rubbing salt into fresh wounds, but it didn't take long for everyone to agree, this was our duty. As journalists, it is our responsibility to provide our community with accurate information as well as provide a first draft of history. After discussing how to approach situations with sensitivity and the importance of prioritizing mental health in traumatic events we were on our way.

I would like to take this moment to really recognize how phenomenal and resilient The Western Carolinian staff was during this time. Throughout this edition you will recognize many new names. Right before the hurricane hit, we hired four reporters and an assistant designer. Despite having no experience on our team before, all of the new staff were enthusiastic about doing this edition and created incredible work.

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# Warren Wilson College: Resilience in the Face of Hurricane Helene

By Sami Mcgaughey

Warren Wilson College, nestled in the picturesque town of Swannanoa in North Carolina, blends the natural beauty outside the classroom with strong community ties inside it. Nestled in the vast expanse of the Blue Ridge Mountains, this campus is like a nature resort with its rolling hills and serene landscapes.

What really sets Warren Wilson apart is its devotion to experiential education. The innovative work program allows students to experience real-life interactions that marry academics with community service. The hands-on approach not only helps develop practical skills but instills a sense of responsibility toward life. Whether engaged in environmental science, social justice or the arts, Warren Wilson provides an

environment that prizes personal growth as highly as academic exploration.

This is the sense of home recently shattered by Hurricane Helene, which came barreling into the small mountain town and the college bringing destructive flooding in a matter of hours. Many residents of this town watched helplessly as their homes and personal objects were swept away with little or no notice of evacuation.

As the town flooded, Warren Wilson was also hit. Around 30% of the campus' buildings were flooded.

Most students who remained on campus during the hurricane sprang into action. Many joined road-clearing efforts and



Warren Wilson's chicken coop after Hurricane Helene. Photo by Erica Ostling.

making sure animals across campus were safe. With power and water outages since the hurricane struck, access to food became a concern.

The farmland of the college, steeped in pride among the students and faculty of the institution, had been destroyed. Many animals were moved to higher ground, while the pigs and chickens remained in their pens. Students worked furiously to rescue as many as possible as the floodwaters rose.

The following day proved even grimmer as students spent the better part of several hours picking up the bodies of the pigs and chickens from the river. The ones that survived were taken to a farm nearby.

Warren Wilson's classes resumed online Oct. 21 and in-person Oct. 28.

The promise from the students and faculty is to join hands to restore Warren Willson to an even better shape than before.



Warren Wilson before Hurricane Helene. Photo by Erica Ostling.



# “There was absolutely nothing normal or usual about this:” Historical flooding devastates Clyde

By Cora Haste

Kevin Massie watched as quickly moving floodwaters approached his home foot by foot. The water rose as the Pigeon River inched its way into the streets of Clyde, North Carolina.

“In this area, it’s common to have several floods a year,” said Massie.

In the 60 years Massie lived in Clyde Hurricane Helene brought destruction in a way he had never seen.

From the beginning, the storm felt different for Massie. As some of the first rain drops fell on Sept. 26 he felt fear, cautioning friends in the area to prepare for something extreme.

Having dealt with flooding before, Massie kept an eye on the Pigeon River that sits across the road from their property. The waters rose and then paused for a bit before heavy rainfall picked up and devastated his home and community.

“I was trying to get stuff up out of the basement to get it on up into the house where it would be dry. And the water just kept coming and we were like okay, we need to move stuff a little higher and the water kept coming and kept coming and it just wasn’t slowing down,” Massie said.

In the process of saving his and his wife’s belongings from the floodwaters, the foundation of the home gave way, letting out a low groan. In that moment, the waters rushed into the home with such force that Massie felt the displaced air hit his face.

“The water went from seven inches deep in the basement to seven foot deep in less than five seconds,” Massie said.

Jerry and Traci Hoglen have been pastors at Sweet Fellowship Church in Clyde for nearly two decades. Situated five lanes and a railroad track away from the Pigeon River, the church building had been untouched by floodwaters since 1949.

The Hoglens live about 3000 feet above sea level, higher than their church. As the storm continued Sept. 27, Mrs. Hoglen was shocked to see water flowing with force down the mountain, through her yard.

“My fear at the time was if I had that much water actually running like waterfalls down the mountain, past my house, I was in fear for



The small and charming town of Clyde has been changed by flooding from Hurricane Helene. Photo by Cora Haste.





Photo by Cora Haste.

the people below me, in the valley, I started thinking back of what happened to me in 04 and sure enough you see what happened. I mean, it was crazy,” said Mrs. Hoglen.

It has been 20 years since Hurricanes Frances and Ivan wrecked Western North Carolina, bringing flooding that Mrs. Hoglen remembers well.

“I did have a house in Canton in 2004 when it flooded and my house got flooded twice and the job that I had in the town of Canton got flooded so I lost my job and I ended up, you know, my home was upside down basically. This was not my first time experiencing a flood,” said Mrs. Hoglen.

Clyde flooded again in 2021 during Tropical Storm Fred, killing six people in Haywood County.

Despite experiencing these devastating floods, the Hoglens could never have imagined their church would flood like it did.

Mrs. Hoglen’s son arrived at her house Sept. 28, after the storm had passed through. In his hands he held a bible from the church’s altar.

“I asked him, ‘why do you have the bible in your hand.’ He said, ‘mama the church is flooded.’ And I said, ‘what are you talking about? There’s no way that church can be flooded,’” Mrs. Hoglen said.

In Haywood County, the road to recovery from Helene is a long one. It is one that cannot be walked alone. On Oct. 2, Mrs. Hoglen took to Facebook pleading for help recovering their church basement.

“I am heartbroken. We need the community,” Mrs. Hoglen said in a Facebook live video. “We can’t do this just the four of us, it’s impossible.”

Mrs. Hoglen credits student volunteers from WCU as an answer to her pleas.

“Anybody that asks me about how the church is, I’m like let me tell you about Western Carolina students. They were a godsend,” Mrs. Hoglen said.

The Massies and the Hoglens, like many in their community, now look ahead to the next steps they need to take in restoring their properties. With few in their area having flood insurance, all eyes are on FEMA for financial assistance.

To start the FEMA application process, those affected can call the toll-free application number 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or register online at <http://www.fema.gov>.

A drive through the streets of Clyde offers heartbreaking views of loss and destruction.

“All you have to do is look a few houses around and you find somebody just as bad or worse than you,” Massie said.

A theme of resilience and community echoes through each story, each pile of debris. But the charm of Clyde never existed in the brick and mortar, it existed in the people.

“It’s been neighbor helping neighbor, local helping local,” Mr. Massie said.

There is a long way to go but spirits in Clyde are strong, despite being battered.



# Lending a helping paw: How students have volunteered in the wake of Hurricane Helene

By Quill Sanders

Cullowhee came out of Hurricane Helene with minimal damage, however many neighboring counties were less fortunate. Flooding and loss of utilities devastated communities across Western North Carolina and the cancellation of classes left many WCU students eager to get out and help.

Every student had a different reason to volunteer. Some were inspired by religious

beliefs, others wanted to use their hands to handle negative emotions and others simply wanted to heal their communities.

“The natural disaster has been so devastating to the area, and as college students, we have a great opportunity to help,” Ella Lewison, a senior, said. “As able-bodied students who have resilience, we are needed to help in the community.”

Kayleigh Dugger, a senior, volunteered as an escape from the negativity swirling around online.

“I kept stumbling across the terrible misinformation being spread about our home, and the backlash from the people here. I knew that I couldn’t fall down the internet rabbit hole, so I went and helped where I realistically could,” Dugger said.



WCU volunteer at Woodland Baptist Church collecting items for families. Photo by Quill Sanders.



Most students have been helping at various churches in Waynesville and Junaluska collecting donations, transporting supplies or providing childcare.

As utilities started to return, efforts transitioned to manual labor. Students cleaned houses and businesses affected by flooding. This included pulling up carpet, gutting houses, cleaning personal belongings and salvaging as much as possible.

Student efforts have mostly been connected through various clubs and organizations on campus.

Knox Hambleton student teaches in Haywood County, a county that was hit particularly hard by Hurricane Helene. Hambleton was with their partner, a Haywood County resident, when they saw the effects.

“We saw on Facebook from a teacher at my placement school that First United Methodist in Waynesville was asking for volunteers. The next day, my roommates and I started carpooling over with friends, then we started asking SGA and other groups to start sharing our carpooling info and things took off from there,” Hambleton said.

Most students who have been volunteering say that they will never forget how amazing it is to see the Western North Carolina community come together and care for those affected by the storm.

Not everyone who volunteered has been able to maintain a positive outlook amid the destruction. A junior named Harper expressed frustration and fear about the recent events.

“Regrettably there hasn’t been much good that stuck with me through this, I feel like I should have a feeling of hope of ‘the good of humanity’ while participating in



WCU students clean a basement in Clyde. Photo by Knox Hambleton.

these efforts, but they truly fill me with dread. Only two weeks after Helene, a category 5 hurricane, Milton, hit Florida, and how many more after that?” Harper said. “I want a world where flooding and landslides aren’t normal... and where we are connected and trust each other instead of fighting over pointless, petty things.”

Despite recent events, the WCU community has been doing its best to stay positive and focus on the unity that has spread through relief efforts.

“Every single house along the road had their yards full of debris and ruined belongings. In front of one of these houses, someone

had written a message on a ruined sheet of drywall that they had propped on a big pile. It said, ‘this is stuff. It can be replaced. Love and Unity last forever.’” Hambleton said.

The resilience and positivity of both community members and WCU students is infectious.

“The amount of people who dropped everything to volunteer was amazing to see. Western Carolina has proved that communities and neighbors will take care of one another during times of crisis and struggle,” Lilly Guinn, a sophomore, comments.



# Marshall citizens spearhead post hurricane recovery efforts in their town

By Mattilynn Sneed

“The destruction is just the first chapter, but the real story is the way people have responded,” Josh Copus, owner of Old Marshall Jail Hotel and Zadie’s said.

Marshall, a small town just north of Asheville, was one of the worst affected by the flooding on Sep. 27. Hurricane Helene replaced the Great Flood of 1916 as the worst storm in Marshall’s recorded history, with the French Broad River cresting at 24 feet compared to 23.1 feet in 1916. The damage to the town’s infrastructure was catastrophic.

The people of Marshall wasted no time responding to the devastation.

What began with Tasha Pumphery and a few friends grilling hotdogs and hamburgers in the Nanostead parking lot for people cleaning up downtown Marshall grew into a citizen run hub for Hurricane Helene relief and cleanup.

“The second we set up with the grill, trucks started pulling in. I still don’t know how it evolved so fast, the second people saw we were trying to help downtown, they wanted to help too,” Pumphery said.

Nanostead has been a cornerstone in the recovery and clean-up efforts, providing a command post for Pumphery and other coordinators, housing supplies for those affected by the hurricane and setting up a place where volunteers could be fed. Pumphery says the operation grew so much that they began answering calls for help in

other areas affected by the flood that hadn’t received needed aid.

“Every single thing here grew out of somebody showing up and saying they have a need and us saying we’ll see if we can fill it as quickly as possible. It is seriously the fastest I’ve seen things manifest in my life. The second I write a need down, the very next person I talk to is the person who can fill it,” Pumphery said.

Volunteers who shuttled to Nanostead from the nearby Ingles parking lot were unloaded,

briefed on health safety concerns, equipped with donated PPE and clean up supplies, then deployed to the downtown area to work in affected businesses and homes. Volunteer drivers filled the truck beds of their own vehicles to haul crews downtown. Residents waved and called out their gratitude as the trucks passed.

Nearly everyone volunteering wore Tyvek suits, rubber boots, thick rubber gloves and respirators. The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality recommends these



The “Thank you for visiting Marshall” sign was ripped from the ground during the flood. Photo by Mattilynn Sneed.





Cleanup volunteers go through decontamination station when arriving back at Nanostead after leaving the downtown area. Photo by Mattilynn Sneed.

precautions for anyone aiding in clean up due to concerns of toxic chemicals in the mud and dust, mold inside the buildings and emissions from running generators.

Volunteers came from near and far to work alongside Marshall residents. Among them was Sabra Freeman from Asheville. Once she got her own house settled, she saw the need for help in Marshall. At the time of the interview, she was still out of work due to no Wi-Fi and was happy to come and help.

“I have so much faith in our Western North Carolina community. Many of the homeowners and business owners I’ve talked to have been some of the most motivated, determined, uplifting people I’ve met. It’s really so heartening to see. I know in a lot of spaces where people are talking about the hurricane it’s all doom and gloom, but if you’re here in real life and talking to people, these are some of the most optimistic and hardworking people,” Freeman said.

Along with individual volunteers, Marshall received aid from a variety of other sources, including Federal Emergency Management Agency, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the U.S. Army. FEMA workers assisted residents in completing aid applications, EBCI Water and Sewer Department worked with the county on repairing infrastructure,

soldiers suited up alongside volunteers to help clean up businesses and homes.

Sergeant Stouffer of the 101st Airborne Division traveled with his unit from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He was posted at the first aid station and said they were there to assist in whatever way the volunteers asked.

“The 101st has always had a proud tradition of being there for the people. From what I’ve seen everyone is working together very well. It’s a great show of human spirit and coming together to be there for your fellow man,” Stouffer said.

Josh Copus, owner of Old Marshall Jail Hotel and Zadie’s, said the soldiers were a big help with cleanup efforts. He talked about his own experience with the flood and the cleanup. He spent five years renovating the building that he co-owns with three friends, then opened his hotel and restaurant in August 2021. After evacuating Friday, he returned on Saturday to wade into his still flooded building.

“At that point no one had communication, there was no cell service or internet. I think everyone just felt kind of alone. I woke up Sunday morning and the world seemed suspended. I didn’t know what to do, I didn’t know how to be. I decided I’m just going to go to the town. I just had to do something. When I got here, everyone was there. We said, ‘I guess we’ll just start now,’” said Copus.

He went on to say that the early implementation of an organized volunteer system by the residents is crucial to the success of the cleanup.

His business has transitioned from cleanup to rebuilding, something that he says he finds both exciting and daunting. Focusing on the tiny victories has been his motto though the recovery process.

Some residents and business owners will

rebuild, others such as Judy Flemming will have to relocate. The apartment that she’s lived in since November 2010 was destroyed during the flood.

“Everything is gone,” she said as she sat outside her apartment building waiting to speak with a FEMA worker about getting aid.

With her apartment no longer livable, she plans to relocate to Virginia to live with her son. She said she’s been able to get plenty of help and supplies from volunteers and aid workers.

“I’m just glad everyone here in Marshall made it out,” Flemming said.

The town has a long road of rebuilding ahead, but Copus thinks if they keep their momentum and celebrate the small triumphs, it will make a swift recovery.

“The town isn’t the buildings, it’s the people. Our buildings were destroyed but our people are still here. And the people make the place,” Copus said. “You’ve got to start somewhere. If you just sit there, you can be paralyzed by the gravity of the destruction. Something small like the little triumph of getting the sidewalk clean adds up and gives you strength emotionally to take this tiny little part of this whole destroyed world and try to make it better.”



Volunteers take a break in front of the Madison County Courthouse. Photo by Mattilynn Sneed.

# Professors navigate course changes amid unexpected university closures

By Marie Spencer

All classes at WCU were suspended from Sept 26 through Oct 11 due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene. WCU's fall break, Oct 14 through Oct 18, continued as scheduled, leaving students out of the classroom for nearly three and a half weeks. To accommodate, professors had to restructure their courses to make up for lost time.

"Faculty were informed we had to be sure our courses were still meeting the syllabus outcomes to be aligned with the accreditation standards," Christina Reitz, music professor, said.

Figuring out how to still meet these outcomes with the remainder of the semester looks different for every professor and course. Professors have to decide what content can be cut from the syllabus to be able to still fit in the essentials. Common changes have been shortening lengthy assignments and combining future lectures.

"The biggest challenge is figuring out how to balance covering essential course material with being responsive to student needs and realities. To make these decisions, I return to the course objectives and ask what students absolutely need to know if they're going to say they've taken a class in this subject," Emily Naser-Hall, assistant professor of film and new media studies, said.

Other professors decided to ask their students what content should be prioritized with the now-shortened semester.

"For my first-year class, I asked them to vote

on which six days previously on the syllabus we should drop, instead of dumping all the content from the two weeks we've missed," Gael Graham, history professor, said.

Reitz also decided to give her students options. She gave her students the choice to remove one of their three major research projects. Reitz hopes that this choice will reduce student stress.

However, eliminating content is not feasible for every course. For example, courses in the pre-health discipline have had the challenge of fitting the same amount of content in the remainder of the semester.

"Anatomy and physiology is an important course for our pre-health professional students, and so my greatest concern is how to make sure they're not short-changed," Joe Bill Mathews, associate biology instructor, said. "At this point, though, I have a pretty good idea of where they're more likely to struggle, so I'm trying to find ways to move a little more quickly through those straight-forward parts that don't require much explanation, so that I can still go through the difficult material in a digestible way."

Throughout all these changes, many professors emphasized their concerns for their students. With unstable internet and Wi-Fi connections across Western North Carolina, many professors had not heard from most of their students before classes resumed.

"I've heard from a number of students, but I'm concerned about the ones I haven't been in

contact with. That's been the most unnerving part of this for me – not being able to check in with my students," Naser-Hall said.

Professors acknowledge that the hurricane will have lasting effects on students' mental health, even if they were physically unharmed.

"Even those who were spared the worst of Helene are likely struggling with the enormity of the damage and the uncertainty of how best to help. This is a hard time," Matthews said. "I've been surprised by how many have emailed to check on me, which was the last thing I was expecting, and very kind. My hope is that those students who have been quiet are simply busy, and my guess is that for many of them, my classes are low on their list of things to be triaged, which is how it should be right now."

"I'm more concerned about how the hurricane and its lengthy effects will impact every aspect of their lives. It felt immediately like COVID – where everything changed, adjustments had to be made all the while knowing students were trying to deal with unbelievable challenges," Reitz said.

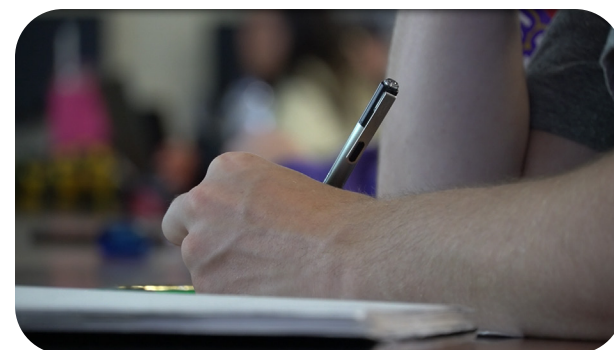


Photo by Liam Bridgeman.



# Cullowhee Community Garden still grows after severe flooding

By Marrah Ste. Marie

Cullowhee Community Garden's peaceful ambience is often enjoyed by gardeners, volunteers and visitors alike. The Cullowhee Creek flows behind it adding a cherry on top by making the soil more ideal for growing while providing the soothing sound of trickling water.

What was once the perfect complement to the garden soon became its opponent as the rain from Hurricane Helene caused the creek to swell causing multiple feet of water to submerge the entire garden.

"We have water marks on different structures on the garden. The plots nearest to the creek showed the water was up over 6 feet," David Claxton, garden manager, said. "Everything got flooded."

The garden is dedicated to aiding food insecurity in Jackson County. At least half of every harvest is donated to different food pantries and charities. Summer crops had already been donated, normally fall donations would've began harvesting, but it was interrupted by the storm.

"Anything that was in contact with the flood water could have been contaminated with microorganisms or possibly even some poisons," Claxton said. "It's just not safe to eat any of that so we can't give any of it away."

This was not the only hit the garden took towards donations this year. Earlier in the year, both pear trees were stripped, and all the pears were stolen.

September 2023, 850 pounds of produce was donated, pears made up 200 pounds of that donation. Despite the 200-pound pear loss, the garden was still able to donate over 800 pounds of produce in 2024.

The life of Cullowhee Community Garden still thrived despite flooding. Recently, Claxton began using vermiculture to aid in composting process. Vermiculture is the use of worms to add nutrients to soil.

Before the storm Claxton moved the worms into the greenhouse. He worried as flooding infiltrated the greenhouse. When he returned, he found out the worms were untouched by the water.

"We saved all of our worms. They're as happy as can be and still doing their little worm things," Claxton said.

The garden also relied on beehives near the creek to help pollinate plots. After the flooding, Claxton checked the hives and saw they had been washed away.

Nearly 70 yards downstream, a gardener checked his plot after the flood and found the hives on their side. The gardener happened to be a beekeeper and was able to save the hives and bees living in them.

The garden still has damaged equipment that needs replaced, including the new battery-powered converter. The brand-new converter was a replacement for the new converter that was stolen in July 2023.



Fallen trees and debris caked in mud laid in front of the greenhouse. Photo by Marrah Ste. Marie.

Claxton tried to keep the converter safe by storing it in a new shed that was secured with an electronic lock. Water was still able to seep in and the lock shorted out. Claxton was touched when the locksmith offered to unlock their shed for free.

"I was inspired by [the locksmith's] approach to community service," Claxton said.

Cullowhee Community Garden is still accepting volunteers from students and community members alike. The garden is also still accepting scraps in their compost pile. For more information visit [health.jacksonnc.org/cullowhee-community-garden](http://health.jacksonnc.org/cullowhee-community-garden).



# So much more than a building: Equestrian barn's road to recovery

By Cora Haste

"It's a feeling, it's a family, it's everything, it's so much more than just a building," Julia Collins, the coach for WCU's collegiate equestrian team said, about her barn in Candler, NC.

Collins has owned Over the River Farms for 25 years. For eight of those years, she has worked with WCU students riding in the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association.

Working with horses comes with its own

set of challenges but the past month has challenged the farm in a unique way.

Collins' farm is located next to a small creek. The creek, typically a source of beauty, caused mass destruction in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

As the storm approached Western North Carolina, Collins assembled a team of students and riders to assist in evacuating the barn's 14 horses. Finding a place to house the horses was a complicated task.

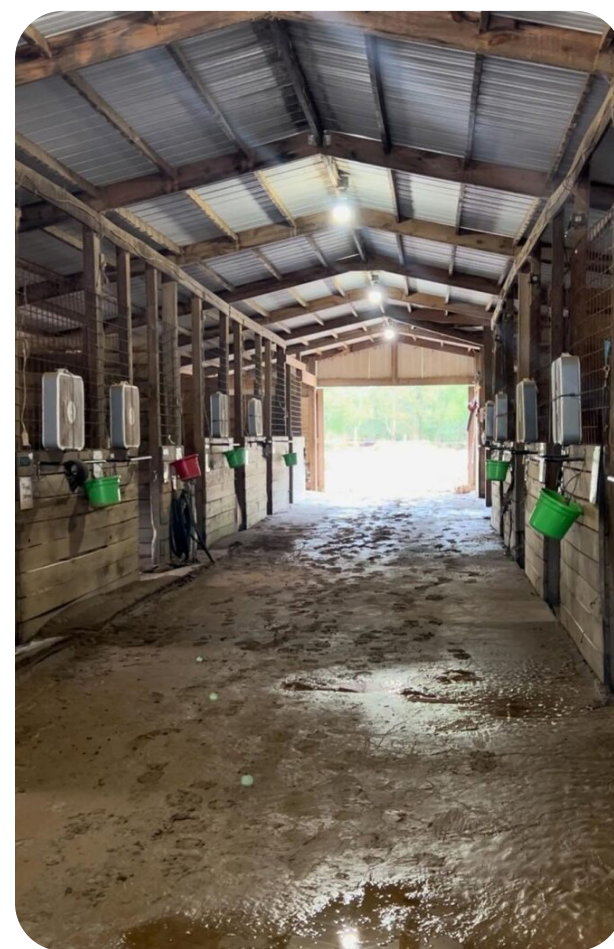
The Smoky Mountain Event Center in Waynesville provided dry stalls on high ground for the horses.

"They were phenomenal for us," Collins said.

With the stalls and pastures evacuated, waters rose ferociously, washing mud and debris through almost every inch of Collins' farm. Long after the water receded, a foot of thick mud lingered on the barn floor.

Most of the property was nearly unrecognizable, though the barn still stood. Taking in the damage, a question hung in the air for Collins, "how do I recover from this?"

"Everything is destroyed, and this strong barn is just standing was first of all what motivated me to try," Collins said.



Thick mud caked each stall of Collins' barn. Photo courtesy of Over the River Farms.

She organized a barn cleanup a week after the storm tore through Buncombe County. People showed up with gloves, shovels and determination.

"For me that was a huge, big deal that so many people showed up and not just showed up and were here but showed up and worked their butts off," Collins said.

For student and non-student riders the barn is more than a building.



"Because a lot of the pastures were washed away and now, they're covered in hard rock and rubble and debris. Horses can't be turned out on that," Whelan said. Photo courtesy of Over the River Farms.



Maggie Whelan is a co-captain of the WCU Equestrian Team. The barn means a lot to her, offering sanctuary and escape. "It's a really big form of stress relief and being mindful and finding peace," Whelan said.

Even covered in a layer of dust and mud, the farm offers beauty and solace. University riders and those boarding horses there seek refuge amongst a group of people tied together by a common passion.

"This flood, I realized it's actually more that's getting destroyed, it's not items, it's a barn community," Collins said.

Seeing her community pull together inspired Collins to recover her farm sanctuary.

People come to her barn to learn riding skills, but Collins says they gain so much more.

Peace, purpose, work ethic, people, home, the barn offers a lot.

And Collins gets a lot out of it too.

"My life is fuller and richer from knowing these people that a lot of people would just write off, as they're just a college kid," Collins said.

A month after Hurricane Helene changed the landscape of Collins' farm, her horses have returned. WCU student riders have saddled up and taken to the arena to begin preparing for their upcoming show at UNC Greensboro Nov. 9-10.

"Hopefully this will pull us together and you know we all share a passion, and we all have a lot of similar goals, and we all love horses and to compete," Whelan said.

Recovery is a long and costly process. For continued updates follow [equestrian.club.wcu](https://equestrian.club.wcu) on Instagram. To help Over the River Farms and the WCU Equestrian Team visit their GoFundMe <https://gofund.me/e1e93b39> and make a donation towards recovery efforts.



"Horses aren't meant to be kept up in a stall 24/7. They're meant to run and be free," Whelan said. Photo by Cora Haste.

## Looking Back: The Flood of 1940



For much of Western North Carolina, the flood of 1916 was the most catastrophic before Hurricane Helene. For Cullowhee, it was the flood of 1940. The Aug 13 hurricane came after the area had already seen 21 inches of rainfall that month. The water of the Tuckasegee crested at 15 to 18 ft above the level of the Cullowhee Dam. Four people from the Canada community died; Albert McCall and his two children as well as Vessie Mathis. Abert McCall and the two children were killed when

their home was swept away in a landslide. McCall and one of their children were never found, while the 5-year-old son was discovered on Govenor's Island in Bryson City. Some residents, including McCall's pregnant wife, clung to the tops of trees to save themselves. The flooding washed out every bridge that crossed the Tuckasegee throughout Jackson County.

Source: The Sylva Herald Archives

# A “Perfect Storm” the misinformation of Hurricane Helene

By Deanna Sipe

As Western North Carolina recovers from the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, misinformation and disinformation continue to spread through social media. The rumors and lies spread have created mistrust hindering effective relief efforts.

“These rumors – or whatever they are – are usually presented as factual information when it is not actually based in fact. What we see now with social media and the internet is that these sources kind of look like reputable news organizations, but they’re not necessarily fact-checked,” said Todd Collins, WCU professor of political science.

Social media algorithms often don’t present content that challenges a user’s views or beliefs, effectively creating an echo chamber. This can lead people to believe and share posts from questionable sources, sometimes spreading false information.

“We have a tendency to kind of believe those things that support the narrative we already want to be true,” Collins said.

In the early days after Helene, many

affected areas were without cell service and Wi-Fi. Most information communicated about relief efforts was spread by those outside of the area.

The outsider narrative created some distrust in government aid. Quinn Manning, a WCU student and former AmeriCorps volunteer, explained in an interview with WWCU that misinformation being spread caused some to become hostile toward FEMA and the National Guard in Asheville.

Dr. Peter Nieckarz, a sociology professor at WCU, says the emotional nature of the storm led to an increased spread of false information.

“People were disoriented, experiencing a sense of fear; And coupled with that people were frustrated with what was seemingly a lack of relief and lifesaving responses,” Nieckarz said.

Nieckarz explains that the fear, disorientation and frustration people are experiencing can cause hysteria and lead them to disrupt relief efforts.

“If they’re getting in the way of emergency relief vehicles or perhaps, they’re trying to drive down an unsafe

road, it can create a situation where they themselves need to be helped or rescued,” Nieckarz said.

Nieckarz and Collins say there are multiple ways to debunk misinformation seen on social media.

“People need to practice what’s known as critical media literacy to be able to understand what probably is real and what isn’t. That means while you’re online, evaluate your sources to look and see if they have a bias or a standpoint or an agenda,” Nieckarz said.

Collins advises when on social media to look at catchphrases like “Finally revealed” or “The story they didn’t want you to hear” in the headlines of stories. He also says to look for misspellings and “gotcha” language.

“To make sure that we are finding the best information, we look at different sources,” Collins said.

When in a crisis like Helene, it’s best to check local government outlets for reliable information.



# Mountain Heritage Day's 50th anniversary cancelled

By Stewart Butler



Photo by Stewart Butler.

Hurricane Helene has had an incredible impact on Western North Carolina. Much of the area is still recovering and will continue to for quite some time.

Cullowhee was lucky to be spared from the worst of the storm. While the university itself wasn't hit hard, many of its people were. When Helene hit, WCU stopped in its tracks. Mountain Heritage Day and campus events faded from the spotlight as people quickly turned to help their neighbors.

Countless WCU students pitched in to the relief effort – traveling across WNC to help with search and rescue, supply donations, cleanup and more.

"We're funneling volunteer efforts from students, faculty and staff," said Provost Richard Starnes. "We're trying to channel people's community volunteering spirit to help our region recover from this disaster."

Catamount Athletics led many student-athletes up to the Jackson County Airport,

where Operation Airdrop was in full swing. They helped load and unload supplies from some 300 or more aircraft through the week.

Athletics also organized the "Fill the Truck" campaign Oct. 12 to raise donations for surrounding communities. By the end of the day, they'd filled nearly three full-size box trucks.

The cancellation of the 50th annual Mountain Heritage Day was a disappointment to many. Minor flooding on campus would make the event impossible, but staffing was another concern. Many who were scheduled to work Mountain Heritage Day had instead turned their focus to helping those in need.

Peter Koch, a member of the MHD programming board, said the cancellation was a disappointment to everyone involved, but it was a decision that had to be made.

Koch said that though much of the time spent planning and preparing was lost to the storm, WCU may recoup some of the planning in events later this semester and next.

The Kruger Brothers are to perform in Bardo Nov. 7. Koch says some musicians who planned to play at MHD will be in attendance.

The hurricane also led to a no-spectator football game against Wofford on Oct. 5. Catamount Athletics' Chad Gerrety says fans took the announcement well.

Catamount football was back in-person

Oct. 12 for its Heroes Day game against The Citadel.

"It really gave us the opportunity to thank people that have been so busy these last few weeks. We really wanted to do some good for the community," Gerrety said.

Helene also had a significant impact on student life. Classes were canceled for nearly a month. WCU offered food, water, a telephone and other services in the days immediately after. Even so, many students drove home, sometimes taking far-extended routes if trying to head east.

"Some of us are worried about the future of the semester," said freshman Luka Kutateladze. "Most of my friends dealt with it in a positive way and used it as a way to get more prepared."

Hurricane Helene presented a difficult situation for WCU, and even more for its surrounding communities. Hard work, resilience and a little bit of Catamount spirit has surely helped WCU through this unique time.



Photo by Stewart Butler.

# Hurricane relief: ways to make an impact

*If you are willing and able, please consider helping the areas and communities affected by Hurricane Helene.*

WCU

- Fund for WCU students: <https://www.givecampus.com/campaigns/12526/donations/new>
- Vecinos CC: <https://form-renderer-app.donorperfect.io/give/vecinos-inc/donation-form-1>

VOLUNTEERING

- FUMC Waynesville: Volunteer opportunities ranging from packaging food to cleaning up the area and houses
- WCU Volunteer Carpool: Meet in front of Hillside Grind at 9am. Call/ Text: 828-331-1684 Instagram: @wcuhelenevolunteers
- Hot Springs needs volunteers for loading/unloading, cleanup, and distribution. Will be provided protective gear. Meet at Hot Springs Elementary, tentative time of 10, and you can show up anytime
- Samaritan’s Purse is looking for volunteers. Visit <https://www.spvolunteer.org/>
- Volunteers needed in Asheville at Manna Food Bank. Visit <https://www.mannafoodbank.org/>

COLD WEATHER ITEMS

Donations needed for these locations in Buncombe County:

- 1298 Patton Avenue in West Asheville
- Presbyterian Church at 2215 Hendersonville Road in Asheville
- Harrah’s Cherokee Center: 87 Haywood Street, at the front door from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week
- 6 Commerce Way, Arden

DONATIONS

- Woodland Baptist Church & Orchard Church is collecting donations of food, hygiene products, and cleaning supplies. People can donate products or volunteer 545 Crabtree Rd, Waynesville, NC 28785
- Darnell Farms is collecting monetary donations to recover from damages to property, farmlands, and equipment. Donate at: [Gofund.me/8e6c11cd](https://gofund.me/8e6c11cd)
- North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund: [www.nc.gov/donate](https://www.nc.gov/donate)
- Salvation Army of the Carolinas: <https://give.helpsalvationarmy.org/give/166081/#!/donation/checkout>
- Clothing Donations Needed: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article293485024.html>

OTHER

- Salvation Army Asheville: <https://southernusa.salvationarmy.org/asheville-buncombe-county/>
- United Way Asheville: <https://www.unitedwayabc.org/donations-goods>
- Goodwill Northwest NC: <https://www.goodwillnwno.org/locations/>
- Asheville Habitat for Humanity: <https://www.ashevillehabitat.org/restore/donate/>
- Homeward Bound WNC: <https://homewardboundwnc.org/donate-items/>
- Buncombe Helene Updates and Donation Centers: <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2024/10/08/helene-in-buncombe-county-trash-collection-how-to-donate-fema/75572616007/>
- Donations and volunteer information for several WNC counties: <https://wlos.com/news/local/volunteer-donation-opportunities-wnc-counties-affected-helene>

Our hearts go out to the individuals, families and communities affected by Hurricane Helene.  
—All of us at The Western Carolinian



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Dear WCU Students:

For the upcoming election, I encourage you to do your own research based on reliable sources, to consider your findings carefully, and to vote according to what's best for you and for our country. But in case you feel you don't know where to begin, allow me to share some general differences between current Republican and Democratic Party principles and candidates.

First of all, do you care about job opportunities? Since February 1989, there have been 3 Republican and 3 Democratic presidents. In that time all 6 presidents together helped create a total of 51.5 million new jobs. Of this total, the Democrats added 50.28 million jobs, while Republicans added only 1.28 million. Under the most recent GOP president, 2.7 million jobs were actually lost, while under President Biden's tenure so far, 15.8 million have been added, which is the most in any of the 6 presidential terms (Source: <https://data.bls.gov>). Recently, Kamala Harris has been endorsed by over 400 economists (CNN).

Do you care about student loan debt relief? According to the U.S. Department of Education, the total amount

of loan forgiveness approved by the Biden-Harris Administration is over \$168 billion for more than 4 million Americans. As reported by YouGov, "the majority of Democrats support canceling either some (45%), or all student debt (26%). In contrast, only 7% of Republicans favor complete cancelation, while 26 % support partial cancelation," and 57% of Republicans are against any relief.

I myself was raised in a Republican household, but when I started paying attention to politics, I realized it was Democrats who were advocating for my values.

In this election it's OK to vote for a Democrat even if you think of yourself as a Republican. That's not just my opinion. For his third campaign in a row, Donald Trump won't have the endorsement of a single former president or vice-president. Furthermore, 40 out of 44 of Trump's own Cabinet have not endorsed him. In other words, almost none of the hand-picked conservatives who worked most closely with the former president think enough of him to support him publicly. But, as reported by CNN, over 200 former staffers to Republicans Bush, McCain, and Romney have endorsed Kamala Harris, and she has also been

endorsed by a hundred Republican former national security personnel.

Donald Trump is not a normal presidential candidate, and in my view he's not even a Republican. At least he doesn't stand for the principles that the GOP has traditionally embraced. As for fiscal responsibility, for example, he added \$7.8 trillion to the national debt in just 4 years (ProPublica). As for protecting democracy itself, Trump never formally conceded that he lost the 2020 election, and he incited the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, thereby violating his oath of office to defend the Constitution, for which he was impeached (his second impeachment). At this moment, he is a convicted felon, convicted on 34 counts.

So even if you consider yourself a Republican, this is one election that you can in good conscience vote for Democrats. As former Republican Lieutenant-Governor of Georgia Geoff Duncan has said, "Let me be clear to my Republican friends: If you vote for Kamala Harris in 2024, you're not a Democrat; you're a patriot."

Bill Spencer  
Cullowhee



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# Halloween Word Search

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A V I W Z S A I C L O R P U M P K I N E  
U C I G H P T W A F N A U R P H H X Z D  
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- Bat
- Boo
- Candy
- Cauldron
- Costume
- Frankenstein
- Ghost
- Haunted
- Monster Mash
- October
- Pumpkin
- Skeleton
- Spider
- Spooky
- Thriller
- Trick or Treat
- Vampire
- Werewolf
- Witch
- Zombie



# Uniting over division? Braver Angels hosts campus-wide debate

By Sam Scroggins



Students gathered in Forsyth to debate if Trump was bad for democracy. Photo by Mackenzie Atkinson.

## Is Trump bad for democracy?

On Sep. 25 Braver Angels, a political nonprofit that aims to unite Republicans and Democrats, hosted a debate to answer that question.

The debate started with four main speakers, two arguing for and two arguing against.

Michael Lenz, a political science professor, was the first to argue for. His argument relied on the idea that Former President Trump's negatives outweigh the positives. Lenz started his argument recognizing that the 2020 election raised the interest in politics, mostly because Trump was such an outsider.

Lenz then suggested the former president

has extremely authoritarian views and that he had hinted he would refuse to accept the election results in 2024. Lenz mentioned a couple of Trump's controversies, namely the January 6 Capitol attack.

Lenz ended his argument saying that the Trump presidency is, "a reflection of stagnating democracy".

Tristan Goode, a student, argued against. Goode's argument was that one man is not a threat to democracy and that the current party divide is because of both Democrats and Republicans. Goode also said that these kinds of debates or conversations seek to bring America back to greatness.

After the main speakers delivered their arguments, the debate was opened up to the audience. First, those who had an argument against Trump being bad for Democracy and then those who had an argument for.

Braver Angels requested audience members' names not be included to create a safe space to participate.

One audience member argued against. In his argument he said that the idea Trump is a threat to democracy, is a threat to democracy. He argued that current media is the real threat to democracy. He said that January 6 was blown out of proportion and that calling it an insurrection was hyperbolic.

One audience member for mentioned an incident in 2020 when Trump had called

the governor of Georgia, Brian Kemp, and coerced him to find more votes for him. The speaker said this was Trump exerting power over a democratic process.

Kevin Lavery and Diana Esters, Braver Angels fellows, moderated the debate. Lavery has been part of two other debates at Western Carolina University.

When debating passionate topics, head moderators are tasked with keeping things civil. According to Lavery, Braver Angels pride themselves on being able to have these controversial conversations and everyone comes away with a better understanding of each other and the topic.

To help Braver Angels' overall goal of unification, debates are noncompetitive.

"It's really more of a conversation, people just talking about what they think," said Lavery.

However, the audience felt differently. One member of the audience, Seth Blumenfeld, felt that while it was an interesting conversation, by the end the question changed to the statement that increasing power in the presidency is bad for democracy. Blumenfeld felt that no one walked out with their minds changed, instead the question got fuzzy enough that everyone agreed in their own ways.

"Having an open and honest dialogue surrounding these issues is so important, even if we disagree," said Diaz.

# Double Up! Hunter Library's new body doubling sessions

By Marie Spencer

Hunter Library is hosting Double Up!, a new body doubling program, throughout the semester at Innovation Cullowhee.

Double Up! will be held 5-7 p.m. Nov. 20 and Nov. 27. Students can arrive and leave as they wish. Although Innovation is a brewery, students of all ages are welcome to attend. Non-alcoholic beverages will be available.

Body doubling is a productivity strategy that focuses on the idea that individuals working or studying are more productive and focused when they have another individual to mirror. The strategy was originally developed to aid people with attention deficit disorders, however it has proven to be beneficial to a lot more people.

Jazmyne Baylor, the librarian organizing Double Up, hopes to increase student productivity and build community in a welcoming environment through these body doubling work sessions.

Baylor is the research and instruction librarian for the education, global life studies and parks and recreation departments. She is also the Curriculum Materials Center lead librarian.

Baylor chose to host Double Up at Innovation Cullowhee to encourage

engagement from students who may hesitate to use the library's resources.

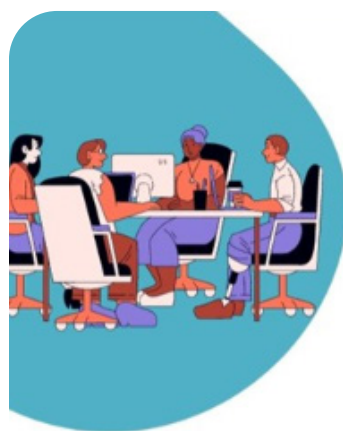
"I think people have stigmas about the library," Baylor said. "And one of our pushes is trying to take things outside of this space to meet people where they are, because some people can't physically come to the library."

Innovation Cullowhee is located more centrally on campus, making it more accessible for students and faculty. Baylor describes Innovation Cullowhee as a

friendlier space than Hunter Library for some students.

"It has a very social atmosphere, so I feel like it will encourage people to participate but also get to know other people in the network," said Baylor.

The first Double Up session occurred on Sep. 25, but was sparsely attended due to developing hurricane.



# DOUBLE UP!

**BODY DOUBLING  
WORK SESSIONS  
@ INNOVATION CULLOWHEE,  
5 PM - 7 PM**

**September 25th  
October 23rd  
November 20th  
November 27th**



# Securing the vote: An inside look into how voting machines are prepared

By Mackenzie Atkinson

With misinformation about the voting process fogging the public's perception of the voting process, the Jackson County Board of Elections provided an opportunity to watch the Express Vote machines be set up in preparation for elections.

All Express Vote machines and DS200 tabulators are tested before being staged for transportation to the early voting locations.

Each precinct has a set number of voting machines that will be available for voters which ranges from three to six Express Vote machines and one DS200 tabulator each.

For every voting machine and tabulator there is a flash drive with all the required information for that voting period. The Express Vote flash drives are programmed with the ballots for each voting precinct. The DS200 flash drives are programmed to count the ballots cast and to accept a specific ballot based on its precinct.

Each precinct has a set of unique passcodes for election day to ensure no machines can be tampered with during the election process.

A set of blank paper ballots are cast and counted by the DS200. Meanwhile, Express Vote ballots that do not have any votes are skipped through to test the machine's marking ability. During the test of the voting machines, the accessibility features are also tested to make sure they are fully operational.

Once the test is complete and the appropriate number of predicted ballots is counted, the machines are emptied out and locked up.

Before locking voting machines, the blue boxes inside tabulators that catch inserted ballots are emptied and double checked to ensure no test ballots are left. Once the machines are locked up, they are not opened until the votes are counted.

Tabulators and voting machines are locked by an orange tie that is logged by Board of Elections workers and checked in the morning to ensure no tampering has occurred overnight.

The same process is followed once the election has started. The Chief Republican and Democratic judges seal and secure the tabulators at the closing of the polls and verify there was no tampering at the opening of the polls the next morning.

Tested and verified tabulators and voting machines are kept in the Board of Elections conference room where they are put in a red cage designated for each precinct. The process of

transporting the voting machines is confidential to ensure the safety and integrity of the voting process.

Anyone can watch the process of setting up the voting machines. The Jackson County GOP chairman, Keith Blaine, and the Jackson County Democratic Party Vice chair sat in and watched the process unfold.

Trey Franks, the election equipment and operations analyst, explained the process to each of the party representatives so that transparency is maintained.

There are many safeguards to ensure the election process remains secure. Transparency is the key to democracy and secure elections. The local board of elections will always explain the process and give citizens an inside look at how things operate.



Express Vote machine. Photo by Marrah Ste. Marie.



# Local nonprofit offers many resources for WNC LGBTQ+ community

By Marie Spencer



The old farmhouse that houses Cornbread and Roses. Photo by Marie Spencer.

Cornbread and Roses, a local nonprofit organization, offers a variety of resources for the Western North Carolina community including therapy services, a food pantry, a gender/size inclusive thrift store and community events.

CBR's mission is "to promote inclusive, vital community services throughout Western North Carolina by focusing on service gaps experienced by marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQ+," according to its website.

CBR offers individual and group therapy sessions for all individuals. CBR currently accepts most major insurances and is working to accept all forms of insurance. The organization also offers a sliding scale payment options for individuals without insurance.

"We offer therapy services trained on working with the specific needs of LGBTQ people, gender expansive individuals and neurodivergent individuals," Destri Leger, CBR's director of marketing and development, said. "We also offer a variety of non-talk therapy options so somatic therapy and play therapy."

CBR currently hosts two monthly group sessions. It's Giving Community Care is a support group for transgender and gender expansive youth. This group meets 6-7:30 p.m. every second Tuesday. The second monthly support group, Raising LGBTQ+ Families, is for parents and guardians of LGBTQ+ children. This group meets 6:30-8 p.m. every third Thursday.

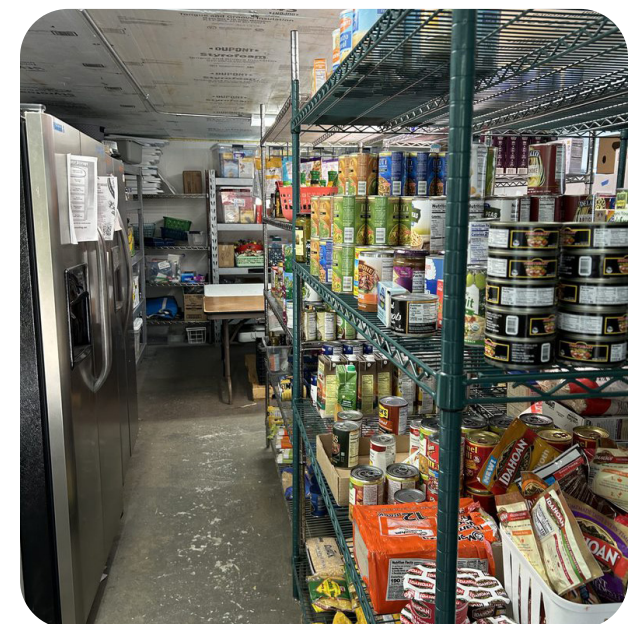
Another resource CBR has is a free food

pantry available to anyone. The pantry is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. The pantry is also available by appointment.

"We try to make it as close to a grocery shopping experience as we can," Leger said. "Folks can come in and select items that make sense for them in their household, they don't have to any intakes or provide any kind of documentation, and they are welcome to take what they need."

The food pantry also provides limited food delivery services for those unable to physically pick up food. Currently, the delivery service is on a waitlist.

CBR is actively building a larger space for the food pantry on their property. The larger



The common room of Cornbread and Roses. Photo by Marie Spencer.



space will be able to accommodate more food and supplies.

CBR also runs Edna's Closet, an inclusive thrift store. Edna's Closet is located inside Wildkitchen Supply in downtown Sylva. According to Edna's Closet's Instagram page, all proceeds from the thrift store go to CBR's services.

Edna's Closet is dedicated to providing affordable size and gender inclusive clothing options, according to Leger.

CBR created the Rainbow Directory to

highlight LGBTQ+ friendly organizations and businesses in Jackson County. The Rainbow Directory includes all types of organizations from churches to repair services. The full directory is available on the CBR website.

CBR provides harm reduction supplies for anyone in need. These supplies are located inside the CBR building in Sylva.

Leger encourages anyone interested in CBR to sign up for the organization's digital monthly newsletter. The newsletter shares upcoming community events and ways to get involved with CBR. The newsletter also shares

information about current LGBTQ+ news such as new legislation.

"I am really proud to see folks that haven't had the opportunity to build community elsewhere find that here," Leger said.

CBR has many volunteer opportunities for community members and students. The food pantry needs volunteers to work in a variety of positions including food delivery, sorting and facilitating open pantry days. More information can be found on the Cornbread and Roses website.

# Election season: What you need to know to vote this year

By Mackenzie Atkinson

The general election is upon us once again. Despite damage caused by Hurricane Helene, the North Carolina State Board of Elections did not extend voting registration deadline.

Although the registration deadline has passed, voters can still register and vote during North Carolina's in-person early voting period until Nov. 2. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5. Same-day registration is not available during this time.

To vote early or in-person you must be in the correct polling location for your precinct. To see your polling location visit [vt.ncsbe.gov/pplookup](https://vt.ncsbe.gov/pplookup).

The landscape and legislation has changed since the 2020 election. It's important to stay up-to-date with what you need to know in order to vote before or on Election Day.

North Carolina's voter identification law is now in full effect across the state after passing SB824 in

late 2018. North Carolina is one of 35 states that requires voters to present photo identification in order to vote at the polls during early voting and election day.

What will count as an ID:

- North Carolina driver's license
- State ID from the NCDMV (also called "non-operator ID")
- Driver's license or non-driver ID from another state, District of Columbia, or U.S. territory (only if the voter is registered in North Carolina within 90 days of the election)
- U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport card
- North Carolina voter photo ID card issued by a county board of elections

- College or university student ID approved by the State Board of Elections (this includes Cat Cards)
- State or local government or charter school employee ID approved by the State Board of Elections

Those who do not have a valid ID may vote with an ID Exception Form and a provisional ballot or vote with a provisional ballot and return to their county's Board of Elections office with their photo ID by Monday, Nov. 11, the day before Canvass day.

Absentee by mail in voting

The deadline to request an absentee ballot was Oct. 29. For your absentee ballot to be counted, it must be delivered to the county you are registered to vote in by 7:30 p.m., Nov. 5. To track where your ballot is visit [northcarolina.ballottrax.net/voter](https://northcarolina.ballottrax.net/voter).

# Safe or sorry: Electric scooters rise in popularity raising questions about safety

By Stewart Butler

Electric scooters are sparking some interest in Cullowhee. Personal transportation like this is nothing new – bicycles and skateboards have zoomed through campus for decades. Electric scooters aren't new either, but their popularity is.

The trend began a few years ago with athletes riding electric scooters around campus. For a while, it seemed to be athletes exclusively. Though it didn't take long for other students, staff and faculty to hop on the trend.

Electric scooters have skyrocketed in popularity in the last few years. Unfortunately, proper safety practices aren't taken when some riders take to the streets.

"If you're in the road, the same traffic laws apply to you that apply to everyone else... Stoplights, stop signs, the rest – if you choose to ignore those, you'll be held accountable," said UPD Assistant Chief Brian Thomas.

Parking Operations has outlined what is and isn't allowed. Both UPD and Parking Ops

have jurisdiction to enforce the codes.

"I don't have the resources to chase people around on scooters all day long," Thomas said. "We've already banned skateboards, and you see how effective that is."

Skateboards were banned in 2011 but have remained a popular mode of transportation since. A scooter ban would likely see similar results.

WCU Parking Regulations Article IX

Scooters and bicycles must:

- Always ride on the street, never on sidewalks and never in buildings.
- Stop and walk through intersections and crosswalks.
- Always yield to pedestrians, don't weave in between them.
- Never ride on pedestrian walkways.

Always park at bike racks.

- Never block entrances, doors or ADA access ramps.
- Do not park in the common area or hallway of any campus building, classroom or residence hall
- Always wear a helmet and protective gear while in use.



Photo courtesy of Stewart Butler.





Photo courtesy of Stewart Butler.

Safety is, of course, the immediate concern.

It's important to distinguish their functional differences from traditional forms of personal transportation. The basics create a recipe for problems, small wheels, high center of gravity and easy speed.

Electric scooters have small wheels, usually between six and eight inches in diameter. Solid tires are becoming increasingly common, too. Solid tires are puncture-proof, require little maintenance and can support great weight. They're often seen in warehouses, airports and other smooth, paved areas.

There's a reason you don't see solid tires on cars or bicycles, they're not meant for roads. Solid tires don't do much to soak up bumps, perform poorly in wet conditions and offer little lateral grip.

A high center of gravity makes the scooter inherently less stable than traditional means. Stability is further decreased by a shallow angle between the steering axis and front wheel – the angle which keeps bicycles upright – making one handed operation difficult. Scooter riders, like cyclists, are

required to indicate by hand signal.

Electric scooters use the same lithium-ion batteries that most devices use, though many videos of scooter fires and explosions have surfaced since their rise in popularity. If left in a walkway or exit, they may pose a fire hazard.

“Storing them is another issue altogether,

because they end up in doorways, stairwells and other places,” Thomas said.

The New York Fire Department reported 13 mobility-device fires in New York City in 2019. They reported 130 in 2022.

Despite this, when used properly scooters are a good thing. They allow for easy transportation, require little maintenance, take up little space and are mostly safe.

“It's easy to get around campus faster, and after practice my legs are always tired so I love being able to just scoot around,” said WCU sprinter Marie Harris. “There are some reckless riders on campus, it just is what it is.”

For the safety of pedestrians and riders themselves, riders should mind parking rules and take special care with road conditions and traffic.

“As long as people are respectful with them, I have no problem,” Thomas said. “Just try to have a little consideration for the people you're sharing this campus with.”



Photo courtesy of Stewart Butler.

# #WNCsmart: Shoreline expert Robert Young discusses the damages and repairs of Hurricane Helene

By Marrah Ste. Marie & Deanna Sipe

On Tuesday, Oct. 8, 12 days after Hurricane Helene arrived in Western North Carolina, reporters Deanna Sipe and Marrah Ste. Marie interviewed the director of the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines, Robert Young. The interview was broadcast live on 95.3 FM WWCU during the station's coverage of Hurricane Helene.

Young uses coastal science to study flood hazards, rising sea levels, coastal storm impacts and coastal erosion. The program educates individual homeowners to varying levels of government to help people understand how to better manage the coast.

**Dr. Young, we knew Hurricane Helene was going to be large before it came but nobody expected it to hit Western NC the way it did. Do you think there was any way for us to prepare for what happened.**

**Young:** Yes. While you're right, a lot of folks are stunned by what's happened, but the Greenville Spartanburg National Weather Service was telling us that this was going to be a historic event five days before it had got here. If you live in a place where you've never seen this level of precipitation and flooding, you can't really wrap your head around it and I'm not sure those of us who communicate flood risks did a good job getting it through to people, but the national weather service nailed it. So, we knew long before that there was going to be a lot of rain and there was

going to be historic flooding in a significant portion of Western North Carolina.

In addition to that, the state produces flood maps, and the federal government produces flood maps and it's all available online. Believe it or not, most of those flood maps did a decent job of outlining where the water could be during an event like Helene.

We have to take a hard look at why so many people died when we have a reasonable understanding for how [flooding] works. I get it, in most places we haven't seen something like this since 1916, but the information was available, we just weren't communicating it well enough, and people weren't internalizing that information in a way they really should have.

**Do you think the reason so many people did not understand the danger because it was such an unusual event of a storm coming all the from the coast to the mountains.**

**Young:** I think it's both of those things. It is an unusual event. This doesn't happen every year, although something similar happened three years ago during the remnants of tropical storm Fred in Waynesville and Haywood County. People died as the storm swept down the valley. That should've been a micro warning.

I don't want people to dismiss our

responsibility for living wisely in the flood plain in the mountains by saying, "this was a ridiculous event that nobody could've prepared for." This is the new normal in a world with changing climate, a warmer atmosphere and a warmer Gulf of Mexico. When you warm the atmosphere a little bit it can hold way more rain than it used to be able to hold and some of that rain is going to get up here in the mountains. We have to take some responsibility for understanding where the places are that are at risk of flooding and understand that climate is changing, and these kinds of events will be more common in the future than they were in the past.

**Based on your previous experiences with hurricanes, could you estimate how long it will take for Western North Carolina to rebuild from Hurricane Helene?**

**Young:** This is a really different setting from the coast of Florida or the coast of North Carolina. Getting into some of the remote valleys and the communities that have been damaged along NC Route 9 heading towards Lake Lure, the road is gone, it's just gone in so many places.

It is going to take a long time for us to recover from this. Some places are never going to entirely recover. You hope that we take the time, while we're rebuilding, to do it smarter so there isn't as much harm next time.



I've seen some hashtags out there like #WNCStrong or #AshevilleStrong, well I'm trying to circulate the #WNCSmart. Let's not rush into putting everything back where it was exactly like it was, then we're all going through this again 10 years from now, which is a possibility. I'm hoping that we take the time to build back not just quickly, but better.

**After this hurricane, do you think we should prepare better in the future, and what would that look like? Also, do you think there are areas where we shouldn't rebuild again?**

That's the scary question, isn't it? That's not what people want to talk about, people will want to put everything back as it was.

Let's take the Asheville River Arts District as an example. It's a pretty broad flood plain there. It was a wonderful place, it was both glittery and grimy at the same time but there's been extensive damage and flooding there. So, what do we put back and does it have to be there in that 100-year flood plain? A lot of it doesn't have to be where it was. Those are the hard questions to ask.

It's not my job to tell all these local communities what they should and shouldn't do. Although, there's a lot of public money flowing in. With the federal and state money going in, we should expect that some of that money will be used to lessen the damage next time.

**In Asheville there were a lot of things floating down the street in rivers, including houses. What causes a house to pick up and start floating down a river like that?**

When we take a step back, so much of our infrastructure in Western North Carolina is in flood plains because it was developed over a century ago. The rivers were the places where we put mills and dams, we were using the water for energy. The railroads were going

along the river because you couldn't put the railroads over the top of every mountain and it's expensive to go through them. Around the railroads built warehouses and towns. Here in Jackson County, they moved the county seat from Webster, which is in a really safe place, to Sylva along Scott's Creek because the railroad went through there. So, we have this legacy of development in the floodplains. A lot of those buildings are old, so they're really sensitive to the flood waters, they're more likely to go down the river than something we just built a few years ago.

Also, in our floodplains in the mountains we tend to put a lot of low income housing there.

Things that are not elevated and are sitting on a slab. A lot of those went down the river. One hopes that there weren't people in those places when they went down the river. My fear is there were.

It's a complicated mix of how the mountains were settled by us and the fact that is where the flat land is. In some areas, that's where you can put a trailer easily for people who have trouble finding affordable housing, which is an issue in this part of the world.

*To listen to the full interview please visit [westerncarolinian.com/2024/10/28/wncsmart](https://westerncarolinian.com/2024/10/28/wncsmart)*



Photo courtesy of Stewart Butler.

# November Arts and Entertainment Events

**Friday Films: Kinky Boots- Nov 1 at Jackson County Public Library at 1 p.m.**

Lively romp about a female impersonator who helps an uptight Englishman save his failing shoe company by designing fetish footwear. PG-13. Community Room.

**WNC Pottery Festival- Nov 2 at Bridge Park in Sylva from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.**

Selected as one of the Southeast's Top 20 Events and regarded annually as one of the most popular arts events in the mountains, the festival attracts several thousand pottery aficionados each year. Admission is \$5 and includes raffle ticket. Children under 12 free. Pets not admitted. More information at [www.wncpotteryfestival.com](http://www.wncpotteryfestival.com).

**Shane Meade, Live at Santé Wine Bare- Nov 3 at 5 p.m.- 7 p.m.**

The soulful singer songwriter and Shane Meade & the Sound frontman shares his original blend of soul-infused folk rock.

**ARTrageos- Nov 5 at Jackson County Public Library at 4 p.m.**

Let's get creative together! Join us as we learn, explore, and get a little bit messy making art.

**Yoga and Guided Meditation with Jazmyne and Sarah- Nov 5 at Hunter Library CMC from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Join us in the Curriculum Materials Center of the Hunter Library on November 5th for a yoga and guided meditation session with Jazmyne and Sarah! All abilities are welcome. Bring a mat or use one of ours.

**Echoes Across the Smokies: A Night of Bluegrass, Ballads, and Tall Tales- Nov 7 at Bardo Arts Center at 7:30 p.m.**

This enchanting evening begins with storytelling trio Sheila Kay Adams, Donna Ray Norton, and William Ritter as they share ballads that will transport audience members through the generations. Headlining the event are the Kruger Brothers with a string quartet. With a unique blend of bluegrass, folk, and classical influences, their music flows like a gentle river, guiding listeners on a journey through a rich tapestry of emotions. Pricing and tickets at [arts.wcu.edu/tickets](http://arts.wcu.edu/tickets)

**Scrapbooking Night- Nov 7 in the UC Grand Room from 6 p.m.- 10 p.m.**

Join Last Minute Productions for Scrapbook Night! Bring your own photos to document your favorite

memories! Notebooks and other scrapbooking materials will be provided (while supplies last)! Check out our Instagram or Facebook for updates. All events are subject to change.

**Fridy Films: Deadpool- Nov 8 at Jackson County Public Library at 1:30 p.m.**

Deadpool is now happily forgotten as Wade Wilson tries to live an ordinary but more peaceful life. However, things are upended when the Time Variance Authority forces him on a mission to save his home universe from destruction. Donning the Deadpool identity again, he finds Wolverine to hopefully help him. But Deadpool's first real mission is to convince an embittered Wolverine that the universe is worth saving. Rated R.

**Bourbon Club - Nov 10 at The Cut Cocktail Lounge at 5 p.m.**

Bourbon Club! Where we taste 6 bourbons or whiskies and eat delicious charcuterie boards. An introduction to each tasting will be presented by Cut owner Jacque Laura-Large. Space is limited so secure your spot now! In person at The Cut Cocktail Lounge or via Facebook messenger. Tickets are \$65.



**Basic DND with the Creative writing Club- November 11 in University Center room 214 from 6 p.m.- 10 p.m.**

For everyone interested in learning DnD, writing character and other parts of writing and playing.

**Sylva Stitchers Club- Nov 14 at Jackson County Public Library at 6 p.m.**

Like to knit, crochet, or do other needle crafts? All are welcome to join this group to learn, work on your latest project, or help a beginner develop their skills. Every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the Month in The Story Time Room on the 1st floor of the library. Stitchers 12 and Under Must Be Accompanied by an Adult.

**Free & Open to the Public - All Programs Are Co-Sponsored by the Friends of the Jackson County Public Library**

**Pink Pony Club: Chappell Roan Night- Nov 15 at The Orange Peel at 9 p.m.**

Club 90s presents Pink Pony Club: Chappell Roan Night. Admission is \$18-\$25. Ages 18+ only. Tickets at [www.etix.com/ticket/servlet/s/38212146](http://www.etix.com/ticket/servlet/s/38212146)

**Violet the Musical- Nov 21- 24 at WCU Auditorium at 7:30 pm (Nov 24 showing at 3:00 p.m.)**

This musical follows a scarred woman from Western North Carolina who embarks on a cross-country bus trip to be healed by a minister... discovering the true meaning of beauty along the way. Tickets at

**Ashevillecon 2024- Nov 23 at Holiday Inn Asheville-Biltmore West from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**

Join us here in Asheville, NC for our first show. Guests, Vendors and Attractions. Fun for the Whole Family and Kids Free. Hue Cosplay & Video Game Contests. For more information, please visit [www.ashevillecon.com](http://www.ashevillecon.com).

**Spice Club: Epazote- Nov 26 at Jackson County Public Library at 6 p.m.**

Spice Appreciation Club is a monthly program that gives participants the opportunity to cook with an extraordinary flavor. Participants pick up a spice kit at the Reference Desk and meet on Tuesday, November 26th. It's like a book club, but instead of reading we're cooking. Many participants bring food made with the spice to share but it is not a requirement. This month we're cooking with Epazote. To reserve a spice kit, please call the library at (828) 586-2016 or email [JCPL-Adults@fontanalib.org](mailto:JCPL-Adults@fontanalib.org).

**Goble on the Green- Nov 28 at The Village Green in Cashiers from 9 a.m.-11 a.m.**

Turkey, cornbread dressing, pumpkin pie, football, and family time... there are so many reasons to love Thanksgiving! Did we mention pie? Each family has its own activities and traditions to look forward to. The Village Green offers a 5K Run/Walk turkey-trot, Gobble On the Green. Register at <https://runsignup.com/Race/NC/Cashiers/GobbleontheGreen>.

**Mountain Artisans Hard Candy Christmas- Nov 29 & 30 at the Ramsey Center from 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.**

Regional artisans have their handmade on display for sale in this folk and heritage craft show. The show has everything from quilters to soap makers, basket makers, leather craftsmen, master jewelers and more. \$5 admission, children under 12 free.

**Christmas in Jackson County- Nov 29 at the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce at 6 p.m.**

The annual Christmas in Sylva celebration begins with the official lighting of the Sylva Christmas tree at the fountain on Main Street followed by a holiday-themed concert by local rockers Terri Lynn Queen and Scott Baker on the front porch of the chamber. There will be free hot chocolate provided. The annual Holiday Fireworks will be shot at 7:30 p.m.

# Fraternities to complete Narcan training

By Max Poku-Kankam

Greek life hosts many social events, many of which can become extremely chaotic. However, fraternity brothers are completing Narcan training to help ensure safety at socials.

Jackson County is no stranger to drug charges. Between May 8 and May 12, the Jackson County Sheriff’s Office led an operation that led to the arrest of 15 people. During the operation, 109 grams of methamphetamine, 88 grams of cocaine, 44.6 grams of fentanyl, nearly a pound of marijuana, 86 THC cartridges, 37.5 assorted prescription pills, 12 ecstasy (MDMA) tablets, 3.5 suboxone units and 3.5 grams of psilocybin (psychedelic) mushrooms were seized.

Due to the circulation of drugs in Jackson County, fraternity brothers are encouraged to carry Naloxone and be properly trained to

administer it at their socials.

Naloxone, more commonly known as Narcan, is a nasal spray that is used to reverse opioid overdoses.

With the hurricane, the day of the training has been postponed to a non-specified date yet, but fraternity members are already getting ready for the training.

“My goal is to get at least 75% of my fraternity there,” said Matthew Aniva, the president of the Pi Lambda Phi.

Outside of Narcan training some fraternities are exercising extra caution by creating plans in the case of an overdose at a social.

“If someone overdoses, we’ll make sure to take them upstairs and provide support to

them, while also getting law enforcement to the place,” said Avina.

When asked for an interview, the Department of Greek Student Engagement and Development said that they “encourage all student organizations to prioritize safety at any events they host, the University does not sponsor, supervise, or monitor private social events.”

So, fraternities have been the ones to plan and start the narcan training for their members to provide safety at their social events. Narcan will be a step in the direction of the safety of WCU students at Greek Life social events.

“There’s still so much more we can do,” said Avina. “We’re not 100% safe, but we are well on our way.”

# Cherokee Mini Lesson

Western Carolina University sits on land that once belonged to the Cherokee people and was called Tali Tsisgwayahi, meaning Two Sparrows Town. In 2019, the Cherokee people declared a state of emergency for the language, as the number of Cherokee speakers dwindled. Efforts to reclaim

and revitalize the language have become integrated into many parts of Cherokee society. Since fall 2024, Western Carolina University offers a Cherokee language minor to aid in the preservation of the language. The written form of Cherokee language seen above was created by Sequoyah from

1809 to 1821. It is referred to as syllabary, as each character represents a syllable in the language. As the weather cools off and we celebrate the harvest season, here are a few words you can learn to describe the world around you.

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Uligohvsdi (oo-lee-go-hu-sdee) - fall

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Uyvtsa (oo-hyu-jah) - it is cold

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Iya (ee-yah) - Pumpkin