

Local volunteers step up for Hurricane Helene victims

Pilots, truckers, businesses answer calls for relief By Michael Standaert - North Dakota News Cooperative

Several North Dakota pilots, truckers and other businesses voluntarily ferried relief supplies to areas devastated by Hurricane Helene in the past few weeks.



James Owen (right) with Dave Garris, airport manager at Johnson County Airport, one of the distribution points he delivered to. "Garris worked from sun up until sun down unloading planes," said Owen. Contributed by Owen.

The hurricane tore a wide swath of death and destruction across several southeastern states in late September. It will take months and likely years to rebuild infrastructure, homes and normal lives again.

With over 230 deaths confirmed across six states and nearly 100 still missing in North Carolina alone, the death toll will keep rising.

For one volunteer pilot, the number of small planes in the sky from all across the country was reminiscent of a mini, airborne "Dunkirk" operation -- the famous evacuation of Allied troops from France to the U.K., aided by hundreds of small boats and vessels during WWII.

"The only way to access some of these communities was by small plane," said Casey Veil, a North Dakota pilot who flew supplies to impacted areas. "So it was really neat to see the number of small planes doing the same thing."

Veil and his good friend Treven Iverson of Jamestown flew supplies down on Oct. 4, initially to Mountain City, Tenn., and were then routed by volunteers through Burlington, N.C., to shuttle supplies there.

"I saw a Facebook post of somebody else doing this, and I thought, man, is it really that easy? I can go load up the plane and head down there and potentially help somebody," Veil said.

So that's what he and Iverson did, buying supplies themselves at the local Walmart after checking with an organization called Convoy of Hope to see what was needed.

"It was a humbling experience," said Veil. "It was just tragic to see what these people are going through. Their houses and livelihoods are gone."

James Owen, a pilot from Gackle, also came across calls to action on Facebook and connected with the operator of a flight school in North Carolina coordinating efforts to fly supplies into the mountainous western parts of the state. At the time, many roads in those areas were impassable and communities remained isolated.

Owen also initially flew into Mountain City and later flew six supply flights into affected areas out of a hub established in Burlington by Brian Fredrickson, owner of the flight school Fredrickson Aviation.

He came across Fredrickson's group on Oct. 2, then notified the pastor at his church, Temple Baptist in Jamestown, about his intentions to fly down with relief supplies. That set off a chain reaction of goodwill donations flooding into the church. In the ensuing hours, Owen gathered the supplies and quickly began his flight to the area.

"The reason I wanted to help is because I felt the Lord was calling me to help out," Owen said. "He has given me talents and abilities, and has blessed our family with an airplane, so I have everything needed to help people in need."

Some landings were a challenge, according to Owen, including clearing a 6,500-foot mountain pass and dropping another 4,500 feet to reach a landing strip.

"I'm a flatlander, and I'll tell you what, that was the most intense flight of my life," Owen said.

Owen saw areas flooded out, semi-trailers blown over, and an entire mountainside of trees laid flat by the hurricane.

"Talking with the folks down in North Carolina at the time, we were the farthest they had received any help from," Owen said.

Pilots from the area and across the country flew around 125 flights and another six semi-trailers full of supplies were also driven by the group into impacted areas, Fredrickson said. He estimates they moved over 300,000 lbs of supplies.

"At one point we had about 40 or 50 volunteers," Fredrickson said. "We were probably flying 30 missions each day."

Fredrickson said people came together, even if they didn't have friends and family in impacted areas, using social media to amplify their efforts.

Since it took time for federal officials to activate emergency relief, volunteers were crucial to the survival of the most remote communities, he said.

"In one of the communities we flew into, our pilots were, for about two or three days, the only ones feeding about 500 people a day," Fredrickson said.

On the ground

Another similar, if more terrestrial effort, came from Shauna and Freddie Gentry, owners of S&F Trucking Company Halliday, N.D.

Freddie Gentry, originally from hard-hit Marshall, N.C., had family and friends in the mountains who were impacted by the devastation and he knew they needed help. During the first several days his relatives were unreachable because of the damage.

"When this happened, it was obvious what we needed to do," Shauna Gentry said.

At first, the Gentrys were going to drive a motorcycle trailer full of supplies down to help those in need. But after putting out calls for supplies in their community and around the state, they decided a full semi-trailer was needed.

They, along with help from volunteers from oilfield trucking company Mann Energy, set up drop-off locations in Bismarck, Minot, Dickinson, Carrington, Keene, New Rockford, Killdeer, and Manning.

The Gentrys set out on Oct. 21 to take the goods to Black

NOTICE OF GENERAL ELECTIONS

Notice is given that on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, at the polling places in LaMoure County, an election will be held election of state, district, and county officers and for voting on Constitutional and Statutory measures.

Absentee/Vote by Mail applications were mailed from the Office of the County Auditor on September 16, 2024. Persons not receiving an application may obtain one from the Office of the County Auditor.

Two polling locations will be open on Election Day, November 5, 2024. These locations are as follows: BankNorth Mall Community Room, LaMoure, ND and Edgeley National Guard Armory, Edgeley, ND. The hours will be from 9 AM to 7 PM Central Time on Election Day, November 5, 2024. Ballots for all precincts will be available.

A voter assistive device is available at each polling location and by appointment in the Office of the LaMoure County Auditor. A Secure drop box is located outside the east entrance to the LaMoure County Courthouse, 202 4th Ave NE, LaMoure, ND. Mail ballots must be postmarked no later than November 4, 2024, or placed in the secure drop box by 5:00 pm CT on November 4, 2024.

The arrangement of candidate names appearing on ballots in your precinct may vary from the published sample ballots, depending upon the precinct in which you reside.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the Seal of LaMoure County at LaMoure, North Dakota, this 19th day of October, 2024.

Jan Hamlin SEAL

LaMoure County Auditor Publish October 23 and October 30, 2024

Mountain, N.C., for eventual distribution.

"We've gotten so many nice, useful donations, and people have reached out from all over North Dakota," Shauna Gentry said. "People have been so giving you know, it's unbelievable, like huge boxes of diapers and 100 small shampoos and body washes. You can't even imagine the amount of donations this has brought in."

Later in the supply effort they shifted toward asking for more specific items like heaters, camping gear, baby bottles and diapers, and items that could be useful for months since recovery efforts will take some time, she said.

Shauna Gentry said people who still want to donate have a wide range of choices, but recommended the Facebook page run by Cajun Navy 2016 -- a volunteer group that initially formed when Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana in 2016 -- that provides links to various donation groups.

Tagline: The North Dakota News Cooperative is a non-profit news organization providing reliable and independent reporting on issues and events that impact the lives of North Dakotans. The organization increases the public's access to quality journalism and advances news literacy across the state. For more information about NDNC or to make a charitable contribution, please visit newscoopnd.org.



Casey Veil (left, black shirt) and Treven Iverson (right, sunglasses) of Jamestown pose with volunteers and the supplies they flew into a distribution point in Jefferson, N.C. on Oct. 5. Contributed by Veil.

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA LAMOURE COUNTY GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT NOVEMBER 5, 2024. Includes sections for Governor and Lt. Governor, County Commissioner, State Auditor, State Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner, Public Service Commissioner, and various State Representative and Senator positions.

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA LAMOURE COUNTY MEASURES BALLOT. Includes sections for Constitutional Measure No. 1, 2, and 3, and Initiated Statutory Measure No. 5. Each measure includes a description, fiscal impact, and voting options (Yes/No).