

# HURRICANE MATTHEW

Stories from Lenoir County's record breaking flood from 2016





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**“This is still a life-threatening flood,”**

Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail said.

**“This flood will touch the lives of all of our citizens,”**

Lenoir County Chairman Craig Hill said.

**“At least we have a couple of days to prepare, this time, that’s the good thing. It shouldn’t be nowhere near the ordeal we had last time because we’re not going to have anything to really clean up.”**

Kings Restaurant owner Joe Hargitt said.

**“I didn’t expect anything like this,”**

said Kinston resident Bryan Garrick.

**“The thing that we are noticing is that people are listening,”**

said Chad Rouse, of the Kinston Police Department, Wednesday as the effort to notify residents on Cedar Lane began. **“They are preparing, they are packing their belongings and they are evacuating. They know what to expect.”**

**“We just want to be sure we are prepared for the worst,”** Minnie Walters, a resident on Cedar Lane, has been packing her home with the help of her family since a few days earlier.

**“I’d rather knock on your door today than bring the boat on Saturday.”** BJ Murphy said

**“I’ve seen some complacency because of the experience of one flood (Floyd) and 70 degrees and beautiful weather,”** Murphy said. **“There have been some — not all, but some — who just want to ride it out and see how it goes. I’m concerned that in two or three days the river will rise higher than it is right now, and people won’t be as prepared as they think they are.”**

**“Looking at the lessons they learned from Floyd, when the river here crests, it is expected to split this area into two parts, a north side and a south side. This is where people on the south side can be brought if they need emergency care.”** Rob Gover, site coordinator of the disaster relief area, said.

**“Nobody is telling us what is going on,”** said resident Wesley Turner said. **“Is FEMA going to come in and help us? Is there any kind of plan in place? I don’t know.”**

Susie Jenkins, owner of the Kinstonian Family Buffet, estimated the damage to her business to be between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

**“The water is out of my building, but we’ve had to tear out every wall in here,”** she said. **“I’m devastated. I don’t know if I’ll ever... I don’t know what to do. We’re waiting on the insurance.”**

## Editor's note:

Every person that walked into The Free Press newsroom in the days leading up to the flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew received a copy of the “flood book” produced by the newspaper in 1999 following the devastating flood caused by Hurricane Floyd. As soon as the flood waters started to recede and life began returning to some normalcy in Lenoir County people started asking for a new “flood book.”

Although some residents remember the damage, devastation, and water lines left behind by Floyd, for many this was a first time experience. One of the overwhelming comments we heard during Hurricane Matthew flooding was from residents in their 20s and 30s who lived in Lenoir County during Floyd but had few detailed memories of the 1999 flood. Information became pivotal for all the residents of eastern North Carolina who had their homes, friends, roads, and lives impacted by the flood.

GateHouse Media, Inc. like many companies in Lenoir County started planning for the potential for devastating flooding as Hurricane Matthew approached North Carolina. With the institutional knowledge of covering the 1999 Hurricane Floyd flooding in Kinston, plans were made to bring in reporters, photographers, and editors from other regions to serve and cover the Lenoir County community and the communities of eastern

North Carolina.

We aimed to give more than weather updates and flood levels; our job was to tell the stories of people impacted by the flood, to find out what was happening, and what was coming next. The dedication of the incoming journalists and the staff of The Free Press can be seen in these pages. A special mention is needed for The Free Press chief photographer Janet Carter who was a senior staff member on the ground and was instrumental in directing news coverage during the flood and the production of this 2016 “flood book.”

Every resident can relate to the difference in the 2016 flooding of Kinston with the prevalence of social media. The news media used social media to report community news as did local governmental agencies and residents. Even without power for several days in some part of the county, residents used their smartphones and social media to show the impact of the flood and to get their information.

The flooding event of 2016 caused by Hurricane Matthew brought this community together and showed the true heart and dedication of Lenoir County residents by the way everyone helped their neighbors and friends.

Thank you to our readers for supporting and reading The Free Press and this book.

*Chris Segal, Editor*



## How this book works:

**F**loyd came slowly and then all at once, dumping rain across the region before flash flooding during a 12-hour period forced the sudden evacuation of residents throughout Kinston and Lenoir County, with some remembering drifting on boats out of Lincoln City by a cemetery in the night. The storm caused 500-year-flooding on the Contentnea Creek and 100-year flooding on the Neuse River at Kinston.

Matthew's floodwaters rose steadily during the blue-skied days that followed in hurricane's wake. The Lumber River devastated Lumberton, and the Black River washed residents out of Pender County as the water that would eventually lift the Neuse steadily worked its way downstream, toward the Pamlico Sound.

Kinston and Lenoir County were especially vulnerable to things like catastrophic floods happening. When a storm

like Matthew or Floyd dumps rain across the Piedmont area, the rainwater runs downhill toward the coast. Once it reaches the coastal plain – which has cities like Burgaw, Greenville, and Kinston – that water slows down.

The book is divided into three sections making it a time capsule of Hurricane Matthew flooding. The date at the top of each page indicates to the reader what day the news was happening. The dates also show how there were three stages of flooding: preparing for Hurricane Matthew and potential flooding, the flood, and recovery from the flood.

The 2016 Hurricane Matthew flood book encapsulates the stories, photos, and news from the flood so that when the next 500-year-flood approaches eastern North Carolina and Lenoir, Greene, and Jones counties, there will be documentation and a roadmap of what may happen again.



## Governor visits emergency center in Kinston ahead of expected hurricane

**Gov. Pat McCrory** takes a phone call from President Obama while touring the N.C. Emergency Management Eastern Branch Office in Kinston Thursday. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**W**hen it comes to preparing for Hurricane Matthew along the North Carolina coast, there is a less than 100-mile window for error.

“Even though the hurricane is still scheduled to take a right turn to the east above Charleston, we realize that’s only 80-100 miles away from the NC border,” Gov. Pat McCrory said from Kinston on Thursday. “If there’s any change in that, that could cause us some major, major issues.

McCrory came to Kinston Thursday afternoon to visit the North Carolina Emergency Management Eastern Branch office.

While at the office, the governor met with local and state officials and got a look at the region’s plans should the Matthew not follow its projected course.

Emergency service teams are set to be

deployed to Williamston, New Bern and Elizabeth City.

Of particular concern for the governor was the Windsor area, which experienced flooding the week prior, and is expected to get more than five inches of rain.

In addition to prepping his own state, McCrory said he has offered helicopters and swift water rescue teams to South Carolina, to help with emergency efforts as the state prepares to be hit by the hurricane.

During his visit, McCrory also spoke by phone to President Barack Obama about hurricane preparations.

“It shows how busy these last two weeks was,” McCrory said. “I talked to the President last week during the Charlotte incidents and had a very good conversation with him there. Who would have known I’d be talking to him a week later during this potential hurricane. I think he’s doing his job in contacting all the governors of each state. He

just wanted reassurance that his people are on the ground and doing the right thing.”

In addition to preparing the region for the possible hurricane, the staff at the Emergency Management Office said they are also closely monitoring the Neuse and Cashie Rivers, which are prone to flooding.

Dianne Curtis, manager of the NC. Emergency Management Eastern Branch office, said both rivers have been down lately, and should be able to handle the expected rainfall without flooding.

“The trick is the rain isn’t what makes them flood, it’s water coming into the river,” Curtis said. “It’s the run-off water from the basins, and we are monitoring all of that very closely.” ■

# Hurricane Matthew nears NC

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**L**enoir County officials are opening the emergency shelter at Lenoir Community College this morning.

“We are opening the shelter due to the possibility of flash flooding in low-lying areas, so people who live in those area have a place to stay,” said Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail.

The National Weather Service issued a tropical storm warning for Lenoir County.

“The main concern is heavy rain leading to some flooding issues,” Lara Pagano, National Weather Service at Newport-Morehead City meteorologist, said.

Pagano said the 8-10 inches of rain could be problematic and lead to flash flooding into Sunday morning.

Lenoir County officials are continuing to follow the category 3 storm that is continuing to move north-northwest at 12 mph.

Lenoir County 911 operations manager Paige Johnson said the county could experience tropical storm force winds of 35-45 mph winds with gusts 50-60 mph.

“We are under a tropical storm warning now and are to expect heavy rain early Saturday morning through Sunday,” Johnson said.

Officials are concerned with the heavy rainfall leading to significant flooding and are advising residents to use caution while driving.

“Right now we are just monitoring the situation,” Johnson said.

One piece of advice Lenoir County Emergency Service officials is offering is for residents who are driving in the storm to turn around and not attempt to drive through a puddle if you can’t see the bottom.

Pagano said besides the roads flooding from rainfall; residents could see an issue with the Neuse River rising and possibly flooding.

“As we get into Sunday and Monday the river could really start to rise,” she said.

The state has continued to prepare for the storm as Gov. Pat McCrory issued a state of emergency for 66 counties on Monday.

“Already, we’ve seen substantial flooding in eastern and central parts of the state from recent rain events, and many areas are already saturated,” McCrory said. “We are taking this storm seriously, and I encourage residents and visitors do the same.”

Currently, the Red Cross is mobilizing trained volunteers, supplies and equipment



in Eastern North Carolina.

“Response vehicles are on alert and volunteers are ready to potentially open shelters, if the need should rise,” Brittany Jennings, American Red Cross regional communications officer, said.

Officials are advising residents to start preparing an emergency kit and to be aware of what is going on with the storm. ■

**Donnie Best and his son Donovan** of Kinston fill coolers with ice in case of a power outage as rain and wind from Hurricane Matthew hovers over East New Bern Road on Saturday. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

## Lenoir County orders curfew

Due to Hurricane Matthew, Lenoir County has issued an overnight curfew. The curfew will be in effect until 6 a.m. Sunday.

Residents are encouraged to stay home and continue to monitor local media outlets for the latest information. The curfew will be enforced by law enforcement, according to Lenoir County officials.

**Dennis Smith** carries his umbrella and a few groceries in the basket of 3-wheeler Saturday along Washington Avenue. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press



# Kinston may see major flooding

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**L**enoir County declared a state of emergency Saturday morning in the wake of Matthew.

The Lenoir County Emergency Operations Center is open and staffed 24 hours a day for the duration of this event to monitor the situation and respond to the needs of the residents of Lenoir County.

“This is still a life-threatening flood,” Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail said.

According to the National Weather Service at Newport-Morehead City, Hurricane Matthew will bring deteriorating weather including winds, heavy rain and flooding.

“This will be a serious situation for the next 24-hours,” said John Elardo, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service at Newport-Morehead City.

Kinston and Lenoir County are forecasted for an estimated 12 inches of rain with winds around 35 mph and gusts averaging over 50 mph.

“Residents could see some road closures due to flooding,” Elardo said.

Emergency Services officials are advising residents who live in a low-lying area that is prone to flash flooding, to closely monitor conditions and be prepared to evacuate immediately if the need arises.

“If you see the water around you start to raise get out as quickly as you can,” he said.

The Neuse River is expected to reach major flood stage throughout this week.

“Between the heavy rain and the water from upstream we are looking at severe flooding around 20 feet,” Elardo said.

Lenoir County officials are continuing to follow the category 1 storm that Gov. Pat McCrory warned has the potential to bring the worst flooding in the state since Floyd hit in 1999.

Residents are urged to stay off the roads Saturday and Sunday as heavy rains will likely cause ponding of water and flooding of roadways that will lead to extremely dan-



gerous driving conditions.

“Do not attempt to drive through a flooded area,” Dail said.

Lenoir County has opened on a shelter at Lenoir Community College in the

Student Center, building two ‘Only service animals will be allowed in the shelter with their owner,’ Dail said. “All other pets will be housed on the college campus.”

Officials said residents who bring their



## City, county officials warn of more flooding

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

Lenoir County and Kinston city officials hosted a press conference Sunday, about flooding hazards.

The after effects of Hurricane Matthew are expected to cause the Neuse River to rise to flood levels.

"At this time we are preparing as we have been told our Neuse River could reach 30 feet by Friday," said Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail.

River levels are projected to be 3 feet more than Floyd's record of 27.7 ft.

Officials are asking residents who live in flood zones to begin preparing their property and family members for flooding and evacuation.

Although some residents were not affected by Floyd in 1999 officials ask all residents to be prepared.

"This is very serious, and we want to treat it as such," said Kinston Mayor B.J. Murphy.

Officials are advising residents to stay out of flood waters, stay off roads and to be aware of their surroundings.

"This flood will touch the lives of all of our citizens," Lenoir County Chairman Craig Hill said.

pet to the shelter, will need to bring a three-day supply of food per pet, bowls, crates and leashes.

Kinston Public Services has not seen any power outages or damaged trees yet

but have storm water crews and electric crews on standby.

Officials are advising residents to start preparing an emergency kit and to be aware of what is going on with the storm. ■

A banner is posted in front of the **CSS Neuse II** as the city braces for massive flooding after Hurricane Matthew. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



## Queen Street Bridge construction stops for Matthew

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

Both the Queen Street bridge and sewer work going on down Queen Street will be on hold this weekend. NCDOT Resident Director Aaron Bullard said the opening day will be around Oct. 17.

"We were hoping to finish some paving this today," Bullard said Friday. "We have pushed that off till Monday."

Bullard said the main part of finishing this stage of the project is completing the paving.

"The main thing is paving but we are also trying to complete some of the tie-ins as well as, the road markings once the paving is completed, and signs," Bullard said.

Queen Street bridge construction began last August and has had previous delays — to the frustration of residents and business owners.

Once this phase is completed one lane

on each side of the bridge will be drivable. Residents were originally supposed to be able to drive on the bridge in May, but multiple delays from utility relocation, heavy rainfall and the recent concrete testing has pushed the date back further.

Previously NCDOT officials were working towards an opening around the week of Oct. 3.

After the road is open to residents, construction, crews will continue to complete the bridge, reset the signal system and prepare the roadway on U.S. 70 and the bridge. Bullard said officials are still planning for mid-December opening

For construction on Queen Street, Cajenn Construction crews headed back to Georgia Thursday and are hoping to return Monday to continue the sewer replacement project.

"The storm shouldn't impact the project," Kinston Public Services Assistant Director Steve Miller said. "Georgia is seeing more of

**The Neuse River** inches closer to the top of the King Street bridge as onlookers take in a view from Herritage Street. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

an impact from the storm so hopefully they get back here alright."

City officials are watching the area to make sure they are not washed out.

"There is a metal plate that crews place over the holes to make sure the hole doesn't fill with water and parts are not blown away in the wind," Miller said.

Rhonda Barwick, Kinston Public Services director, said contractors normally don't work in the rain and are used to securing sites for weather. ■

# Officials predict massive flooding

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**T**he City of Kinston and Lenoir County officials ordered a mandatory evacuation for residents and businesses along the Neuse River Monday afternoon.

According to the press release sent out by Lenoir County Emergency Services as of Monday at 5 a.m. the Neuse River at Kinston was at 20.8 feet. The National Weather Service at Newport-Morehead has forecasted a rise to 26.3 feet on Friday.

Lenoir County officials said severe impacts comparable to flooding from Floyd in 1999.

"We are encouraging individuals to start preparing now," said Kinston City Manager Tony Sears.

Officials are asking residents who live in flood zones to begin preparing their property and family members for flooding and evacuation.

Lenoir County currently has one shelter open for displaced residents in Lenoir County at Lenoir Community College. Pets will be accommodated at the shelter, but only service animals will be allowed in the shelter with their owner. Officials said pets will be housed on the campus.

Officials are asking if you do bring your pet that bring a three-day supply of food per pet, bowls, crates, and leashes. Owners will be responsible for their own pets.

While Lenoir County remains under a State of Emergency, Red Cross volunteers working in the area providing food, water and necessities to displaced residents.



Supply stations will be set up on both sides of the river for relocated residents.

The flooding and other aftermaths from Hurricane Matthew has left both power outages and road damage.

NCDOT officials and Lenoir County Emergency Services have said that major highways such as U.S. 70 and N.C. 11 will not be closing unless they have running water over them.

Many residents still do not have power. City of Kinston utilities and Duke Energy both have crews out working to reinstate power.

Duke Energy has said many of their customers in Lenoir County will not have power until Sunday.

"There are more workers on their way but please understand if they can't get to the lines because of water or roads there's not much they can do," Lenoir County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety said. "I too am without power and have been since 5 p.m.

**Mayor BJ Murphy** listens intently to **Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail** as the city and county discuss Neuse River flooding hazards at a special press conference at City Hall. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

Saturday, but I'm so appreciative and thankful for everyone out doing their best in this historic storm."

City officials are working on restoring power as quickly as they can and have brought in additional crews from Rocky Mount and Wake Forest.

"We don't have a timeline at this moment, but we are working as fast as we can to reinstate power to all of our customers," Kinston Public Services Director Rhonda Barwick said. ■



# How flooding happens

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**W**hen there is no more room in the river, the water will flood the earth.

That is the projection for later this week, when the water of the Neuse River is expected to rise to more than 26 feet in the wake of Hurricane Matthew, the highest the river has been since Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

The level at which the river is high enough to flood is 14 feet. Monday, river waters broke the 20-foot mark, and are expected to continue to rise.

Despite no rain falling since the storms passing on Saturday, water levels of the river continue to rise, thanks to a combination of water runoff and ground water feeding into the Neuse.

"You have to do a calculation there, and if the volume (of water) exceeds what the river can hold, the water has to go somewhere," said Hans Paerl, professor of marine and environmental sciences at the UNC Chapel

Hill Institute of Marine Sciences in Moorehead City.

Paerl has been studying the Neuse since the 1980s, and said he and his colleagues are closely eyeing the rise of the waters in Kinston.

While a lot of comparisons are being drawn between Floyd and the expected flooding resulting from Matthew, Paerl said it's hard to tell what to expect from this week's expected flooding.

"The issue with Floyd was that the storm stuck around quite a bit longer than this storm did," he said. "(Floyd) got stuck over the eastern part of the state for some time before moving on, and it also covered a much larger section of the state."

The difference in time is an important one in determining how much flooding can occur, as one of the factors in determining how much water will overflow is breaking down exactly how much rain fell, how much the ground could absorb and what will end up in the river.

But the flooding is only part of the problem.

**A National Guard vehicle** drives through high water along NC11 at Skinner's Bypass Tuesday as floodwater overtakes the road. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

*The Neuse River is expected to break 26.2 feet, a foot and a half less than after Hurricane Floyd, by the end of the week.*

Floodwaters can carry environmental concerns, from waste water entering the water system to potentially harmful microorganisms working their way into the area.

Once the river does overflow, Paerl said it will be his job to help test the water and learn just what can be found in it.

The Neuse River is expected to break 26.2 feet, a foot and a half less than after Hurricane Floyd, by the end of the week. ■



A large portion of **US-70 East** collapsed due to flood water between Piggly Wiggly and King's Restaurant. The major thoroughfare reopened with one lane traveling in each direction Tuesday afternoon. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

# Businesses prepare for flood

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**B**usinesses throughout Kinston and Lenoir County are closing their doors temporarily in preparation for flood waters after Hurricane Matthew.

Many businesses along U.S. 70 E have already evacuated their property or were finishing up Tuesday.

Kings Restaurant closed at 2 p.m. Tuesday. Owner Joe Hargitt said they will reopen once the waters have receded.

"We're working on getting all the equipment and furniture out now," he said.

All of Kings food is being taken to the take out stores throughout town that have power and are remaining open.

"At least we have a couple of days to

prepare, this time, that's the good thing," Hargitt said. "It shouldn't be nowhere near the ordeal we had last time because we're not going to have anything to really clean up."

The Piggly Wiggly in Jackson Heights is still without power and not open to customers.

"The only thing we have now is lights," John King, the store manager said. "I don't have refrigeration or registers."

Tuesday, employees were cleaning out the grocery store after a majority of their refrigerated foods.

"We're getting some stuff, dry foods, from the store on 70," King said.

The U.S. 70 location has been gathering their dry, non-perishable foods, to bring it to the Jackson Heights location.

"We're trying to get prepared to open," King said. "We are just waiting on our

power. Hopefully, we can get some stuff from our supplier, but they are in bad shape too."

Although the store is closed to customers, the Jackson Heights Piggly Wiggly are providing necessities to the Sandy Bottom Fire Department.

The Barnhill Contracting shop on U.S. 70 still has some staff coming in to work on equipment, but the majority of their tools and equipment has been moved to houses, farmland and other Barnhill locations.

Anthony Moore, a parts runner, who has been with the company for many years talked about what happened during Floyd.

"We were flooded up to the bottom of our windows here," Moore said.

Employees were working Tuesday to repair any trucks or equipment and moving last minute tools up to higher shelves. ■

# From Floyd to Matthew, hurricane preparation and response changes

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**W**hen Hurricane Floyd hit Eastern North Carolina in 1999, it triggered what The Free Press called “The 500-Year Flood.” The flood would cause significant damage to more than 1,000 homes, flood another 2,500 homes and caused more than \$300 million in damages.

By Friday, Kinston expects to be hit by the worst flood since Floyd.

Waters in the Neuse River are projected to break the 26-foot mark, one foot less than the levels experienced nearly two decades ago.

While the results of Floyd and Matthew are expected to be similar – water damaged homes and businesses, flooding and property damage – the way the city approaches the two disasters has changed.

“A lot of the biggest changes are technological,” Tony Sears, Kinston city manager, said. “The way we are able to communicate with the public has changed, and I think we have done a pretty good job of using things like Facebook to keep the people informed of what is happening.”

Since before the storm hit, a variety of Facebook and Twitter pages, from the City of Kinston’s official outlets, to Emergency Services, Kinston Police and other social media accounts have been updated regularly with releases on storm preparation, evacuation information and other pertinent information.

“Those are just things that didn’t happen before,” Sears said. “Before, if someone couldn’t hear an announcement live, how would you communicate that to everyone?”

Communication isn’t the only area the city has improved.

Following Saturday’s storm and the rise of the river over the weekend, much of the Neuseway Nature Center was under water

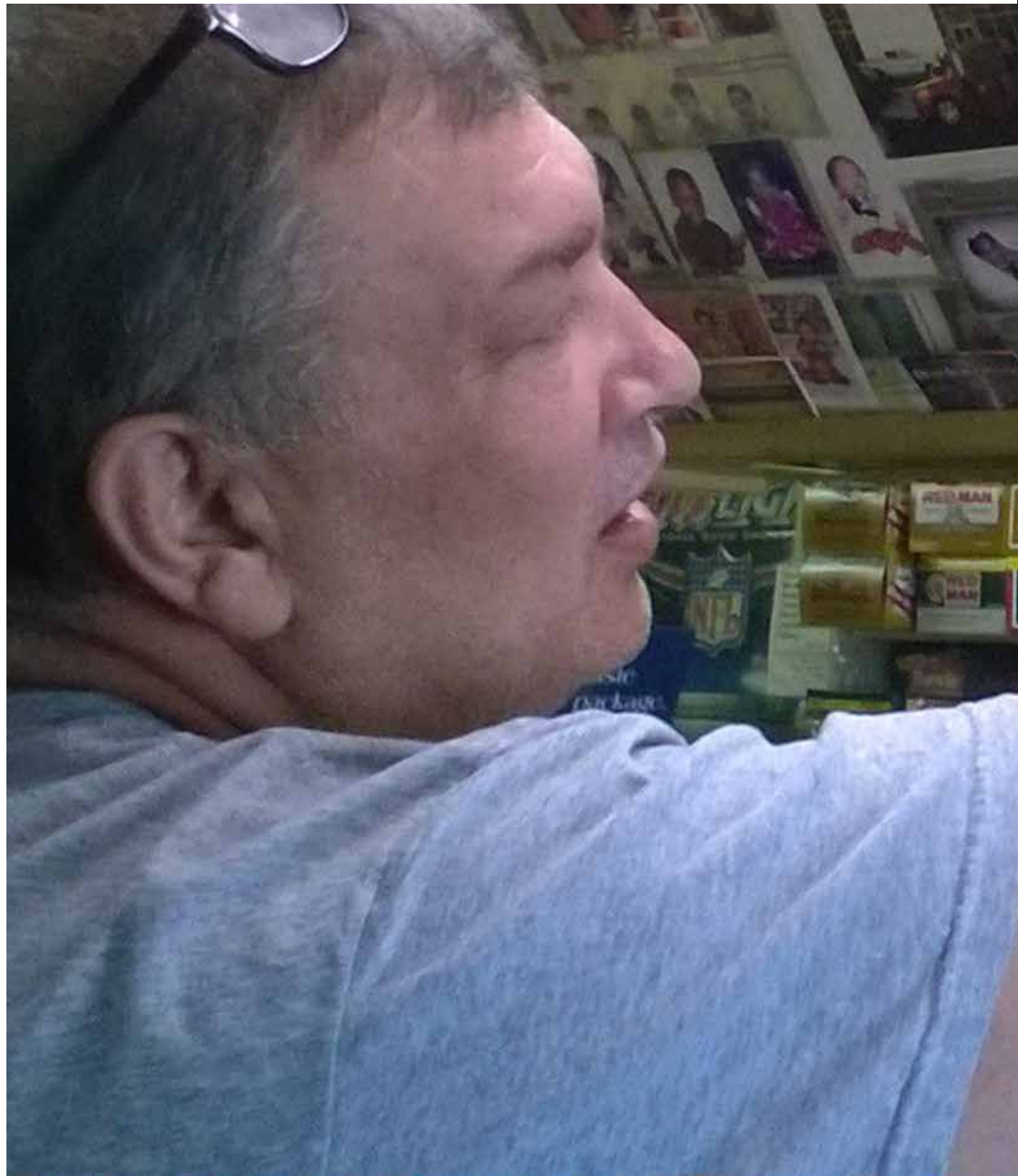
by Monday morning.

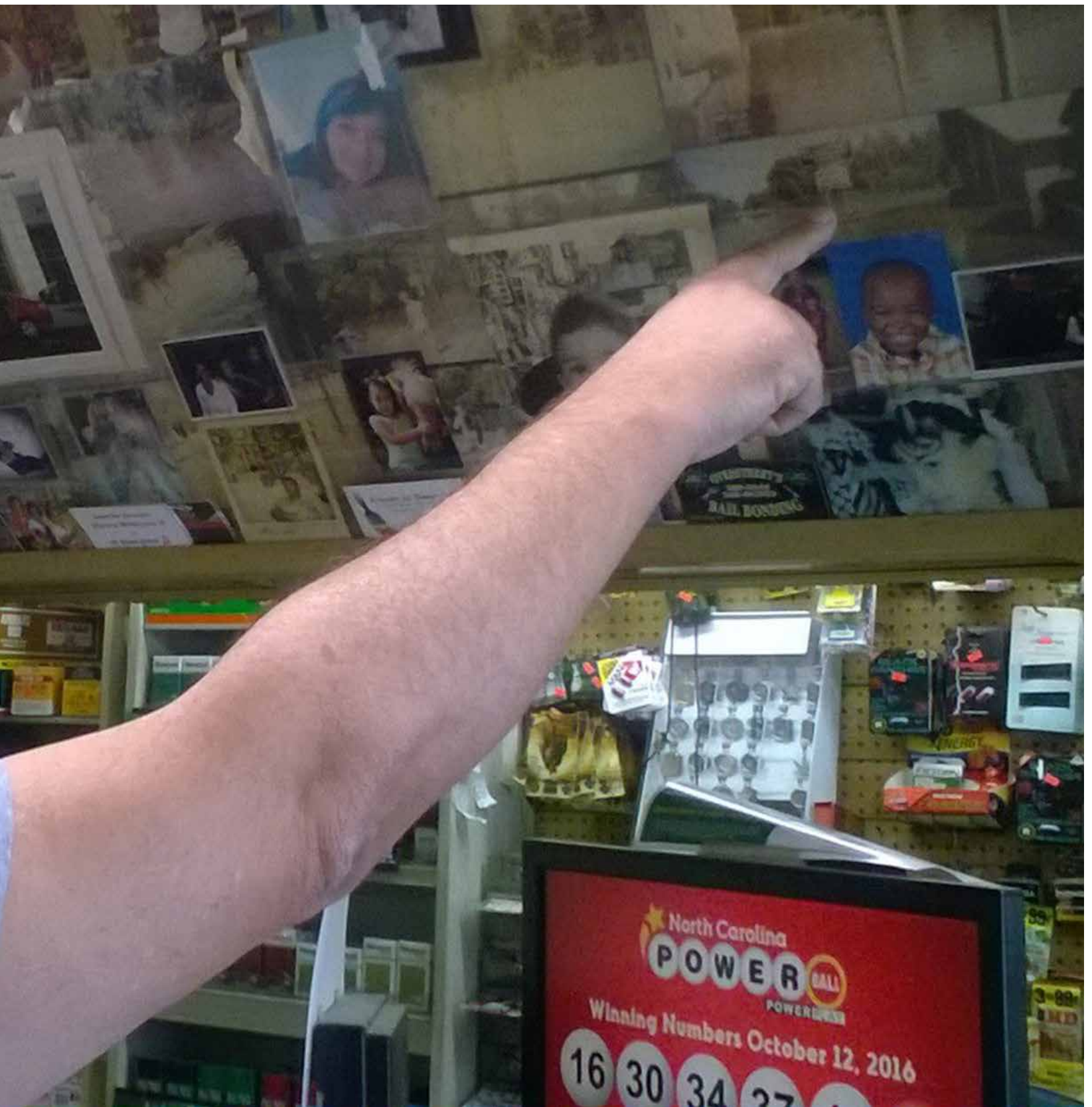
While all of the non-native animals, furniture and equipment were evacuated from the center before the storm hit, Parks and Recreation Director Bill Ellis said the center will be able to reopen in the same building once the water recedes.

“We modified that building to be hurricane-resistant,” Ellis said.

Following Floyd, Ellis said the main building was modified with new walls and floors, and the electrical systems were modified to keep them operational even if the building were to take on water.

One of the biggest differences between 1999 and 2016 storms isn’t actually what has been added to city infrastructure, but what has been taken away.





Following Floyd, the city, with help from Federal Emergency Management Agency, bought out homes in some low-lying and flood-prone areas, moving people out of those houses and onto higher ground.

It was a controversial decision and one that some still question today, Sears said, but ultimately one that worked.

"On a day like today, you can see it was

a good decision," Sears said. "Today, the amount of people who would need to be evacuated is one-tenth of what it would be."

Following Floyd, the city also moved the Water Reclamation Facility out of its old location, to prevent waste water from mixing with other flood waters should a storm like Matthew cause flooding in the future. ■

**Keith Awadallah**, who owns the Main Street Mini Mart in Hookerton, points to photos of flooding from Hurricane Floyd. Photo by Steve Devane / Gatehouse Media

# Residents still dealing with fallout from Matthew

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

“I didn’t expect anything like this,” said Kinston resident Bryan Garrick.

Saturday evening, Garrick was in his home in the dark after his power went out, waiting for Hurricane Matthew to leave the area, when suddenly his house flooded.

The almost knee-high water inside the house forced Garrick’s wife, an amputee, to be evacuated by local firemen, she could not stand or sit anywhere in their home.

A mandatory evacuation remains in place for residents and businesses along the Neuse River in Lenoir County. Currently, the National Weather Service is forecasting that the river will peak near 27.1 feet by Saturday afternoon. This is just about a half foot less than Floyd

Garrick was one of many residents in his neighborhood who were still tearing out carpet, mopping floors and removing soaked belongings from their homes in Kinston.

Just getting the water out of his home was a trial, Garrick said. He had to carry standing water outside using buckets and his trash can. He then used a mop to push out what he could, and he said filled several more buckets when he stopped to wring out the mop.

In addition to his rain-soaked home, Garrick also lost the two vehicles in his driveway. Both still have water in them, and neither will start.

“The man who owns the house said insurance will cover the damage to the house, but it won’t cover me and the things we lost,” Garrick said.

Next door to Garrick, Delloyd O’Brien fared slightly better – her raised home didn’t flood – but she did have a close call when a tree located across the street fell on her house.

“I was laying on the couch looking out, and it was just standing there, then it just fell,” O’Brien said.

The tree destroyed the fence in front of her home and knocked down part of her gutter before coming to rest on her roof, but luckily never fell through the house.

A local tree removal service came the next day to remove the tree and place the pieces of it back on the other side of the street.

Less than 100 yards away, residents at the Adkin apartments were dealing with the loss of their personal vehicles after the storm.



“This was all underwater,” Jesse Majette, a resident of the Adkin Apartments, said of the area surrounding the apartments.

In the apartment parking lot, a white metal storage container floated across the lot and into a pole during the storm, and the lot fence was also damaged.

Vehicles left outside during the storm were also damaged. Water visibly pooled in windows and seats, signs of just how high the water got during the weekend storm.

“The water came all the way up over them. They were totally underwater,” Majette said of his pickup truck and mini-van, which were among those parked at Adkin during the storm. “They are estimated to be a total loss.”

Majette said he was waiting for someone to come tow the vehicles on Tuesday so they could be appraised by his insurance, but he wasn’t feeling optimistic.

“When I cranked them up, water came shooting out of the tailpipes, that means it’s in the motor too,” he said. “If I was to be able to keep them, that would have to be replaced, oil and transmission fluid too.”

The cost to repair his vehicles would likely be more than what they are worth.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do,” he said.

Across town, more than 150 evacuees were staged in the shelter at Lenoir Community College.

The shelter is staffed by members of

A large tree fell during Hurricane Matthew breaking into a carport and building at this home **Hardy-Bridge Road near Deep Run**. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

the Red Cross and Department of Social Services, and has room for approximately 400 people in need of a place to wait out the impending flooding of the Neuse River.

It is one of two shelters located in Kinston, following the opening of the Kinston High School shelter Tuesday afternoon.

Some shelter residents, like Jamiya Barnes and Shenice Allen, were trying to make the best of their time at LCC.

They, with a group of friends were outside the shelter Tuesday, laughing, joking and trying to remain positive about their situation.

“We are all family here, and this is our home now,” Allen said. “There ain’t no use in crying about it. You just have to stay positive.”

Others, like Wesley Turner, are waiting anxiously to see what is going to happen to their homes after the water has receded.

“Nobody is telling us what is going on,” Turner said. “Is FEMA going to come in and help us? Is there any kind of plan in place? I don’t know.” ■



## As evacuation is encouraged, some are already moving, deciding to stay

**Gary Briggs (from left), Levitta Anderson, Michelle Anderson and Melvin Anderson** watch the Neuse River rise outside Melvin Anderson's Springhill Street home in Kinston Thursday, Oct. 13, 2016. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**K**inston Mayor BJ Murphy said he knew on Wednesday how Noah must have felt before the biblical flood that covered the earth.

"Except he had 120 years to tell people what was coming," said Murphy, who has been between now and Saturday morning to convince residents living in low-lying areas to evacuate before the Neuse River crests this weekend.

"Because what we are going to experience is so predictable, the fear of losing even one life keeps me up at night," Murphy said.

The river is expected to crest Saturday morning at an estimated nearly 28 feet, potentially higher than the record set by Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Wednesday, volunteers went out into the city for the third day in a row to knock on doors and warn residents of the pending flooding they can expect, and to encourage those still in their homes to

consider evacuation.

Two shelters have been opening in Lenoir County, one at Lenoir Community College and another at Kinston High School. Both are staffed by Red Cross and Department of Social Services personnel, and will remain open as long as necessary.

Shelters are fed by volunteers with the N.C. Baptist Men organization, and have security provided by local law enforcement.

"The thing that we are noticing is that people are listening," said Chad Rouse, of the Kinston Police Department, Wednesday as the effort to notify residents on Cedar Lane began. "They are preparing, they are packing their belongings and they are evacuating. They know what to expect."

Minnie Walters, a resident on Cedar Lane, has been packing her home with the help of her family since Monday.

When Floyd caused the area around her home to flood 17 years ago, Walters said waters reached her doorstep, but didn't flood

her house, but did flood the three houses next to her, which are no longer there.

"We just want to be sure we are prepared for the worst," Walters said.

Walters plans to go stay with a family member until it is deemed safe to return to her home, which she said she was "hoping and praying" to be able to return to.

Other people living in nearby areas aren't so ready to leave just yet.

Larence Brown is planning to stay with her uncle in Simon Bright Apartments, with her children, despite warnings that the area will likely flood this weekend.

"We don't really know where to go," Brown said. "Not everybody can shack up at Kinston High School or at the college; that's too many people."

Murphy said he hopes people in Brown's position will reconsider evacuation.

"The shelters still have plenty of room left," he said. "I would rather spend two to three days at a shelter than have to be rescued off my roof by the Coast Guard." ■

# Flood waters close US 70

**F**lood waters have reached the roadway at U.S. 70 and Queen Street in Kinston.

Emergency officials and law enforcement are helping to direct traffic, which is down to one lane. A curfew remains in effect in Lenoir County from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. until further notice.

With floodwater from Hurricane Matthew continuing to rise, the N.C. Department of Transportation has closed U.S. 70 in both directions in Kinston. Detour routes are set for east and westbound traffic, according to a press release.

Eastbound drivers should exit at U.S. 70 Business (Vernon Avenue), and turn left on N.C. 11 North. At N.C. 102 in Ayden, they should turn right and go east to N.C. 43, continuing through Vanceboro, then merging with U.S. 17 South. Turn right to stay on N.C. 43 and follow back to U.S. 70 East.

For westbound traffic, take U.S. 17 North toward Washington, then exit left on N.C. 43 toward Greenville. Continue on N.C. 43 through Vanceboro, then turn left on N.C. 102 to Ayden, and then left on N.C. 11 South toward Kinston. A right turn at the third traffic signal on to Vernon Avenue will lead back to U.S. 70 West. ■

A guardsman patrols a closed section of S. Queen St. in Kinston Thursday, Oct. 13, 2016. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media







# Neuse River levels continue to rise

BY ADAM WAGNER

**L**enoir County remains under a flood warning for the foreseeable future while the Neuse River continues its ascent to record flood levels.

As of 3:15 p.m. Wednesday, the river stood at 24.01 feet, well past the 21 feet required for the National Weather Service to classify the flood as “major.”

The Neuse is expected to rise two more feet by 3 p.m. Thursday and, by Friday afternoon, break the 27.7-foot record set by the “500-year flood” that inundated Lenoir County in the days following 1999’s Hurricane Floyd. It is projected to peak at 28.1 feet Saturday morning.

“People in the warned area should not travel,” the NWS wrote in a Wednesday morning advisory, “and be prepared for widespread flooding of a magnitude not seen in many years.”

Wednesday afternoon, Kinston Mayor BJ Murphy took an aerial tour of the area.

“We add another four feet to it and we’ve got some major issues,” Murphy said. “And that’s what we’re expecting.”

When the river reaches 27 feet, it will cause what the weather service deems

“disastrous flooding,” akin to what Floyd brought to Lenoir County.

Water will flood every major road on Kinston’s south side, according to a NWS flood warning, and U.S. 70 is projected to sit beneath two feet of water.

To prepare for the likely flooding, Murphy joined a team of volunteers urging residents to leave the area and head for shelters at Lenoir Community College and Kinston High School.

While many heeded the advice and left their homes, several said they would stay because Floyd’s floodwaters had halted short of their homes.

“I’ve seen some complacency because of the experience of one flood (Floyd) and 70 degrees and beautiful weather,” Murphy said. “There have been some — not all, but some — who just want to ride it out and see how it goes. I’m concerned that in two or three days the river will rise higher than it is right now, and people won’t be as prepared as they think they are.”

The flooding from September 1999 should not be used as a guide to where flooding will happen in October 2016, according to a Lenoir County Department of Emergency Services release.

**South Queen Street** buildings near Springhill Street in Kinston take in flood waters from the Neuse River on Friday. KEN BLEVINS/GATEHOUSE MEDIA

“Flooding may occur in areas that did not flood during Hurricane Floyd,” the release said, “due to developments and changes in topography.”

The NWS projects the Neuse will remain at major flood stage through Oct. 20.

In addition to the Neuse, the Contentnea Creek will continue to flood. In a release Wednesday, the department of emergency services urged residents in the area to monitor water levels and remain prepared to evacuate.

“This is a very fluid event and will change as we move through the week,” according to the release.

Murphy, meanwhile, urged residents who could be at risk to leave by land while they still had the chance.

“I’d rather knock on your door today,” he said, “than bring the boat on Saturday.” ■



# Volunteers flock to Kinston to feed, help flood evacuees

**Volunteers set up a free food area** for residents effected by Hurricane Matthew on Wednesday at the corner of S. Adkin and Caswell Street. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**W**hile many around Eastern North Carolina are still without power, water and their homes, their neighbors from the mountains are coming to help.

The North Carolina Baptist Men organization has deployed teams of volunteers to various areas affected by Hurricane Matthew.

On Tuesday, volunteers began working in the parking lot of First Baptist Church of Kinston on Rouse Road to set up a kitchen from which they could prepare meals for more than 700 displaced residents a day.

“The majority of the folks here are from the Asheville area,” Terry Hall, ministry coordinator for feeding with the N.C. Baptist Men, said. “They will be here through the weekend, and then they will go home, and another group will come in and pick up where they left off.”

Volunteers at the First Baptist work site will prepare meals for people who have evacuated their homes in anticipation of the Neuse River flooding later this week.

Meals prepared by the kitchen will be packed up in vans and sent to shelters and

other planned feeding locations to be given to those who need a meal.

The kitchen is just one of multiple feeding sites to pop up in response to flooding.

Since Sunday, stories have appeared on social media of restaurants opening their doors to feed people with no power or water at no cost, and a mobile pharmacy has been set up in the Southwood area as of Tuesday.

Also this week, the Woodmen Community

Center has opened its doors for people who are currently without power and water to charge their phones and take showers if they need to, and some churches have taken to Facebook with plans to feed residents this week.

“This is what God calls us to do,” Lee Starnes, of Asheville, said. “If this happened to us, people from here would come to do the same for us.” ■



**Carolyn Creasman, of Asheville, NC,** helps prepare water for distribution from the N.C. Baptist Men Disaster Relief staging area in Kinston, NC, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016. The volunteers will prepare and deliver meals for evacuees and first responders from the site for as long as needed. (Zach Frailey/ Daily Free Press)

# Volunteers continue to provide resources for one another as in Matthews wake

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**L**ike a good neighbor, the people of Lenoir County are there for one another.

Since the arrival of Hurricane Matthew on Saturday, residents have been looking for opportunities to volunteer to help one another eat, shower, move and contact loved ones.

On Wednesday, volunteers set up two grills and a row of tables to cook and give out food those lose living in the Caswell and Adkin areas.

“We started yesterday with \$60, some hot dogs and a grill,” said Ken Yari, one of the cookouts organizers. “People brought us more food, supplies, they donated us some money, and so we decided to come back out here again.”

Yari said the goal of the meals was twofold – to provide a hot meal to people who haven’t had power since Saturday, and to help spread the word that much of the area they were serving is under a mandatory evacuation notice.

Over on Rountree St., Saint Mary’s Episcopal Church opened its doors Tuesday and Wednesday to anyone in need of a warm meal or looking for a place to charge their cell phones.

Community members aren’t the only ones taking steps to help others in the wake of





**Volunteers, Liz Barringer, Rachel Barrow and Ray Bostic** assemble cleaning supplies and buckets that will be given to those in need Wednesday inside the former Expressions store at Vernon Park Mall. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

the hurricane.

In anticipation of the pending flooding of the Neuse River, the state Emergency Services office, at the request of Lenoir County Emergency Services, has set up a disaster relief hospital in Southwood.

“Looking at the lessons they learned from Floyd, when the river here crests, it is expected to split this area into two parts, a north side and a south side,” Rob Gover, site coordinator of the disaster relief area, said. “This is where people on the south side can be brought if they need emergency care.”

Located in a church parking lot, the hospital is comprised of a series of tents and a trailer, has its own nursing staff, doctor and a series of medical specialists ready to see patients as they arrive.

The hospital is divided into an urgent care facility and a small emergency room, and has a trio of holding beds for patients waiting to be seen.

If a patient needs care beyond what the unit can provide, the hospital has the ability to transport patients by helicopter to Lenoir UNC Health Center or any other hospital in the area.

The center, much like a standard hospital, is open and staffed 24/7, and has ambulances on standby to be dispatched into the community. ■



**Water flows across Highway 11** South near Skinner's Bypass on Wednesday, October 12, 2016 as Kinston prepares for more flooding after Hurricane Matthew. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

# Pedro: Valuable during Floyd, unavailable for Matthew

BY DREW C. WILSON

Less than 13 months after the search and rescue mission ended for Marine Transport Squadron One at Cherry Point, grounding the famed Marine HH-46E Pedro helicopter fleet, a clarion moment has arrived along with floodwaters from Hurricane Matthew.

"We lost the most valuable resource you could ask for in times like we're going through right now," said Stanley Kite, emergency management director for Craven County.

The helicopters that played such a vital role in rescues during Hurricane Floyd in 1999 no longer fly in Eastern North Carolina. The helicopters became too old and the national defense budget too tight to keep the Marine Corps search and rescue mission alive. Grounding the storied orange and gray helicopters meant a savings to taxpayers of \$400 million over three years.

"Those guys were trained professionals to do search and rescue. They were trained professionals to do extraction from trees and water. They were invaluable," said Kite. "I think it also relates to the Marine aviator training. In weather situations where other aircraft wouldn't attempt it, the Marine aviator crew would go right on. Sometimes it wasn't inclement weather. It was just the

threat of inclement weather and we couldn't get anybody else, but they would go."

With rivers and creeks overflowing in many communities, the helicopter could have been used in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew.

"A helicopter has pretty much access to any area the water might come up into," said Woody Spencer, a spokesman for the police department in Kinston, where the Neuse River is expected to near a record flood crest. "I saw it in action in Pitt County with the military helicopters. Pedro is one of many helicopters and any helicopter along those lines would be a definite benefit to us in Lenoir County. We're preparing for a 27-foot or 28-foot crest, which is right at the same elevation as Floyd."

Tom Braaten, a retired Marine Corps major general and former commanding officer at Cherry Point, flew a number of Hurricane Floyd rescue missions.

"I have been waiting for this one to come out," Braaten said. "Somebody had to say, 'damn, if we had Pedro now, we could sure be doing something.'"

He said Pedro crews were involved in nearly 400 rescues during Hurricane Floyd.

"They were from all kinds, off of buildings, off of the top of vehicles or just out in their front lawn just as their house or

trailer was about to go under," Braaten said. "So it was an interesting and an important time for the squadron."

Braaten remembers the faces of those rescued from Floyd's floodwaters and knows that Pedro could have played a crucial role during Matthew, too.

"There was a mix of relief and happiness on their faces because they knew they had been plucked out of a bad thing, but were, of course, trying to look out the window and look down at their home, or trailer, or vehicle, whatever was partially underwater and going to be destroyed," said Braaten. "It was mixed emotions for everybody."

Kite said he knows the importance of Marine rescue helicopters.

"Pedro was a very, very valuable asset to the community that we don't have anymore," he said. "Before this event is over with, we're going to wish many times over that we had Pedro back. Without a doubt, no hesitation to say, we would definitely benefit from having them back." ■



## Some Snow Hill residents still without power

BY PAUL STEPHEN

**L**inda Burton's Snow Hill home has been without power since Hurricane Matthew pushed through Greene County Saturday night. A hot shower, however, is the least of her concerns at the moment.

Burton's business, Linda's Alterations, is only two blocks away on Mill Street, but far enough downhill to be inundated by the rising Contentnea Creek rushing through the town's historic district.

"I'm wet as a rat now," Burton said. "It's halfway up the wall."

Burton was able to save some merchandise and equipment from the shop, but had to sacrifice others to the water. A particular heartbreaking loss was her large worktable,

a custom-designed piece of equipment that serves as a dividing wall for clients changing clothes and another piece of furniture that held mannequins.

Mill Street is among the lowest lying spots in the town, and waters had risen to doorknob height on several buildings as of Wednesday afternoon. But Burton remained optimistic the town would dry out soon, pointing to debris along the road that indicated the level had dropped from the day before.

"I know that building is shot," Burton said. "But I look at it this way – it's going to help my electric bill next month."

For Mark Bunch, who lives in the downtown area, the flooding brought back memories of 1999 when Hurricane Floyd swamped the region. But Bunch didn't

**Linda Burton** surveys the damage outside her store, Linda's Alterations, in downtown Snow Hill Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2016 after heavy rain from Hurricane Matthew caused the Contentnea Creek to flood. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media

appear too worried while walking across a bridge on Greene Street over the swollen creek Wednesday.

"Floyd really set everyone back and this was a whole lot of 'here we go, not again,' he said. "But having been through it before, this was a major serious irritation, but not a cause for panic." ■



Water from the Neuse River inches closer to **NC.11 near the Kinston Drag Strip** on October 12, 2016. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

Flood waters creep further into the **Hampton Inn, Quality Inn and Hardees** at the intersection of U.S. 258 South and U.S 70 on Wednesday in Kinston, October 12, 2016. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

# Jones County begins clean up

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**J**ones County Sheriff Danny Heath said the floods and aftermath of Hurricane Matthew has slowed down in Jones County.

“As of right now all of our rivers are receding so we’re in pretty good shape,” Heath said.

Earlier in the week law enforcement and emergency services were performing rescue missions in Trenton where homes near the Trent River flooded.

“There was one point where I was very concerned and scared because of situations we were in,” Heath said.

Officers performed rescues in chest deep water that was moving fast trying to get residents out of their homes.

“It got scary but we did what we had to do and we got everybody out,” Heath said.

Besides the home rescues, many farmers lost livestock in the flooding Jones County Commissioner Sondra Riggs said.

“They’ve lost a million chickens and some hogs out here in Jones County,” she said.

Heath said the Methodist Church in Trenton is taking donations to help those in need.

“For the most part we have come out of this thing pretty good, now we just have the cleanup efforts,” he said.

Now that Jones County has reached some stability, Heath said emergency services personnel will head out to other counties to help those still in need.

“We’re reaching out to the counties around us and are keeping our eye on Lenoir County in case Sheriff Ingram needs anything,” Heath said. ■



## Waters in Greene County receding after Hurricane Matthew

BY JUNIOUS SMITH III

**S**NOW HILL | As Kinston braces for a Neuse River that is projected to crest at a higher level than after Hurricane Floyd, the worst could possibly be over for Greene County.

While several roads are still not accessible, there is greater access for motorists through Snow Hill, including an opened up N.C. 258. Areas that were underwater as late as Tuesday have seen receding waters.

Snow Hill resident Coshon Moore said while Hurricane Matthew was problematic, it was more tolerable than the 1999 storm.

“This wasn’t as bad as Floyd,” Moore said. “A great part of the county was without power – I was without it for a day and a half – and there’s been more road decay than normal, but things are getting better.”

Frank Awad resides in Winterville, but works in Snow Hill and said the storm prevented him from working for five days.

“(Thursday) was my first day back,” Awad said. “We always get flooded (after hurricanes).”

For those in need of shelter due to flooding, Greene Central High School’s gymnasium has been converted to house

individuals. Greene County DSS director Angela Ellis said at most, 254 people have needed to use the shelter at any time, but with roads starting to clear residents have started moving back to their homes.

“(N.C.) 91 just cleared up (Thursday),” Ellis said. “Before then, workers had to be brought in by the National Guard and individuals traveled alternate routes. Other streets are still flooded and the EMS hasn’t allowed anyone to travel on the roads. We’ll continue to provide services for as long as we can.”

Colby Chase, the Greene Central EM coordinator, said the waters have gone down quickly and while most of the roads are accessible, there are still issues.

“Places like Four Way Road, Lily Pad Road and 123 North are still affected,” Chase said. “123 has about 4 feet of water in some sections leading toward Hookerton. We were affected when the bypass was flooded – it cut us off from the northern part of the county and we needed the National Guard just to get food to the shelter.”

“We have to go around and assess the damage later. FEMA will be here soon to assist and thankfully, we’ve had no reported deaths.” ■

**Steve Johnson** gets ready to take a boat to see how badly his home on Loop Road off Four Way Road in Greene County. Photo by Steve Devane / Gatehouse Media

# Threat remains for Goldsboro coal ash site, environmentalists say

BY STEVE DEVANE

**G**OLDSBORO | Environmental groups are concerned about a coal ash pond surrounded by floodwaters from the Neuse River.

The 120-acre coal ash pond at Duke Energy's H.F. Lee plant in Goldsboro is contained by a dam. Water from the flooding river had risen more than halfway up the 20-foot dam when Pete Harrison, staff attorney at the Waterkeeper Alliance and Matthew Starr, the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper, paddled a canoe close to it on Tuesday.

Kinston and Lenoir County are downstream from Goldsboro. The Neuse River is expected to crest in Kinston on Friday at record levels.

The two groups also are concerned that floodwaters have overrun three former coal ash sites. They also called attention to the breach of a dam on a 1.2-billion-gallon cooling pond dam at the Goldsboro plant.

Duke Energy released a statement saying the cooling pond does not contain coal ash. It was constructed to supply cooling water to power plants at the site, according to the statement.

The active coal ash pond continues to operate safely, the Duke Energy statement said. The inactive ponds are now covered with a forest, it said.

"Those basins normally are dry and do not impound water, and they do not pose a risk for a significant release of material," the statement said.

Starr said he is concerned that floodwaters will mix with coal ash remaining on the coal ash site and wash it downstream. When the flood recedes, it could cause erosion that would release more coal ash, he said.

"That is a big concern," he said.

Receding floodwaters also could harm the dam around the active coal ash site, Starr said.

"You start to see the impact once the waters recede," he said. "The Neuse is running so quickly, it's chewing up everything in its path." ■



**Muddy footprints are seen in the sidewalk of La Petite Boutique Wednesday.** Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press



## Southside residents cut off from Kinston

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**W**ith water levels rising on many of the major highways in Kinston, the town has been divided.

"You probably can't get to the other side of town without a boat or an airplane," Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail said.

Residents on the south side of the Neuse River have experienced, power outages, evacuations and road closures that have caused many to stay in their homes now that they cannot cross U.S. 70, N.C. 258 and N.C. 11.

The Piggly Wiggly in Jackson Heights had been closed after Hurricane Matthew caused the grocery store to lose power. The store, which took in all of the U.S. 70 stores product after that location closed, opened Wednesday, with milk, bread and other grocery necessities.

Later on Thursday power to the Jackson Heights area went out again.

"I have some lights so we are still open," store manager John King said.

King said he had contacted Duke Energy and hoped the power returned soon because of the refrigerated food that is still in

the store.

Residents were clearing off shelves Thursday before and after the power outage. One resident said he was just there to get some groceries and get out.

While the grocery store was operational again, down in the Southwood area, volunteers and emergency service personnel were helping keep residents safe and healthy.

While the north side of town has access to the UNC Lenoir Health Care Hospital, James Hood, Lenoir County community paramedic, has helped open and run a field hospital at Southwood Christian Church on N.C. 58.

Doctors, nurses, EMT's and pharmacists will be on site to treat emergencies, injuries and can fill prescriptions.

"We have physicians here, a working lab, X-ray machine, a triage area and a small emergency room with five beds," Hood said.

The hospital has a series of tents and trailers to help administer care to patients if needed. An ambulance bus, rescue teams, law enforcement and multiple ambulances are on standby in the church parking lot. At nearby Southwood Elementary School, a helicopter waits on site to transport critical patients as needed.

**A mobile hospital has been set up in Southwood** to treat patients south of the Neuse River as access to UNC Lenoir hospital. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

Officials say having the emergency air lift available allowed them to save three lives on Wednesday.

"People could have died, if they didn't have this facility," Hood said.

While the emergency service personnel has been staying at the Southwood Memorial Church volunteers have donated food, a place to rest and water to those who have been out in the field.

"All the churches in the area have been very supportive of this. They have made sure we have everything we needed whether it was toiletries, food, entertainment and it's been all the churches in the whole county," Hood said.

Lenoir County Commissioner Linda Rouse Sutton said she is so proud of the county employees.

"They have gone above and beyond the call of duty," she said. ■



# Grifton residents wait on flood waters

**Sharon Jones** reads a letter from the NC Baptist Men on Thursday as she stands inside her home damaged by rising water from Hurricane Matthew on Braxton Road in the Grifton, Lenoir County community. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

BY JANET S. CARTER

**S**haron Jones and her husband, Michael, expected rain from Hurricane Matthew but didn't imagine they'd lose the entire bottom floor of their Grifton home in Lenoir County. Thursday the Jones family and other Grifton residents on the Lenoir County line began planning their next steps.

"We couldn't leave, we sat on the stairs and watched it come in," said Sharon Jones.

Although the flooding is upsetting, the Joneses said they are not in shock. They said it's nothing like the emotion they experienced in 1999 when Hurricane Floyd displaced them for more than three months.

"You can't let it get to you. You just have to go on," said Michael Jones.

Less than 2 miles down the road, Roy Hughes sits underneath his carport as flood waters created a pond covering about 75 percent of his property.

"I'm not planning on leaving, I know where it got the last time when Floyd came through, I've already counted the bricks where the water is going to be," said Hughes.

The water levels continued to rise in the tight-knit community as neighbors and onlookers stopped by to talk about the risks. Hugo Volunteer Fire Department came through the area earlier in the week and asked residents to evacuate.

"The water came in yesterday. When it leaves Kinston, it comes by here," Hughes said.

He said he's keeping a watchful eye, as is his neighbor Billy Smith, who came out to get a closer look at the steadily rising flood waters along Braxton Road.

Smith stayed there during Floyd and said, "We were fine during Floyd. It would have to raise several more feet before it would get in our house."

Smith said he has plenty of food, water and beer, and gas for the generator and feels like they will be OK.

Residents in the Tick Bite community don't have that luxury.

N.C. State Highway Patrol Trooper Gary Beaman, who was parked in front of the blockade at Tick Bite and Saw Mill roads, said residents were evacuated Saturday.

"I talked to a couple that lived in a trailer to the left down here," Beaman said. "They pulled up (in their vehicle) and said that Saturday the National Guard was out here and they told them they had 15 minutes to get their stuff and get out, that the water was rising fast."

As Kinston prepares for record-setting flooding, Grifton residents watch and wait. ■



## Governor McCrory examines flood damage

BY ADAM WAGNER

**K**inston's recovery from the flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew will take months or even a year, Gov. Pat McCrory said during a Thursday afternoon visit to the beleaguered city.

"The recovery from this will not happen tomorrow," McCrory said. "It will be weeks, months and for some people even a year. That's how big this hurricane has been."

As the Neuse River continued its rise, McCrory spent a few minutes at the Tiffany West Park. Kinston Mayor BJ Murphy showed McCrory how the water had risen and the governor gave words of support to politicians and residents who were gathered nearby.

Then the governor continued on to the still-under-construction Queen Street Bridge. With a flooded streetscape behind him, McCrory said the worst is yet to come and warned that floodwater could be contaminated with petroleum or farm chemicals.

"Stay away from the water," McCrory said, "not only to save your life, but don't even put your hand or feet in it because the water is most likely not safe to touch."

As of early Thursday, the governor added, 20 people in North Carolina had died during Hurricane Matthew and its aftermath, with 19 of those deaths being caused by drowning.

Murphy urged residents to evacuate

while they could and to use common sense while the floodwaters soak the city and surrounding areas.

"We don't want a single person lost," Murphy said. "I love the fact we've got National Guard here, we've got Coast Guard around, but we don't want to use them."

Murphy also cautioned that Friday and Saturday would likely see waters continuing to rise. There are 150 National Guard troops stationed in Lenoir County, as well as 50 N.C. State Highway Patrol troopers.

As of early Thursday afternoon, Lenoir County's shelters at the Lenoir County Community College and Kinston High School were providing a total of 205 people with temporary housing, with that number expected to rise. The shelters could hold up to 1,600 people.

Overwhelmingly, McCrory said, the people who are suffering from flood damage across the state are the poor.

"When they're displaced, they have nothing. They have nothing to go to," he said.

McCrory's request for a federal disaster declaration for Lenoir County has been approved, with public and individual federal assistance giving residents whose homes suffered flood damage some support to aid in rebuilding.

Once the floodwater does recede, the governor said N.C. Department of Transportation crews' evaluations of roads and bridges will become a priority.

"The big issue for us is going to be taking

Local officials, from left Rep. **George Graham**, Kinston Mayor **BJ Murphy** and Mayor Pro Tem **Robbie Swinson** listen as Gov. **Pat McCrory** gives an update on Hurricane Matthew Thursday in Kinston. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

care of infrastructure – blocking the bridges where people should not be going over at this point in time," McCrory said, "and then doing a quick evaluation of the roads and bridges and trying to get them fixed as quick as possible."

Among the major roads already flooded in Kinston are U.S. 70, N.C. 55 and U.S. 258 south of the city.

McCrory also took note of the contrast between the day's blue skies and the slowly evolving disaster on the ground.

"I have my sunglasses on, it's a beautiful day, it's almost hot," McCrory said. "And we're in the midst of a hurricane in North Carolina. It has not ended even though the hurricane dissipated many days ago over the Atlantic Ocean." ■

# New flood record set for Neuse River

As of 6 p.m., the Neuse River reached 27.73 feet, exceeding by .02 inch the record level of flooding brought by Hurricane Floyd in 1999, according to the National Weather Service.

The river was expected to peak at 29 feet Friday afternoon.

Melvin Anderson watched the Neuse rise from the stoop outside his Springhill Street home Thursday afternoon. In just two hours, Anderson said, the river managed to cover three steps on a walkway from the road to his home. Anderson, who moved into the house two weeks ago, was more awestruck than depressed, noting that his insurance coverage was solid and the house was built after Floyd. Anderson and his family planned to evacuate with cars packed and ready to go.

Bear Creek has flooded homes on Jenny Lind Road near Kennedy Home Road south of Lagrange in western Lenoir County. The Neuse River is has flooded onto Pine Bush Road near Sutton Shortcut Road about a half mile from where the river's usual banks.

Duke Energy Progress reported 2,215 customers without power in Lenoir County as of 5 p.m. Thursday, with about 1,400 in Grifton and 630 in Kinston.

U.S. 11 is closed from Ashland Drive to U.S. 70. Central Avenue in Jackson Heights is closed.

## RIVER LEVEL

As of 6 p.m. Thursday the Neuse River was at 27.73 feet, a new record. The projection shows the river increasing to 29 feet around 5 p.m. Friday.

## CURFEW

Lenoir County and the City of Kinston are still in a state of emergency. Officials have issued a curfew from 9 p.m. Thursday, Oct.



13, to 7 a.m. Friday, Oct. 14.

## EMERGENCY FOOD STAMPS

Residents can contact the Lenoir County Department of Social Services if they are in need of emergency food stamps by calling 252-559-6341.

## A PLACE TO RECOUP

Woodmen Community Center is offering residents in need a chance for a hot

shower, a place to charge electronic devices and socialize. The center will be open from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

## FIELD HOSPITAL

A field hospital is being set up at Southwood Christian Church on NC-58. Doctors, nurses, EMT's and pharmacists will be on site to treat emergencies, injuries and can fill prescriptions. Officials say there will be a helicopter on the south side of Lenoir



County available to airlift any critical or emergency patients.

### SHELTERS

Two shelters have opened to residents who have been evacuated. One shelter is at the Lenoir Community College Student Center, which allows pets and service animals. The second is at the Kinston High School Gymnasium.

Pets will be accommodated at the LCC, but

only service animals will be allowed in the shelter with their owner. Officials said pets will be housed on the campus and are asking if you do bring your pet that bring a three-day supply of food per pet, bowls, crates, and leashes. Owners will be responsible for their own pets.

### WATER SAFETY

The boil water notice for the Deep Run Water Corporation has been rescinded. ■

**An aerial view looking west on U.S. 70** shows Skinner's Bypass area submerged south of the river. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



# What I saw during Hurricane Matthew flooding in Lenoir County

BY J MAC DAUGHETY  
LENOIR COUNTY COMMISSIONER

On Oct. 8 I was watching the forecasts that continually predicted Hurricane Matthew would collide with another tropical front and hook off the North Carolina coast missing inland Eastern North Carolina. Having watched hurricanes off the coast of North Carolina for decades it was obvious to me the theory was flawed. I begin to share my concerns with folks on Facebook telling them regardless of what the forecasters were saying to be prepared for the worst.

On Oct. 9 after the direct hit from Hurricane Matthew I drove around Southern Lenoir to assess damage. I saw Volunteer Fire Departments out cutting up and removing trees and debris. I saw NC DOT workers scurrying around trying to identify roads that were impassable and erecting barricades.

I started driving around and it was evident that because of the magnitude of damage DOT wasn't able to identify all roads. When I spoke with DOT District Maintenance Engineer Len White later that morning he estimated that as many as 120 roads in Lenoir County were severely damaged if not destroyed.

I began to call DOT to aid with identifying as many as possible so the roads could all be barricaded. I came upon entire roads cut into or where half of the roadway up to the middle of the road was gone.

I stopped at Vance's Grill in Moss Hill the morning of the 9th and spoke with Farmer Jack Davis who said his rain gauge had measured almost 19 inches of rain from Matthew.

As time went on I began to notice that no one from Lenoir County Government was sharing badly needed information with our citizens on a timely basis and took it upon myself to investigate first hand what was going on in Southern Lenoir County so that



I could make sure our citizens were warned and informed when necessary.

Come Wednesday Oct. 12, we were getting conflicting reports from Official Services and Forecasters on the residual flooding coming downstream from the upper Neuse.

I knew whatever happened at Seven Springs would be close to what happened in Lenoir County. I drove down to Seven Springs to speak with Seven Springs Fire Chief Jeremy Price and get his assessment of damage there.

What normally was a 15 minute trip took me almost an hour with multiple detours due to roads being cut in half.

Chief Price was on the scene of the flooding and evacuations in Seven Springs



**J MAC DAUGHETY**

Photos by J Mac Daughety

and told me it then was worse than Hurricane Floyd and wouldn't peak for another 24 hours.

I knew then that the forecasts for flooding in Kinston were off and I needed to begin to warn out people.

I returned home and began to warn people through Facebook. On Thursday Oct. 13, at noon I sent a warning to people who were in Kinston and living on the Southside of the Neuse River that in my opinion they needed to be across the Neuse and headed home absolutely no later than 6 p.m.

Skinner's Bypass/Highway 70/11/55 Intersection began to overrun with water and close around 5:30 p.m. as did the length of U.S. 70 Bypass from one the Business 70 entrance to beyond Lenoir Community College. Forecasting on Hurricane Matthew and the Flooding left a lot to be desired.

Beginning the morning after the flood-

ing I made it a point to check in daily every morning with the crews at all of our First Responder sites beginning with a drive from Sandy Bottom VFD, Deep Run EMS, Pink Hill VFD, and with a final stop at the Temporary Hospital at Southwood Memorial Church on N.C. 58 South to make sure our First Responders and Volunteers both within and from outside Lenoir County were getting whatever they needed. I also did this because these fine folks were working 24 hours 7 days a week for 3 straight weeks without anytime off or being able to return home to their families. Every day I could see the exhaustion on their faces but no one complained and they always served with a smile.

I wanted them to know if they had to do it I was with them and had their backs.

One of the reasons I did this is because early on I found out that a volunteer group was supposed to feed all our First Responders at Southwood Memorial Church and it had fallen through the cracks forcing our folks to go out and buy their own food and cook it. Graciously the fine folks at Southwood Memorial agreed to take over this responsibility and they were phenomenal. After that I wasn't going to leave anything to chance.

City of Kinston Councilwoman Felicia Solomon called and asked would I go to the Lenoir Community College Shelter manned by the Red Cross to check out several complaints about how the evacuees were being treated.

After a strong conversation with the Shelter manager I was assured all would be corrected.

Three days later Councilwoman Solomon, Lenoir County Commissioner Linda Rouse Sutton, and myself had to return because of similar complaints.

When Commissioner Sutton and I returned to Southwood Memorial Church from visiting the displaced at Lenoir Community College we both agreed that being isolated from Kinston because of the flooding that a Contribution/Distribution Center needed to be organized on the South Side of the Neuse River to help those affected by the flood.

I spoke with Rev. Justin Barnett of Jackson Heights Church and we found an empty

*Every day I could see the exhaustion on their faces but no one complained and they always served with a smile.*

building that we manned with volunteer staff and began to solicit donations to be distributed to those who were homeless, hungry or relocated.

Donations began to pour in from as far away as Pennsylvania and all parts of North Carolina and thanks to that generosity and our volunteer staff over a two week period we were able to provide assistance to over 1,200 recorded families.

What history should know about this Flood?

Every Hurricane is dangerous and there is no exact Weather Science available to predict Mother Nature. This storm was predicted until the last moment to turn hard off the coast and do very little if any damage. Instead it brought a minimum of tropical storm if not hurricane strength winds and heavy rainfall topping 15-20 inches in some portions of Southern Lenoir County in a 12 hour period. History will learn of the potential pitfalls of rebuilding dams that burst in Floyd only to have them burst again with devastating infrastructure and property loss. Lessons learned are that we are a strong cohesive people, that all Hurricane activity requires preparedness even until the very end, and well-intentioned remedies such as rebuilding dams needs to be well studied to prevent recurring issues in the future.

History will also learn that government needs at all levels to have better plans to help those truly in need in business and circumstances with true safety nets that are more efficient. ■



## Residents pray as flood waters rise

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**E**ven as the water encroached on the ground where they were standing, Kinston residents came together Thursday morning to pray about expected flood waters predicted to overtake the city later this week.

Organized by the Kinston Teens, more than 100 residents gathered at Tiffany West Park on the wood dock that normally overlooks the Neuse River.

As the vigil began, water from the Neuse had reached the ground around the dock and was slowly advancing.

By Friday night, the river is expected to crest at 28.9 feet, and bring flood waters to the city that is estimated to be worse than what Hurricane Floyd wrought nearly 20 years ago.

Those gathered at the vigil prayed for

safety of their homes, their neighbors and for God to keep damage caused by the flooding to a minimum.

"We really believe in the power of prayer," Arletha Skinner said at the vigil. "I hope for people to be safe, and really for the water to go the other way."

Louise Harrison, another resident attending the vigil, said she didn't expect to see any flood waters at her home, but came instead to pray for those who will likely see flooding in the low-lying parts of the city.

"We are concerned for them, and want them to be safe," she said.

The event also served as a rallying call for people to volunteer to help with evacuation and flood preparation efforts.

"We have had an entire week to prepare here for what happened in Lumberton in 24 - 48 hours," Kinston Mayor BJ Murphy said.

Lumberton flooded earlier this week,

forcing many residents from their homes and businesses with little warning.

"The loss of even one life here is unacceptable," Murphy said.

Murphy once again reiterated the need for people in low-lying areas to evacuate, and for people not in those areas to help knock on doors and warn residents of the impending flood. People can also help businesses prepare for the flood by filling, transporting and stacking sandbags Thursday.

"We are not just servants today, we are soldiers too," he said. ■

**Community members pray at Tiffany West Park** in Kinston as the Neuse River rises. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



**Dewey Price and his dog Bandit** sit on the back of his pickup truck while they stay at the Red Cross shelter set up at Lenoir Community College. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

# Helping save the animals

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

Since Hurricane Matthew hit many people have lost their homes and been displaced – as well as their pets and livestock.

The shelter at the Lenoir Community College is the only shelter in Lenoir County that accommodates pets.

Officials have asked residents who bring their pet to the shelter, to bring a three-day supply of food per pet, bowls, crates and leashes.

Lenoir County Cooperative Extension Director Tammy Kelly said although the shelter is getting full they will still take pets.

“We have some room, if they had a crate it would help because we are running out of small crates,” Kelly said.

Lenoir County Cooperative Extension has been helping to house pets with owners and rescuing animals.

“If they are with their owner we will take them,” Kelly said. “We’ll work with them and if they have a crate that is the best.”

Wednesday the shelters amount of pets doubled from what they have been since it opened.

Eve Honeycutt, livestock extension agent at Lenoir County Cooperative Extension, said because this flooding has been slower, residents have been able to move their live-

stock to higher ground.

“I do know of a few farms where the cows are just kind of situated on a higher part of the farm,” Honeycutt said.

Most livestock owners were able to get their animals out of harm’s way without the need for evacuation.

If people do need help with rescuing livestock at this point officials are advising they call the Lenoir County Cooperative Extension.

“It’s really going to depend right now on where they are located if any do need to be evacuated,” Honeycutt said. “There are not a whole lot of options south of the river as far as moving to other counties because there are so many counties south of us that are in worse shape.”

While some livestock is safe from flood zones, Honeycutt asks farmers to keep fallen tree limbs out of the pastures for their animals’ safety.

“When the limb breaks and the leaves start to wilt, cherry trees develop what’s commonly called prussic acid poisoning, they develop this toxin in the leaves while its wilting and if cattle and horses are around those leaves they can eat them if there isn’t much else around,” Honeycutt said.

The State Fairgrounds is one of the evacuation points for livestock, but with the fair going on Honeycutt said that is not an option.

“For horses there is the Bob Martin Regional Center in Williamston and it is available and we can provide that contact information if people still have horses that need to be evacuated,” Honeycutt said.

Agencies through the Cooperative Extension have also been bringing in hay and feed for those who are stranded and can’t get out to get more.

“There’s lots of help available we just need to know what the need is,” Honeycutt said. ■



## FEMA offers assistance to NC residents

BY AMANDA THAMES

For those with damages and in need of help due to the tragedy Hurricane Matthew and its wake has brought to Eastern North Carolina, FEMA says they can help.

Gov. Pat McCrory requested a federal disaster declaration for Lenoir County, along with 16 additional affected counties, and was approved for public and individual federal assistance, according to a press release.

“This declaration will help augment state and local costs of responding to the storm and will provide assistance for individuals to repair or rebuild damaged homes,” according to the release.

Thursday’s press release from FEMA, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said short-term assistance for survivors can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs. Other needs included medical and dental expenses along with funeral and burial costs.

Long-term assistance includes low-interest disaster loans from U.S. Small Business Administration that could help cover losses that are not fully compensated by insurance, according to the release. These loans would not duplicate benefits given by other agencies.

“Survivors should also contact their insurance company to file an insurance claim. FEMA is unable to duplicate insurance payments. However, those without insurance or those who may be underinsured may still receive help after their insurance claims have been settled,” according to the press release.

The application process takes approximately 20 minutes to complete and registers will need their Social Security number, insurance information, financial information, contact information and banking information if the approved choose to have funds transferred to a banking account, according to Disaster Assistance.

Businesses are asked to use the Social Security number of the person responsible for the business. Applicants should have pen and paper nearby while completing the application in order to record information during the registration process, according to Disaster Assistance.

Storm damage and losses from Hurricane Matthew must have occurred on Oct. 4 or after, according to a press release from FEMA.

“All donations received will support Hurricane Matthew long-term recovery efforts in North Carolina,” according to FEMA. ■

### Details

The North Carolina counties approved for individual assistance as of Thursday afternoon are below. If your county has not been added to the list, Disaster Assistance says to complete the application now to speed up the process if other counties are included in the declaration. The application will be processed if your county is added and FEMA determines you’re eligible.

- Beaufort
- Bertie
- Bladen
- Columbus
- Cumberland
- Edgecombe
- Greene
- Harnett
- Hoke
- Johnston
- Lenoir
- Nash
- Pitt
- Robeson
- Sampson
- Wayne
- Wilson

*Information courtesy of Disaster Assistance*

**Red Cross staff members** have to be brought in by trucks Saturday to get to the shelter at Lenoir Community College. Many roads are closed due to flooding from the Neuse River. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press



**Piles of furniture is stacked outside of Herriage Court Apartments** on Thursday along Doctors Drive. Rainfall from Hurricane Matthew flooded parts of the complex and forced emergency evacuations. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press



**Trista Jones** watches the Neuse River rise at Tiffany West Park in Kinston Thursday, Oct. 13, 2016. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media



**Floodwaters closed several roads in downtown Kinston** Thursday Oct. 14, 2016. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media



**The Neuse River rose to record levels** along Lincoln Street Oct. 14, 2016 in Kinston. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media

# Lenoir County residents hopeful despite devastation

BY STEVE DEVANE

**L**A GRANGE | Vernon Herring III remained optimistic Thursday, even as he and his wife, Arrin, used a canoe to retrieve some of his parents' clothes and other personal belongings from their house on Jenny Lind Road.

"We're expecting the worst, but we're still hopeful," he said. "That's what keeps you alive and keeps your heart pumping."

Herring's parents' house was flooded. Water encircled his and his wife's house next door.

Bear Creek, which runs behind the houses, flooded after Hurricane Matthew dumped about 9 inches of rain Saturday in Lenoir County. The water already was as high as it was when Hurricane Floyd hit the area in September 1999 and is expected to get higher.

"They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger," Herring said. "By now, we should be as tough and as hard as rock."

Herring said he and his family members are living with relatives in La Grange and Goldsboro.

"We're just trying to re-establish basic living," he said. "That's about all we can do because everything is so overwhelming."

Herring said he was looking for a reason to be hopeful. Efforts to help crossed racial and religious boundaries, he said.

"Deep down, we're all human beings," he said.

The flooding also put Herring and his family in contact with old friends who wanted to know how they were doing.

"Maybe we should do that all the time rather than just when apocalyptic things happen," he said.

A few miles away on Pine Bush Road, Patrick Barwick was checking on his grandmother's house, which was a few hundred yards from the Neuse River's floodwaters. He said his grandmother, Ella Daughy, was staying with his mother.

"We got her out just to be on the safe side," he said.

Barwick's house is nearby, but on higher ground. He said the river was usually about a half mile away.





"I've never seen it this high," he said.

The flooding was higher than when Hurricane Floyd came through, Barwick said. He said he is hoping the water has stopped rising.

"The good Lord willing, we're all going to be all right," he said.

In Kinston, Wesley Collins was surveying high water near his mother's house on South Street. He was staying with her because his house on Poole Road already flooded.

"That's why I'm over here," he said.

Collins said his mother, Delorise Collins, was living in her house when Hurricane Floyd hit the area. The water came within about 100 feet of the house, but didn't get closer.

"She said everybody flooded except this area," he said.

If the water gets in the yard, Collins said he and his mother will leave. The water had risen to near the Hurricane Floyd area and was swiftly flowing about 100 yards away Thursday.

"It's got some current to it," he said.

Felicia Lawson already had to leave Wingate Apartments off Lincoln Street. The residents there had to evacuate on Tuesday, she said as she watched the rushing water from Heritage Street.

"They have police on every street," she said. "They're making sure nobody goes down there to get hurt."

Lawson, who is staying with her mother, said she was glad to see people offering to help.

"A lot of people don't have anywhere to go," she said. "Some people are taking people in." ■

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**James Estep** sits on a step along Shine St. as floodwater from the rain of Hurricane Matthew surrounds Faith Tabernacle Holy Church in Kinston, Friday, Oct. 14, 2016. The Neuse River is expected to crest early Saturday morning, but is expected to remain at major flood levels for weeks. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



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**Used cars submerged in floodwater rest along US 70W in Kinston, Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2016, as the Neuse River continues to rise. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press**



# Hurricane Matthew flooding claims two lives in Lenoir County

BY ADAM WAGNER

People have died in two separate Lenoir County incidents related to the Hurricane Matthew flooding, with thousands of gallons of diesel fuel spilling in another incident.

The fuel spill and one of the deaths were both caused when motorists drove around barricades, said Roger Dail, Lenoir County's director of emergency services.

"Do not go around these barricades," he said. "They're there for a reason, don't go around. These roads are in bad shape."

A person drowned Thursday morning after driving around barricades on Fields

Station Road, Dail said. He did not identify the deceased motorist.

The driver of a home delivery fuel truck drove around a set of barricades on N.C. 55, Dail said. Between Strabane and Seven Springs, the truck ran into a flooded stretch of road and tipped.

After it tipped, Dail said, the truck spilled an estimated 4,500 gallons of diesel fuel into a nearby creek.

On Tuesday, a man riding a horse was initially injured after the animal tripped and fell in a flooded field. The man died from his injuries, Dail said.

The man, who Dail did not identify, was attempting to round up loose livestock

**First responders** unload a man, injured while rounding up stranded cattle, from a Humvee and into a waiting ambulance after a water rescue off Neuse Rd. in Kinston on Thursday, Oct. 13. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

around 4 p.m. Tuesday when the horse he was riding tripped.

It was unclear whether his death was caused by drowning or from injuries incurred from being crushed beneath the animal, Dail said. ■

## KINSTON AFTER DARK: Pumps running; feeding first responders; remembering Floyd

A tour of Kinston after dark – and before the 9 p.m. curfew – found downtown bustling with activity.

BY PAUL STEPHEN AND ADAM WAGNER

Shortly before the 9 p.m. curfew fell Thursday, Hardy Creech stood on the corner of North and Queen streets, hoping the seven sump pumps he could hear running in the basement of Realo Discount Drugs were working.

Realo, which Creech co-owns, is no stranger to flooding. On a pole in the basement, there's a distinct line about 2 feet off the ground marking where water from 1999's Hurricane Floyd sat.

During Floyd, water came gushing upward from a storm drain in the basement, flooding the office Creech's partner had there. This time, the Neuse River is seeping through miniscule cracks between bricks, and Creech's partner has his office on the third floor.

"It took us a while to figure out where it was coming from," Creech said.

This year's flooding began Saturday, when the storm surge associated with Matthew hit, leaving 3 inches in the basement.

Creech and his partners started running two or three sump pumps, turning them off some nights only to come in and find another 2 or 3 inches of water on the floor.

Wednesday night, Creech left three sump pumps running only to come back and, again, discover 3 inches of water on the floor.

Kinston Police Department officer J. Delaney (from left), Cpl. Travis Moore and Sgt. Wayne Bayless place an order with manager Andrew Sutton at Boiler Room Oyster Bar Thursday evening. The restaurant is offering free meals for all first responders helping with flood relief efforts in Kinston through Saturday. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media

To solve the problem, he more than doubled the number of pumps he had running.

"I'm just hoping tomorrow I'll come in and there won't be 3 inches of water again," Creech said.

When Creech took a pair of visitors down to the basement late Thursday, past the set of extension cords snaking down the stairs, the water laid uneven across the floor, with up to an inch in spots.

'It was time for a cold beer'



Around the corner, the heart of Downtown Kinston had slowed to a crawl as the swollen Neuse River rose to record heights Thursday night. But Andrew Sutton, general manager at Boiler Room Oyster Bar was anything but bored.

"It's not so much a storm as a steady onslaught," Sutton said. "It's the sunniest, nicest Armageddon of all time."

The restaurant opened its doors to first responders, offering those working to keep residents safe a free meal. More than 200



Hardy Creech, owner of Realo Discount Drugs, monitors multiple sump pumps in the basement of his business at 300 N. Queen St. as water from the flooded Neuse River flows into downtown Kinston Thursday evening. Paul Stephen/GateHouse Media

firefighters, police officers and others had stopped by since Wednesday and the staff was bracing for that many more before the end of the week.

"We're thankful for what they've done for us," Kinston Police Department Sgt. Wayne

Bayless said before placing an order. "Otherwise we're just grabbing a sandwich at a gas station."

Around the corner at Sugar Hill Pizzeria the mood was festive despite the coming flood. Susan Fillippeli was in town to cele-

brate her father's 90th birthday, but wound up contributing to the relief effort as well.

"We've been filling sandbags all day and decided it was time for a cold beer," Fillippeli said. "It's wonderful to see the community come together like this. I love Kinston, so I want to make sure it does as well as possible during this storm."

'Praying for the rest'

Around the North Street side of Sugar Hill, Brookes and Amanda Poole and Candace Beverly pulled up with a jon boat dangling from the back of their pickup truck.

The trio had been out filling sandbags and distributing them to downtown businesses that could lie within the flood plain when the Neuse peaks late Friday.

"The floodscape has completely changed," Beverly said. "If you didn't flood during Floyd, but it was close, you're probably going to flood now."

The trio was dirty and tired, estimating they'd filled 50 to 75 sandbags Thursday alone. Thursday was the fourth consecutive day they'd spent filling sandbags and leaving them outside downtown residences.

"We're sandbagging what could be sandbagged and praying for the rest," he said.

Brooks had used the jon boat to reach a warehouse his company, Poole Realty, owns that was flooded.

A major difference between Matthew's flooding and Floyd's, the Pooles said, is the presence of social media in 2016, which helps people throughout the county share and appreciate what damage is being done and where.

Social media also helped the Pooles and other Kinston residents and businesses better prepare for the disaster.

Even with the extra notice, the Pooles and Beverly all know the coming days will be challenging, no matter what precautions they or others take.

"This is still the before pictures and video," Amanda Poole said. ■



**Flood waters from the Neuse River surround parts of Kinston, N.C. Friday Oct. 14, 2016 after Hurricane Matthew.**  
Photo by Ken Blevins / GateHouse Media



## HELPING HANDS: Unaffected Kinston residents rush to donate to flood victims

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**K**INSTON | If you drive through certain parts of Kinston, chances are you wouldn't even know that the city was experiencing its worst flooding since before the turn of the 21st century.

That doesn't mean the people living there have abandoned their neighbors by the water, though.

Thursday and Friday of this week, residents flocked to Fairfield Community center to deliver food, water, pet food, clothes and other supplies for people currently living in shelters at Lenoir Community College and Kinston High School.

"Where I live, my yard is intact and my house is dry, but if you look just a stone's throw away, people are struggling," Sue Ellen Maddux, who helped organize the donation drive, said.

Maddux said she didn't like the idea of people losing their homes and belongings while she remained, dry, and reached out to city councilwoman Felicia Solomon to see if

there was anything she could do to help.

The pair set up the donation drive at Fairfield, and were inundated with donations from churches and community members.

"Every time we change the list of needs, I turn around and there it all is," Christy Eubanks, who made more than six deliveries over the course of two days to Fairfield

Eubanks said the donations were coming from members of Bethel Freewill Baptist Church and the residents of the Banks Elementary School community.

"It's nice enough there that we could go back to school already," Eubanks said. "But I think for a lot of us, even though we can't see it, we know it's there, and we want to help."

After being dropped off, some donations were organized and stored at the community center, while other supplies were sent to the LCC and KHS shelters courtesy of National Guard vehicles.

Maddux said there are no plans to return to Fairfield today or tomorrow for another drive, but she does plan to resume collecting donations on Monday, asking specifically for cleanup supplies.

**Christal Edwards**, who was impacted during the flooding of Hurricane Matthew, receives donated goods Saturday at Southeast Elementary in Kinston. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

In addition to supplies for people living in shelters, volunteers at Fairfield were also collecting donations for the Lenoir County SPCA, which opened a satellite shelter at 431 Joe Nunn Road on Friday.

The shelter is a temporary location used to house lost, stray or abandoned animals until the SPCA can get animals from the south side of the river across town to the main shelter.

That location is in need of old newspapers, disposable gloves and pet food, particularly food for kittens.

To contact or organize a donation for the satellite shelter, call 252-286-0178. ■



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**The American flag is reflected in a window at Tabernacle Church along U.S. 70W in Kinston, just above the high water mark of Hurricane Matthew flooding. The church, and many others, are picking up the pieces after last week's record flooding event. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press**



## FEEDING A COMMUNITY: Kinston volunteers feed those in need

Atika Sayfuddin (left) fills plates for Kinston-area residents affected by the Hurricane Matthew flooding at the Temple of Deliverance Worship Center on Lenoir Street Friday afternoon. Photo by Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media

BY PAUL STEPHEN

**H**urricanes and floods are no excuse to let a neighbor go hungry in Kinston. With the waters of the Neuse River rising to a historic 28.27 feet by noon Friday, area churches, restaurants and residents were doing their part to feed those in need.

"We're making a large amount of food and bringing it to the shelters," said Cecilia Wong, whose family operates Hibachi Express at 2405 N. Herritage St. "We saw on the news that people lost everything. We were so grateful to have a restaurant that's still working and wanted to help the people who've been affected."

For Jonetta Dixon and her sons, J.J. and Tru Dixon, the efforts of a group of Kinston-area

pastors meant a break from cold bologna sandwiches. She has been stranded at the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School since floodwaters drove her out of her Lincoln Street home.

Ministers Anthony McGleen and Mike Fields were among the organizers behind an effort called A Community Feeding A Community, which set up at the Temple of Deliverance Worship Center at 314 W. Lenoir Ave. through 4 p.m. Friday. Dixon was among the earliest visitors to stop by Friday.

"This will be the first hot meal we've had in days. It means a lot, and I say that from the heart," Dixon said while waiting on a plate of grilled chicken, baked beans and vegetables. "It feels so good to be around people who are filled with positivity in this situation."

Fields said the effort started with \$60

and 50 hot dogs after Hurricane Matthew passed through last week. It has since grown to a production featuring two massive charcoal grills, hundreds of pounds of chicken and enough sides and beverages to fill any hungry belly that passes by.

"No questions, no money. We're just doing this because God has touched our hearts," Fields said.

The operation was largely supported by a steady flow of donated food and other supplies.

"Whatever you want to bring, we'll make sure it gets used for the glory of God," Fields added.

A Community Feeding A Community has served meals in several locations since the flooding began. They will continue the effort tomorrow at Teachers Memorial School at 500 Marcella Drive in Kinston. ■



## RIDING IT OUT: As Kinston flood waters rise, some residents stay at home

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

Friday morning, Leytrecia Marshall, Edna Briggs and Josephine Harper, with her dog, Rusty, sat outside of a home on Cedar Lane in Kinston, just a few feet away from the water slowing pouring into their neighborhood.

“There is nothing like sleeping in your own bed,” said Briggs, who, with her husband, returned to her home early Friday morning, after staying with a family member. “We came back this morning and we checked on our house and we checked on the neighbors, and then I went inside and took a nap.”

Cedar Lane was one of multiple low-lying areas where mandatory evacuations were issued earlier this week, in anticipation of the Neuse River flooding the area. Now that the river has officially begun flooding the city, simply traveling to the small neighborhood involves passing by a maze of closed, flooded or blocked roads.

Most of the neighborhood is underwater,

and the majority of its residents either moved out or fled earlier in the week, including Briggs, who suspects the storage unit she moved most of her valuables to has now flooded, even as her house remains dry.

Briggs said she came back home because she didn’t feel comfortable leaving what she had left at home unsupervised. As they evacuated, many of Briggs’ neighbors placed orange stickers on their doors, signifying that they had left home.

“Those stickers are a sign that no one is home,” Harper, also of Cedar Lane, said.

Harper, like Briggs is lucky, her house is still dry, and the water appears to have stopped well short of her driveway.

“We are here to look out for each other,” Harper said. “To make sure no one is taking advantage of our neighbors while they are gone, because there isn’t anybody else coming back here to check for them.”

Just a few houses down from where the trio of women are keeping watch, William Murrell returned home for what he called a much-needed respite.

**Flood waters from the Neuse River** surround parts of Kinston, N.C. Friday Oct. 14, 2016 after Hurricane Matthew. Photo by Ken Blevins / GateHouse Media

Water had engulfed most of Murrell’s driveway by Friday morning, though it didn’t appear likely that his house would be damaged by the flooding.

Murrell’s main concern was actually a building he keeps in his back yard, which was surrounded by water that spilled out of a drainage ditch and contributed to the flooding in his neighborhood.

Murrell said he has been living in his home for more than 40 years, and has never seen flooding as bad as this week.

“Even during Floyd, it didn’t get this far,” he said. “We can’t be living like this, but as long as it gets better, we’ll try it again.” ■

# GOING QUICK: Kinston grocery store shelves emptying as flooding continues

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**G**rocery stores throughout Eastern North Carolina have started getting groceries back on the shelves.

Since Hurricane Matthew hit grocery stores around Kinston have continued to sell out of milk, bread and other daily necessities.

Christy Phillips-Brown, with Food Lion's corporate office said the company's distribution center in Dunn was closed for two days as a result of the storm but re-opened on Tuesday upon full restoration of utility power.

"We are working to resume full capacity of distributions from this center as quickly as possible," she said.

Stores have continued to receive products from other distribution centers around the country.

"We have been supporting our stores through other distribution centers and appreciate the heroic efforts of teams across our company, even as far as Maine and New York, who are supporting restoration efforts at our stores and distribution center," Phillips-Brown said.

While the Piggly Wiggly in Jackson Heights has received some product from distributors, it also received a lot of product from the U.S. 70 store that has been evacuated due to flooding.

"Hopefully my supplier will start bringing trucks in tomorrow," Piggly Wiggly Store Manager John King said.

The store is currently out of canned pastas and many dairy items and frozen foods.



King said he hopes to begin getting trucks in every day starting Monday.

Though this whole storm, King said his employees have been great throughout this experience.

"They have stuck right by me day and night," he said. "I've really been lucky."

Officials at Food Lion have been working extensively to ensure stores are open to serve residents.

"Our Kinston stores are receiving deliveries today," Phillips-Brown said Friday.

Pink Hill Food Lion Assistant Manager Timothy Bryant said they had gotten a truck in that morning and employees were restocking the shelves.

"We have trucks coming from Virginia and other distributors," he said. "We've had some come in and we have more coming."

Besides getting trucks and groceries into their stores, Food Lion has also been reaching out to those severely affected by flooding.

"On Monday, Food Lion committed to providing \$100,000 in donations to local food banks, including the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, along with a \$25,000 donation to local the American Red Cross' Hurricane Matthew Relief Fund," Phillips-Brown said.

**Water surrounds the Piggly Wiggly and Kings Restaurant on U.S. 70 E in Kinston during the Hurricane Matthew flooding. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press**

Stores also are accepting in-store donations for the American Red Cross' Hurricane Relief Fund and have donated 15 truckloads of water to communities in need in eastern North Carolina.

The Piggly Wiggly Fresh Buy and Piggly Wiggly North Carolina will be donating several tractor trailers of food and water to those in need Monday.

Greg Floyd of Piggly Wiggly said the grocery chain would be making a significant contribution to the Food Bank of Eastern North Carolina, Mary's Kitchen and the Salvation Army.

"We're waiting on the final dollar amount, but it's going to be a lot of product," Floyd said.

The donation will be at 10 a.m. Monday in front of the Heritage Street store near Kinston Plaza. ■





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An National Guard truck drives through flood waters from the Neuse River down U.S. 70 East near the Kinston Visitors Center. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press



## As Neuse River nears historic crest, officials look ahead to recovery

BY ADAM WAGNER

**J**acqueline Ruffin, a resident of the Simon Bright neighborhood, sat outside Friday with her friends, watching as water left behind by Hurricane Matthew slowly crept across the road in front of her apartment.

"It's like watching a nature show on TV," she said. "All these people that have never seen the Neuse, here it is."

As Simpson stared at the Neuse River, it was nearing its projected crest, already having blown past the record set by Hurricane Floyd's flooding in 1999. The National Weather Service predicted the river, which reaches flood stage at 14 feet, would crest at a new record 28.8 feet around 2 a.m. Saturday, remaining steady around 28.6 feet before beginning to fall.

As the river's rise slowed Friday, emergency officials and city leaders were begin-

ning to turn their eyes to the challenges the coming days, weeks and months will bring.

"We had the preparation, then we had the response, now we're fixing to get to the recovery side," said Roger Dail, Lenoir County's director of emergency services. "And the recovery side is the hard side because there's a lot of people out there who are hurt."

During the course of the week, the Neuse spilled over its banks and into the 100-year



William Murrell stands at the edge of his property, which is partially underwater, on Cedar Ln. in Kinston. Murrell and his wife Jo Ann weathered the storm following Hurricane Floyd and chose to do this same during this flood. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

flood plain from the Wayne County line on the west to the Craven County on the east.

As of Friday afternoon, there were 74 people in the Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School, with 110 more at Lenoir Community College. What remained unclear was how many others had evacuated, fleeing to friends and family as the flood water seeped into their homes.

As residents begin returning to their homes, the assessment phase will begin,

with teams spreading across the county to determine the dollar amount of the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew's flooding. Lenoir County will ask state and federal emergency management professionals to aid with that effort, Dail said.

Those whose homes suffered storm damage can register for federal assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

A FEMA official will visit Kinston on Saturday to begin coordinating response with Dail. One key aspect of the recovery will be finding temporary housing for the people who were displaced by the flooding.

After Hurricane Floyd, Dail said, the county built a camper community. In 2016, that is no longer an option, so Dail and his team will investigate other options, including renting homes around the area or other forms of temporary housing.

Late Friday, about 230 Duke Energy customers remained without power late Friday, 209 of whom were in Grifton. Earlier in the day, Duke had sent a mobile substation to Grifton to step in for damaged equipment.

"When we started planning our response to Hurricane Matthew late in September, we anticipated hurricane-force winds and we anticipated a lot of rain, but no one anticipated the historic flooding that really has just engulfed this area," said Bobby Simpson, Duke Energy's storm director.

In light of that historic flooding, residents across Lenoir County banded together to lend a helping hand. At the Boiler Room, emergency officials were offered a free meal, while a woman stopped by the Free Press' office looking for old newspapers she could use to line cages at the Lenoir County SPCA's temporary shelter on Joe Nunn Road.

While he was heartened by the spirit he saw, Kinston Mayor BJ Murphy hoped it would linger.

"We need that same passion two weeks from now," Murphy said. "There will still be businesses that need cleaned out, there will still be people that are displaced, there will still be emergency management personnel."

Murphy also warned that floodwaters remain dangerous, urging drivers to drive around when they reach flooded stretches.

Dail warned that dangers will remain even once the water starts receding.

Emergency officials should be the first people into recently flooded areas, he said, so they make sure live power lines don't present a risk to people's lives.

"If everybody can just be patient," he said, "we're going to make it happen as quick as we can." ■

## FLOOD DEATHS: Pink Hill man dies when mower overturns in flooded ditch

BY ADAM WAGNER

**P**INK HILL | Hurricane Matthew's flood waters claimed a third Lenoir County victim Thursday afternoon in Pink Hill, said Craig Hill, chairman of the county commissioners.

As of Friday afternoon, Matthew's floodwaters had claimed three lives in Lenoir County.

A man died Thursday afternoon in Pink Hill when the riding lawn mower he was riding overturned into a flooded ditch, said Craig Hill, chairman of the Lenoir County commissioners. Hill did not know the man's name.

His death follows a Tuesday afternoon incident in which a man was riding a horse in a flooded field when the horse tripped, pinning him beneath it. Officials said the man died Wednesday.

And Thursday afternoon, a woman drove around a barrier in the LaGrange area before running into a washed-out road and drowning.

"They're all storm-related deaths, all risks that people are taking," Hill said. "We're just asking people to be cautious." ■

# The First Responders: In Their Words



"I was a victim of Hurricane Floyd in '99 and I lost everything and had to rebuild. This is an opportunity to help others rebuild, and it's a heartfelt moment to do this because I went through the same thing." -**OFFICER ADRIAN BAKER**, Kinston Police Department. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media

"This is the most rewarding job I've ever had. I get to help other people, and it's an honor to be selected for this work." -**PATRICIA WIEDMER**, FEMA. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



"Helping others is my passion, and every job I have is centered on helping people. When you see people who've lost everything it puts everything into perspective. It's amazing to see how everyone in this community has pulled together and are helping one another." -**RON WILSON**, FEMA. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



"I believe in doing unto others as you would have done to yourself. My life is good, and I feel that this is the least I can do to give back to those who need it. It's the right thing to do and I want to do it." -**AUDREY SCOTT**, American Red Cross. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media

"I love doing this, it's a passion for me. It's in the family; my mother and father did this as young adults, so helping people is second nature. You don't think about who it is, you just do it. It's all about helping people." -**BANKS NIMMO**, Kinston Fire Department. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



"I grew up in Missouri, so I've grown up with tornadoes, floods, and ice storms every year. Going through that you learn to help everyone, and I really enjoy helping others. I got involved with the Red Cross because I believe in humanity, and nothing is better than helping others." -**BRIAN GATES**, American Red Cross. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



"It is a privilege to be part of a team that helps people when they need it." -**JAMES LANCASTER**, Kinston Fire Department. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media

"I've been a volunteer to ten years, and been on four national deployments. It's the moments where I'm able to help someone during their bad time that means the most." -**KATHLEEN IVES**, American Red Cross. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



"I joined the Red Cross after 9/11 so I could help the people in New York City. I'm glad to be able to do this and it's very satisfying to help someone who needs it, and to be able to make a positive difference in someone's life. It's my way of giving back after being so blessed." -**LINDA PLANTE**, American Red Cross. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



"It's a privilege to help those who are hurting and to give them relief. It makes me thankful for all I have, but also makes you realize that tomorrow everything you have could be gone." -**KENNETH CHURCH**, American Red Cross. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media

"It's sad that people who have everything they've known taken away because of the water, but being there to help them, get them to a shelter, get them fed, is a great feeling." -**OFFICER JAMES BEST**, Kinston Police Department. Photo by Todd F. Michalek / ENC Media



## Impact of flooded hog waste lagoons debated

BY STEVE DEVANE

**E**nvironmentalists and pork industry representatives disagree on the potential impact that flooding from Hurricane Matthew might have on lagoons filled with hog waste.

The Neuse River reached historically high levels after the storm dumped nine inches or more of rain in the area.

The head of the N.C. Pork Council said damage from the hurricane is relatively minimal. A hog waste lagoon that is underwater remains intact, council CEO Deborah Johnson said in a statement.

"The floodwater runs over the lagoon and carries away only a small portion of wastewater that is heavily diluted," she said. "Most of the wastewater remains in the lagoon and the environmental impact is greatly minimized."

The Waterkeeper Alliance says untreated hog waste containing "dangerous bacteria and viruses" is headed downstream. Matthew Starr, the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper, said the organization has photos

documenting issues with lagoons.

"There is hog feces in the water and lots of it," he said.

Johnson said that as of Friday afternoon, no breaches of hog lagoons had been reported. She said the state Department of Environmental Quality reported that 11 farms had been inundated with floodwater.

"This is a situation where the lagoons did not overflow or breach," she said. "The lagoons remain intact but are underwater as a result of flood waters coming onto the property."

Rick Dove, a senior adviser with the Waterkeeper Alliance, said he has seen at least 12 flooded lagoons in his flights over the area. Four more lagoons in Craven County might be underwater today, he said.

The alliance said in a statement that flooded or breached lagoons in the Neuse River watershed and near Contentnea Creek. The Trent River is threatening lagoons in Jones County, it said.

Johnson said in her statement that the alliance is exploiting the storm's aftermath to push an "anti-farm agenda."

**Flood waters creep further into the Hampton Inn, Quality Inn and Hardees at the intersection of U.S. 258 South and U.S 70. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press**

Since Hurricane Floyd hit the state in 1999 the pork industry has worked with state officials to reduce the risk of pollution during major storms, Johnson said. The number of hog lagoons that have flooded this year is a decrease of nearly 80 percent from 1999, she said.

"This shows that the proactive steps we have taken since Hurricane Floyd are working," she said.

Johnson said the alliance is ignoring spills of human waste from municipalities after the storm.

Starr said those spills also upset him.

"Let's work on it all," he said. "There's a lot of blame to go around." ■



## ALONG THE RIVER: Pearson Park draws historic flood watchers

A view of the planetarium from Pearson Park shows how high the Neuse River reached the building. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

BY PAUL STEPHEN

**K**inston-area residents are used to gathering around Tiffany West Park, be it to fill their bags with fresh produce at the farmers market, catch a concert in the neighboring Pearson Park or burn off dinner in the walking trail that connects them all.

Hurricane Matthew brought a new activity that has become a daily ritual for many: watching the flooded Neuse River rise perilously close to the King Street bridge.

"It's just kind of a compulsion to be here. I can't not watch," said Allie Carter, who lives and works downtown. "This is the heart and soul of the community for a lot of us."

Many used the spectacle as an opportunity to swap war stories from Hurricane Floyd in 1999 – the last time waters lapped at Heritage Street.

"Back then I was told it was a 500-year flood," Joella Wooten said. "Now here we are again just 17 years later."

Even Briley Lanning, only 12 years old, was able to hold her own with the flood-water veterans thanks to a few implanted memories.

"I feel like I was there because my dad is always telling stories about it," Briley said.

Mayor BJ Murphy, who could be spotted by the bridge dozens of times since the waters started rising, wasn't surprised to find so many of his fellow Kinstonians

watching on from the park.

"This is a natural watering hole," Murphy said, hesitating. "Please pardon the pun."

For Arthur Platt, the river served as an effective gauge until he'd get back to work. Platt makes windows for Alside, and has been out of work since the flooding started, but anticipates clocking in soon.

"They told us to be ready," Platt said. "I know I'm going to be putting in a lot of hours as this city gets cleaned up."

With only a half hour to spare before the 9 p.m. curfew kicked in Friday night and well after sunset, P.C. Barwick and Becky Darst strolled through for one last peek before the river crested at a record 28.31 feet.

"For us," Barwick said. "This is historic." ■

# Faces from the flood

People impacted by Hurricane Matthew's flooding in the Kinston area.

**OCTAVIOUS CANNON** was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from his home in the Mitchell Wooten Apartments. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



**SARAH ROGERS** lives in Tupelo, Mississippi, and is volunteering with the American Red Cross at the emergency shelter at Kinston High School. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



**ROSEMARY CHESTON** was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from her home on Holman Street in Kinston. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



**JAMIE BARNES** and her goddaughter Amina Allen were staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from her home on Bright Street in Kinston. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



**GARLAND BULLOCK** was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from his home in LaGrange. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



**FRAZIER BRYANT** was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from his home in Holloway Court Apartments. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media

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**LANIER SWINSON**  
was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from his home on Lincoln Street. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



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**KEVIN CAMPBELL**  
was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from his home on Shine Street in Kinston. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



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**JONETTA DIXON**  
was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from her home on Lincoln Street. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



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**GLENDALOCK**  
lives in Kinston and is volunteering with the American Red Cross at the emergency shelter at Kinston High School. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



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**TYLER CORSER**  
was staying in the American Red Cross shelter at Kinston High School after evacuating from his home in Goldsboro. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media



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**DENNIS HENDRICKSON**  
lives in Sacramento, California, and is volunteering with the American Red Cross at the emergency shelter at Kinston High School. Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media

# 2 HURRICANES: Kinston's response to Floyd lessened Matthew's impact

BY ADAM WAGNER

Standing on the banks of the Neuse River this week, watching water creep ever-closer to the bottom of the King Street Bridge, crowds of people continually compared what was happening to what Hurricane Floyd wrought here 17 years ago.

Friday evening, Joella Wooten brought her daughter and a friend to see the flooding first-hand. The river had seeped past Floyd's 27.71-foot record and was near its 28.31-foot crest.

"This is something they need to see," Wooten said, later adding, "This is worse than Floyd."

Floyd and last week's Hurricane Matthew both caused at least 500-year floods in Kinston and catastrophic flooding throughout North Carolina, but they are not the same storm.

Floyd came slowly and then all at once, dumping rain across the region before flash flooding during a 12-hour period forced the sudden evacuation of residents throughout Kinston and Lenoir County, with some remembering drifting on boats out of Lincoln City by a cemetery in the night. The storm caused 500-year-flooding on the Contentnea Creek and 100-year flooding on the Neuse River at Kinston.

Matthew's floodwaters rose steadily during the blue-skied days that followed in hurricane's wake. The Lumber River devastated Lumberton and the Black River washed residents out of Pender County as the water that would eventually lift the Neuse steadily worked its way downstream, toward the Pamlico Sound.

## KINSTON 2016

Perhaps most importantly, the Kinston of 2016 is not the Kinston of 1999.

The Kinston of 1999 had Lincoln City, a vibrant black community that flooded during Hurricane Fran in 1996 and flooded worse during Floyd in 1999, after which FEMA bought and razed nearly 800 homes so future flooding would wash away tall grass and trees rather than people's homes.

The 1999 flooding was quickly followed by nearly 1,200 layoffs at Lenoir County's DuPont plant, a decision that claimed middle class jobs and led to many fleeing the area for good. Kinston had 24,729 residents in 1999, according to U.S. Census data, but the



**Galen Treble** watches a landscape of water along U.S. 70 bypass as he delivers much needed supplies, including soccer balls, to the Red Cross Shelter at Lenoir Community College Friday. The Free Press file photo (9-25-99)

**Mayor BJ Murphy** records a video of flood waters from the Neuse River washing over U.S 70 East on Saturday. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

population had slumped to 21,212 by 2014.

On the banks of the Neuse, civic leaders and restaurant owners have just begun to establish Kinston as more than a place vacationers from Raleigh breeze past when they're taking U.S. 70 to the beach. Mother Earth Brewing and the Chef and the Farmer restaurant anchor a burgeoning food scene, and the city's downtown features blocks that wouldn't be out of place in Charlotte's Plaza Midwood.

Matthew's flooding could set that revitalization back -- the tops of hotels on the city's south side stuck out of the Neuse River on Thursday behind N.C. Gov. Pat McCrory as he gave an update on conditions in the region.

"You've got two floods of a century in less than two decades," said BJ Murphy, the city's mayor. "But I have a tremendous amount of faith in our entrepreneurs and capitalism and humanity to know Kinston will get back on its feet."

## TWICE IN A LIFETIME

And then there are the dozens, possibly

hundreds, of people across the county and region who have been affected by flooding, many of whom are only 17 years removed from starting from scratch after Floyd.

Sharon Whitfield remembers Floyd's floodwaters. She was living in Lincoln City, a low-lying area east of Queen Street and south of Lincoln Street, when the Neuse began to rise.

Emergency crews evacuated Whitfield and her family on boats back in 1999, and on their way out, they floated past Maplewood cemetery. Headstones in that same cemetery were underwater again Friday evening, and a basketball net dangled mere feet above the swollen river.

"It's only been 17 years," Whitfield said. "I did not think we would see this again and just to look at it and see the same scenario, but just a lot worse than it was before ... You would never think you'd see it twice in your lifetime."

Whitfield doesn't live in Lincoln City anymore. The house she lived in was one of about 800 FEMA bought countywide after Floyd's waters had receded, and her new home is a refuge for her daughter and grandson, who left their home when Yadkin Branch spilled over its banks. They're waiting for their hot water heater, washer and dryer to be repaired before returning home.

## OPEN DOORS

Throughout Lenoir County, residents have opened their doors to family and friends who were forced out by flooding.

Tony Bowden swept hair from the floor of South Queen Street Barber Shop Friday evening. Bowden had been offering customers who could make it to the shop half-price haircuts, with the difference coming out of his own pocket.

Bowden's 16-year-old and 14-year-old son had come to stay with him when floodwaters affected the Tick Bite home where they live with their mother. The 16-year-old grasps the scope of what's happening around him, but the 14-year-old is autistic and having a more difficult time.

"All he knows is that the power's out and that a big adjustment for him," Bowden said, "because he can't use his iPad, the TV's not on and he can't use his fan."

Bowden remembers the days after Floyd, when the community rallied together to help clean up and do something as seemingly simple as feeding each other. He wants his sons to appreciate how people are banding together, but also to see how quickly everything they have can be taken away.

Earlier this week, he took the boys to the corner of Adkin and Caswell streets, where a group was providing free meals to anyone who needed it.

"Come here," Bowden told his sons. "This is life. These things happen."

## 'GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN'

Kinston and Lenoir County are particularly vulnerable to things like catastrophic floods happening, said Rick Luettich, the director of the University of North Carolina Institute for Marine Sciences.

When a storm like Matthew or Floyd dumps rain across the Piedmont area, the rainwater runs downhill toward the coast, Luettich said. Once it reaches the coastal plain – which has cities like Burgaw, Greenville and Kinston – that water slows down.

"The land surface flattens out. It hits the coastal plain and all of a sudden it's flat so it doesn't flow downhill as rapidly," Luettich said.

Luettich also pointed to the impact of climate change. The geography combined with the increased frequency of large storms could leave residents across the Coastal Plains once again scrambling to fill sandbags and rescue prized possessions.

"This is going to happen again," Luettich said, later adding, "Events like this are probably going to happen again in people's lifetimes and in their mortgage time frames and even typical business cycles."

## BUYING OUT THE FLOOD ZONE

After Floyd, Kinston prepared in several ways, overhauling emergency response standards and improving communications between city and county officials. For instance, the city and the county had identical 9 p.m. curfews throughout Matthew, and the governments had a joint emergency operations center on Rhodes Avenue.

A key step, though, was city and county leaders' efforts to purchase land along the Neuse's floodplain using FEMA Hazard Mitigation and Housing and Urban Development Disaster Recovery Initiative funds.

The area most affected by the buyouts was Lincoln City.

"Everybody was close-knit. It was just like family. Everybody's kids knew everybody," Whitfield said, adding the former residents of the area continue to have an annual reunion.

Like many residents, Whitfield understands why her neighborhood was destroyed, but also has difficulty reconciling that logic with the strong sentiment she holds for the place she once called home.

"It's not a yes-or-no situation," Whitfield said of the buyouts. "If they hadn't, then it would have been right back to the same thing again, people would have tried to rebuild (after Floyd). They would have just turned around and lost everything all over again."

Officials are quicker to praise the buyouts. Even as the waters continued to rise, Roger Dail, Lenoir County's emergency services director, was thankful the homes were no longer there.

"The one saving grace we have is we don't have those 800 homes," Dail said.

## AFTERWARD – CLEANING 'NEUSE JUICE'

During the days following Floyd, Joe Hargitt remembers the stench of the floodwater, which ran through people's homes, picking up their belongings, sewage and whatever else was in the way.

Hargitt, the owner of King's Restaurant in Kinston, believes the buyout program at least helped Kinston escape an odor problem during Matthew's flooding.

"Everything that was in the way in Floyd isn't there now," Hargitt said, "so the water is basically running over clean land."

King's is one of Kinston's most recognizable restaurants, a barbecue shop that can seat 800, has two satellite stores and has been featured in Southern Living and on the CBS Early Show. It also sits on U.S. 70 just south of the Neuse River and has been underwater for days.

Hargitt plans on reopening the restaurant in the coming days, chopping pork at the takeout stores in the meantime.

"I don't have anything else to do," Hargitt

said. "If I don't open my restaurant back up, I'd have to go work for someone else and I don't want to do that."

The restaurant withstood Floyd and will reopen again after Matthew, but Hargitt is already thinking about the possibility of it flooding again.

"We've had probably eight or 10 hurricanes come through since Floyd," Hargitt said. "I'm just wondering: If every time one comes through, am I going to have to worry about it happening again?"

Ideally, Hargitt said, he would be able to build a platform so the restaurant could stand higher than it does right now. He said he also would consider moving away from the U.S. 70 corridor to higher ground.

Nearby King's stands what N.C. Gov. Pat McCrory called "one of the state's best stores." The Neuse Sports Shop took the warnings about Matthew very seriously, mobilizing a staff of about 60 people to clear most of its wares – including clothes, guns and home décor – into tractor-trailers that were driven to high ground.

"All those people are ready and waiting to scrub 'Neuse Juice' – that's what we started calling it after Floyd – off the walls and fixtures and clean the store up," said Russell Rhodes, Jr., the store's president.

By Tuesday or Wednesday, Rhodes hopes to have his staff back in the store cleaning. After three days of scrubbing and sterilizing, he hopes to start moving merchandise back in by the fourth day.

"The spirit of the people in Kinston is amazing. They will rebound, they will rebuild and businesses will be back on," Rhodes said. "It's an unfortunate thing to learn the quality of your neighbors in this way."

Kinston's spirit becomes clearest when it is responding to a disaster, said Bowden, the barber who took his sons to see relief efforts first-hand.

"It's like everybody's one," he said. "And there's a lot of us here who wish it would continue." ■

## Hurricane Matthew in North Carolina, by the numbers

**2,333:** Water rescues during Hurricane Matthew

**1,136:** N.C. National Guard reservists activated

**660:** Roads that remain closed in eastern and central North Carolina

**26:** Storm-related deaths

**28.31 feet:** Neuse River's crest, Friday at 2 p.m.

**27.6 feet:** Neuse River's depth at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday

**13,366** power outages statewide Saturday



## SHELTER LIVES: Forced out of their homes, residents make the best of life at Red Cross shelter

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**E**ven if it isn't certain what will happen for evacuees living at the Red Cross shelter in the Lenoir Community College gym, life goes on.

Saturday, residents of the shelter moved in and out of the building, walking around the college campus, feeding fish, playing foot-

ball, and finding other ways to keep busy.

"It's pretty nice, you just have certain rules you have to go by," Dewey Price, who has been at the shelter since Thursday, said between drags on a cigarette. "They feed you, you got a place to sleep. It's a good thing they are out here."

Price said he came to the shelter on Thursday, after floodwater forced him out of his

home on U.S. 258.

Price said he spends most of his time outside by the pond in front of the college gym. He has a dog – a light brown shepherd mix named Bandit – who he visits twice each day to feed, water and walk, and said he is just waiting to see what will happen next.

He doubts he'll be able to return home even after the water recedes, but said he



**Michael Stowe, 11, and his grandmother Peggy Key** stand outside the shelter at Lenoir Community College on Saturday. Michael woke his grandmother up when water flooded her home. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

her home in Dupont Circle flooded during the hurricane, said her experience at the shelter has been less pleasant.

Key arrived at the shelter with her 11-year-old grandson, Michael Stow, with nothing but the clothes they were wearing when they escaped their homes. For Key, that consists of a T-shirt, a pair of jeans, and tennis shoes, Stow arrived with just a T-shirt and shorts. Saturday morning marked his seventh day with no shoes.

"They gave me some socks," Stow said. "But they took them away at night to wash them. I'd rather just walk around like this."

A volunteer with the Red Cross told The Free Press that a pair of shoes was being delivered to Stow Saturday afternoon.

Key, who has medical issues, said she has had trouble getting her medications from Red Cross staff, and a recent change in staff at the shelter has led to a lot of confusion at the shelter.

"They keep changing the rules," she said.

Christina Jimenez, shelter manager, said that when the current staff arrived at the shelter on Thursday, the shelter was not being run to the standards set by the Red Cross, and some changes were made at the shelter, but she was unaware of any problems residents had adjusting.

"If anyone has any questions or problems, we are always here to help them," she said.

Located a short walk from the main shelter, the Piedmont Emergency Animal Response team is operating a shelter for cats, dogs, birds, rabbits and other pets kept at the shelter.

Pets are kept in crates, and owners are allowed to visit, walk and feed their pets for most of the day.

"She is just tolerating it. She's used to having free reign of our back yard and not being in a crate or on a leash," Alice Langenbach said while walking her boxer mix Roxy on Saturday. "But I'm more comfortable and less stressed just knowing that she is here and she is safe." ■

doesn't like to think too much about it.

"I've put it all in the good Lord's hands now. He'll take care of me," Price said.

A few feet from where Price was enjoying a smoke Saturday, Elijah Hamillton, 16, and his cousin, Malik Council, 15, were throwing bread to the catfish swimming in the school pond, and trying to lure a turtle out of the water so they could catch it.

They were waiting on other members of the shelter to come outside and play football on the college lawn.

Hamilton said he, with his mother, has been at the shelter since Tuesday, after being evacuated from Kennedy Home, and

Council said he left home on Chestnut Street the night Matthew soaked the city, fleeing a flash flood.

While Council was brooding from being stuck at the shelter with his mother, Hamillton said he was thankful his family had a place to evacuate to.

"Some of the people here don't appreciate what these people are doing for them," he said. "They are feeding us, they are giving us a place to stay, and that means a lot. My mom's a single mother, and this is giving her time to figure out what we are going to do and where we can go."

Peggy Key, who came to the shelter after





# FIRST-TIME JITTERS: For some, Matthew was a first, not a repeat of Floyd

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

Even as waters overtake parts of Kinston in the wake of Hurricane Matthew, many in the city are reminded of images of the last time a major flood hit the area following Hurricane Floyd. For some, though, Matthew is a first-time experience.

For its time, Floyd led to record-level flooding in Kinston, with 27 feet of the Neuse River spilling into the city. This week, Matthew crested at 28.3 feet, a foot more than Floyd.

Malik Council, a 15-year-old displaced by flash flooding from Matthew, said he grew up hearing stories about Floyd and the damage it did to Kinston, but didn't expect anything like what he experienced during Matthew.

Council said he and his family left home to stay with his grandmother as the storm

began, but were quickly forced to evacuate again as water from a flash flood entered her home.

"It's hard right now," Council said. "I'm especially worried about my grandma. She survived Floyd, but I'm wondering if she will survive this."

Peggy Key, another displaced resident, said she was living in Gaston County when Floyd hit almost 20 years ago, and saw none of the effects of Hugo before that.

A flash flood forcing her out of her home during Matthew was her first time seeing the power of a hurricane up close.

"I stayed up all night Thursday and all night Friday, and I thought we were going to be fine," Key said.

At around 5 a.m., Key was woken up by her grandson as water poured into their house on Dupont Circle.

"When he came in there and woke me up, there was water up to my knees already. By

Neuse River floodwater overtakes the corner of U.S. 70 and 258. As the river has crested and waters slowly recede, low lying areas like this may retain water for some time. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

the time we got outside and off the steps, it was almost up to my chin," she said. "He saved my life."

Key said she doubted she would be able to return to her home even after waters recede sometime in the next few weeks, but her concern is currently with the community garden she helps maintain on King Street.

"I had just planted some nice collards there the Wednesday before this all happened. I don't know what the situation over there is, but it probably isn't good," she said. ■

# Kinston nightlife cut short; parents find solace

BY PAUL STEPHEN

**K**inston's burgeoning nightlife has slowed to a crawl in the wake of Hurricane Matthew and the floodwaters that swamped the city in the storm's wake.

Add to that a countywide curfew that has shut residents in between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. – Kinston Police Department Chief Alonzo Jaynes said Saturday the policy would likely stay in effect for the foreseeable future – and it's no surprise you can hear a dime drop on the otherwise bustling Heritage Street after sunset.

"In short, I do great business on a Saturday. It's dead here right now, but it's the flood, not the curfew," said Mother Earth Brewing tap room manager Heather Campbell. "Nobody likes the curfew, but I look at it like a necessary evil. It's hard to see water at night. They just want to keep people safe."

Her customers Saturday night, squeezing in one last round before the hour tolled, were largely in agreement.

## Residents share their thoughts on the curfew. This is what they had to say:

**Judy Cline Smith:** "We played Yahtzee and Scattergories here in Moss Hill"

**Sonja Price:** "Yahtzee, go fish, painting toenails and packing moving boxes here in Deep Run. And a little bit of TV."

Barbara James Toteno: "I like the curfew myself. It's nice and quiet like it should be at night I say we keep it!!!!"

**Chris Hughes:** "This is Kinston, like there is something to do here after 9 any other time. It just means you can't go out to eat as late or go to Walmart as late."



**Judith Kennedy:** "We played cards by lantern and had a hard time seeing the colors in UNO. We also played board games and some artistic work. The flood was terrible, but the games were a good way to pass the time. Reading is one of our favorite ways to spend time."

**Amy Taylor:** "Go to bed early so we can get an early start but most importantly to get caught up on lost sleep."

**Tammy Jones:** "My teens have fallen in love with Monopoly!"

**Danielle Bryan:** "True Blood marathon!"

**Holly Smith:** "We put some wood in the fire pit at the horse barn and cooked some chicken on the grill and just hang out with the family."

**Beverly King:** "Clean yard, put Halloween decorations back out, watch movies, visit with neighbors, and thank God for keeping my family safe."

**Lemaoiaiseupu Toluaiaava Tupua:** "Just relaxing... it's been nice"

**Heather Powers Jarman:** "Sleep, duh! LOL."

"The curfew is understandable. It makes sense," said Austin Langston. "And it hasn't bothered me at all. We have a newborn and get home at a decent hour anyway."

Parents, in particular, were grateful for the policy that aims to keep residents out of harm's way.

"It hasn't affected me – I'm at home by then anyway – but I have a 16-year-old son who works at Piggly Wiggly. They normally close at 10 p.m., but they've been shutting down early so everyone can get home," said Jessica Miller. "I've been glad it has been

**Erin Barnette and Troy Robinson** enjoy one last round at the Mother Earth Brewing taproom before the 9 p.m. Lenoir County-wide curfew kicks in Saturday, Oct. 15, 2016. Photo by Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media

in place. It's one less thing for me to worry about during all of this."

For Blaine Robinson, 7, the curfew has meant at least a few more movies than usual with his school, Arendell Parrott Academy, out of commission during the flood. The latest "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" was a particularly big hit in the Robinson home.

But the break in routine hasn't been all fun and games. The school has taken measures to keep its pupils on track – a lesson learned after Hurricane Floyd left area children with a slew of makeup days, said Blaine's father Troy Robinson.

"He's got homework out the wazoo. When the kids are out of school for weeks, you just can't do that. You can't get behind on their education."

The curfew is in effect for all of Lenoir County until notified otherwise. Until that time, residents – whether traveling on foot or by car – are expected to stay indoors. Follow the Kinston Police Department or Lenoir County Emergency Services on Facebook for the latest information. ■



**Members of Faith Tabernacle United Holy Church** were driven from their sanctuary on S. Adkin Street by the flooding in Kinston, but met for service at Greater St. Paul UHC Sunday, Oct. 16. Photo by Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media

## FLOOD OF PRAISE: Kinston churchgoers return to pews, give thanks

BY ADAM WAGNER

**W**ith about 40 members either stranded in shelters or their homes and a carpet that was flooded during Hurricane Matthew's storm surge, Elder Tyrone Haney wasn't sure St. Peter Church of Christ would have a service Sunday.

Nevertheless, about 65 people drove through a city still suffering the impacts of historic flooding to attend their regular Sunday service.

St. Peter's joyful service was shot through with reminders of Hurricane Matthew. From a reminder of how those on food stamps could receive emergency benefits to Elder Tyrone Haney's sermon that focused on the importance of praise during troubled times, Matthew and its floodwaters were

never far from the congregation's mind.

"It could have been me when the tree fell. It could have been me when the sinkhole opened up," Haney said. "Thank you, Jesus, I made it through the storm."

Cassandra Cummings attends St. Peter every Sunday. Haney's words resonated with her belief that if you stay strong during hard times, better ones will soon come.

"He'll make a way. The Lord'll make a way," Cummings said. "Kinston'll make a way. It bounced back two times from Fran and Floyd."

Thomas Dawson, a deacon at the church, said St. Peter's is willing to do whatever it can to help its members who lost their homes and possessions to the storm. Dawson, for instance, has a generator he is not using and is willing to loan to someone in need.

The congregation as a whole is putting together packages of non-perishable

food, dish detergent and other necessities -- including, vitally, a can opener -- for its members in need.

At nearby River of Live Christian Center, Pastor Helen Locust preached a similar message of praise during a difficult time.

"I want you to let you know today that this storm did not catch Him by surprise. He made provisions for this," Locust told her congregation. "Don't talk about how bad it is. Talk about how good God is. He has been your shelter in this storm."

With the city functionally divided by the flooded Neuse River, some congregations moved their services to other venues or splintered into multiple ministries. Kinston's 902 Church held services at its main campus on Carey Road, but those stuck on the south side of the river gathered at a member's home to worship outdoors. ■

# Kinston flooding keeps some waiting, others busy

BY RANDY FOSTER

In the slow-motion flooding disaster Hurricane Matthew left in its wake, people left separated from home, work and school have little more to do than wait it out.

A group of young men gathered in the driveway of a house on Old Snow Hill Road at Marcella Drive. Davion Walters of Lynchburg, S.C., was among them. He came up to New Bern a week ago around the time of Hurricane Matthew to visit his Kinston relatives and hasn't been able to return home since then.

"I didn't know it would be like this," said Walters. Complicating matters is his ailing arm, still in a cast following surgery; he has been unable to get pain medication out of fear his insurance would not cover the cost because he is out of state.

Walters, 30, works at a Target distribution center in South Carolina to support his wife and eight children, who range in age from 2 to 15. He has been using his brother Antwon Walters' cellphone to stay in touch with his family.

Walters comes from a large family, 13 siblings; he's the only one who was born in South Carolina. All the others are from Kinston.

His brother Antwon Walters, nearby sitting in his car, works in a chicken processing plant and has not been able to go into work all week.

"We depend on that money for rent and the light bills," said Antwon Walters, who has a wife and two children ages 13 and 10.

Like all children in the Kinston area, his children have been unable to attend school and he doesn't know when they are going back.

## 'WE NEED SOME REAL FOOD'

Alawisha Fields rode by, the passenger in a car driven by Jeneshia Kinsey. They stopped the car to talk to a reporter. In the back seat were their children, 2-year-old Madison Houston and 6-month-old Tristan Hicks.

Jeneshia Kinsey hasn't been able to report



Area residents check out the flooding at the intersection of Adkin and Shine streets in Kinston Oct. 15, 2016. Photo by Paul Stephen / GateHouse Media

to work at her job at Sanderson Farms. She and Houston were driving around "trying to get some food for the kids."

They found a place distributing donated food, a plastic grocery bag full of snacks.

"We need some real food," said Fields.

## STANDING VIGIL

Not far away, 47-year-old Claudett Highsmith of Kinston sat on a chair outside the Family Worship Center, a storefront church on Queen Street she has attended for several years. The church was closed but she was standing vigil. She is suffering from a life-threatening illness and is seeking help from a higher power.

"The doc said I had nine months to live," said Highsmith. "I decided to give God praise and pray for healing."

Her husband suffers from the same illness and she worries for her two teenage daughters.

## GOOD OUT OF BAD

A stone's throw away, another group of men are busy cleaning and detailing six cars at Bronze Star Inspection Center on Queen Street.

The hurricane and subsequent flood has worked out well for owner Albert Williams and his crew.

"It helped us out," he said; motorists have been bringing steady business of cars made dirty by flooded roads and yard debris. "Every bad gets something good."

Williams pointed his nozzle at the muddy wheels of a white 1997 Lincoln. He washed off muddy cat pawprints on the hood for no extra charge.

The Lincoln's owner said she was too embarrassed to give her name. "I went off the side of the road and got stuck in a hole," she said. A tow truck was required.

Bad weather seems to follow her. She was in Connecticut when Hurricane Floyd hit, New Jersey when Hurricane Sandy hit, and now was in Kinston during its 500-year flood.

Albert Williams chimed in.

"They say this flood is the worst," he said.

"I don't think so. Floyd was the worst."

## 'IT'S JUST THE SITUATION'

Across town, at the Holiday Inn Express near the Golden Corral off U.S. 70, Craig Callicutt of Kinston sat forlornly on a bench outside the hotel's entrance, smoking a cigarette.

"The wife's upstairs," he says. "We've been in motels since Sunday. Tempers flare -- it's just the situation all around."

He and his wife Tracy fled their house on Neuse Road amid the rising waters of Southwest Creek. They are lucky, though. They have relatives nearby and the means to ride out the flood in a hotel. Still, their first night out, the closest lodging they could find was in Goldsboro. When it lost power they were able to get a room in Kinston.

They returned to their house several times during the week to check on their chickens and boarded dogs, move belongings to higher ground, and retrieve belongings. By Saturday, there was no getting there, but a neighbor told them their house was still intact and dry, mostly.

Outside the hotel, the air smelled of laundry coming out dryer vents. Inside, the fully booked hotel was bustling as housekeepers rushed to replace bedding and towels. The corridors were clean and smelled pleasant.

Upstairs in the room occupied by the Callicutts, Tracy was keeping the room tidy. The hotel is a strain on their finances, with weekday rates of \$118 rising to \$180 for weekend nights. The price includes a hot breakfast, supplemented by the provisions they brought with them: cans of Dinty Moore Beef Stew, Sweet Sue Chicken & Dumplings, chips, loaves of bread and a big bottle of Gilbey's Gin because, why not?

The Callicutts consider themselves lucky. They have flood insurance and are expecting their homeowners insurance to pick up some of the tab for their hotel stay.

"We're lucky, we know we are," said Craig. ■

# Could be months before all roads OK'd for travel



BY BILL HAND

**T**he river's going down in Kinston — nearly a foot and a half overnight — but it will be a while before the streets are dry and open to traffic, and even longer before the city is back to normal.

Meteorologist Hal Austin of the National Weather Service in Newport said that the Neuse is flowing at a 26.3-foot flood level in Kinston — about two feet less than its peak of 28.31 feet on the 14th, a record depth that beat the previous 1999 record of 27.7 feet following Hurricane Floyd.

Austin said the river is expected to recede from major to moderate flood stage on the 19th, but to reach its original levels will take “quite a number of days.”

Roger Dail, Director of the Lenoir County EOC, said that some side roads are reopening already but added that “our main corridors are not open. It’s going to be a while before they do.”

He said U.S. 70 may be dry in two or three more days, but even then it won’t open up right away. “You still cannot open it till DOT gets on the road and checks everything,” he said. “I can already tell you there’s going to be repair work that needs done to it.”

How much repair work?

“I can’t commit either way,” he said. “We could get on there Tuesday and everything looks fine (although) I don’t think so. Or we

may get on and say, ‘Lord have mercy, we’ve to shut this whole thing down.’”

Mayor BJ Murphy said he hopes that something can be arranged for anxious business owners on New Bern Road and in other flood areas to be able to inspect their businesses before traffic is opened to the general public.

“I’ve spoken to three business owners who own businesses along 70, and that’s the question we’re going to be asking: If they can at least get in and start assessing damage and coordinating with insurance companies,” he said. “We don’t have that answer (yet) but I hope we can work that out.”

The emphasis on getting highways back in running order will focus on U.S. 70, 258 and N.C. 11, all main thoroughfares through Lenoir County. N.C. 11 is already open between Kinston and Greenville and, according to Dail, that is the route Kinstonians will have to take for now if they want to go to New Bern: 11 to U.S. 43 in Greenville, down to U.S. 17 below Vanceboro, to U.S. 70 on the east end of town.

As it stands, numerous miles of roads — just how many no one seems to know — are flooded and may require repair delays. Bridges will also have to be inspected. Dail said there is particular concern for the bridge on N.C. 903 in western Lenoir.

“It is completely shut down,” he said.

Murphy also referred to the potential damage to roads. “DOT has their hands

**A wide washout of N.C. 55 between Sandy Bottom and Moss Hill** has cut off driving access for residents. The road collapsed during Hurricane Matthew flash flooding. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

full,” he said. “The number of roads that are washed out... and not just the asphalt, it’s the bedding. It’s not going to be weeks; it’s going to be months.

Dail said the Department of Transportation will be setting up detours for the many closed roads over the next few days.

Meanwhile plans are beginning for the upcoming recovery efforts.

“Two o’clock tomorrow is going to be the first day to see what the recovery is going to be like,” Murphy said. “There are some people who can’t get in their homes right now who’ve lost everything. I’ve got a tremendous amount of faith that our citizens and our neighbors and this country for that matter are going to do everything we can to be sure that those people’s lives are going to be put together as fast as we can.”

Lenoir County may be losing its flooded streets, but it’s still facing a long road.

Maybe Dail put it best: “Sit back,” he said. “Be patient. Wait.” ■

**FLOOD PHOTOS FROM KINSTON MAYOR BJ MURPHY**



**Gov. Pat McCrory** holds a press conference at the intersection of South Queen Street and Highway 70.



**US Senator Richard Burr** and **US Representative David Rouzer** receive an update on damaged areas by Lenoir County Emergency Management Director Roger Dail.



**Jessica Murphy**, wife of the mayor, spotted a little girl by herself outside of an American Red Cross Shelter. They struck up a bond that still lasts to this day.



**More than 300 people** came to an impromptu call to prayer and action organized by the Kinston Teens. Following this gathering, citizens knocked on doors of low lying areas and filled sand bags.



**The National Guard members** were a regular sight as they helped transport medical supplies and food.



**"My personal favorite from the Hurricane Matthew flood experience.** Facebook Live became a go-to tool for relaying urgent information to our citizens. These four future leaders joined me in an impromptu Facebook Live to help warn citizens of curfews, barricades, and preparedness," said Mayor BJ Murphy.



# Southern Lenoir surrounded by deep water

Neighborhood residents paddle near the intersection of Oak Bluff and River Rd. in Lenoir County Sunday. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**T**he Neuse River crested at 28.31 feet Friday, and residents on the south side of the river are still stranded.

Many of the houses off Oak Bluff Road are still surrounded by deep water.

Pam Martinez walked down near the water with some of her family Saturday to show her grandchildren what the water has done.

"I thought maybe if they see it for themselves they might understand because they don't understand why we can't get to town," she said.

Martinez said she knew many people on the south side who had lost their house in Hurricane Floyd and have now again lost homes following Matthew 17 years later.

"I grew up in that neighborhood over there by the fairgrounds and a lot of people we know lost everything," she said.

Another Oak Bluff Road resident, Pat McConiga tracked the water level with stakes in his yard.

"It's come down a lot," he said.

McConiga has lived in Kinston through hurricanes Fran, Floyd and now Matthew.

"The water came up, but it never came into any of the buildings or the house," he said.

Some of his neighbor's houses were under water, but many still did not lose power or water. Nearby street signs appeared to be floating in the middle of what looked like a lake.

"The only problem we had is that little low spot in the road down there," he said.

Many residents stayed home while others require a boat to get to property that is surrounded by water on NC-55 and cannot get to town.

"We all did things based on what we knew from before," McConiga said.

Major highways and side roads are still blocked off, which leaves south side residents stranded from the city of Kinston. Many have attempted the almost two-hour drive through Vanceboro to get the other side of U.S. 70. ■

## Donation center opens in southern Lenoir County

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

County officials and local churches have banded together to help others in the community.

Lenoir County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety said there now is a place in southern Lenoir County that can receive donated supplies to be distributed to those displaced by the flood.

"We are so thankful to have a community that has come together to help others," Daughety said.

Volunteers from Lenoir County as well as Fayetteville and Garner have collected items, like food, clothing, health and beauty supplies, bedding, sheets and towels to opened a location for donation drop offs at an undisclosed area in southern Lenoir County.

"We got together and talked and this place opened up," the Rev. Justin Barnett said.

Lenoir County Parks and Recreation has offered the building up for this occasion to help those in need in the southern part of Lenoir County.

The location will be announced later on as the process becomes more organized and volunteers find a distribution location.

"We're going to try and establish some hours soon and arrange for people to drop items off and those in need to pick up," Barnett said.

Residents looking for a donation site on the south side of town will be able to bring clothes, food, water, entertainment items like books, movies and toys and many other items.

The American Red Cross will be bringing in supplies and donations as well.

"We will be unloading the Red Cross truck and be bringing in items that have been brought to the church," Barnett said.

For information about where to bring donated items contact Brian Croom at 252-560-3901 or the Rev. Justin Barnett, of Jackson Heights Free Will Baptist Church, at 252-560-7551.

Local residents interested in volunteering or those who have items to date can also contact the Rev. Josh Whitfield of Deep Run Free Will Baptist Church or the Rev. Andrew Shue at Southwood Memorial Church, for more information as well. ■





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Large piles of clothes are looked through Tuesday at the **Lenoir County Donation distribution center** on N.C 11 South. Canned goods, diapers and clothing and other items are available to those effected by Hurricane Matthew. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

## Neuse receding as community assesses damage

The waters of the Neuse are continuing to recede.

The National Weather Service said water levels had dropped to 25.95 feet around 7 a.m. Monday, down from Saturday's record crest of 28.31 feet.

The Neuse is expected to subside beneath major flood stage of 21 feet on Wednesday, and below 14 feet on Sunday.

As water continues to recede, some roads may be opened for motorists, but most main roads closed during flooding will remain closed until they have been inspected and cleared by N.C. Department of Transportation.

Lenoir County Emergency Services will be hosting a news conference this afternoon to address recovery efforts and what resources FEMA will be providing residents affected by the flooding.

### RIVER LEVELS

Despite receding flood waters, officials reminded residents and business owners that they will not be permitted into structures or previously flooded areas until officials can confirm they are safe. They will be inspecting for damage, electrical and utility hazards, health concerns and structural integrity of roads and infrastructure.

### NO FLY ZONE

A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) has been issued for Lenoir County affecting



drones only. Operation of drones under 400 feet is restricted until further notice.

### ROAD BLOCKS

An interactive map of the mandatory evacuation area and current road closings in Lenoir County can be found at <https://goo.gl/Hkwdsa>.

### DAMAGE

Information from the state estimates damage from hurricane-related flooding to more than 100,000 structures valued at nearly \$1.5 billion.

### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber



of Commerce is accepting donations of pet supplies for the SPCA and personal items for families in shelters. Drop off donations for canned dog or cat food, cleaning supplies, kitty litter, old towels and blankets, toiletries, coloring books, games and books at Fairfield Gym. The chamber will also accept

monetary donations that will assist the local community.

#### **CURFEW**

A curfew remains in effect from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. nightly for Lenoir County and the City of Kinston until further notice. ■

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**Vernon Herring**, who lives on Jenny Lind Road, gets some of his parents' personal belongings from a canoe. He and his wife, Arrin, were retrieving the items with a canoe after water from Bear Creek flooded the area. Their home is in the background. Photo by Steve Devane / GateHouse Media

# Kinston flooding: A tale of two cities

BY BILL HAND

One could look on Kinston, post-Matthew, as a kind of Tale of Two Cities: one on the north side, high and dry and business-as-usual; the other a disaster zone, inundated with floods even 1999's Hurricane Floyd couldn't touch.

That doesn't mean all areas haven't suffered: When the hurricane's rains arrived Saturday much of Kinston was put out of power for two days; flash floods washed away driveways and flooded homes.

Along the U.S. 70 corridor, however, the worst would take a couple of days to arrive as the Neuse River slowly swelled.

One business that has experienced both is King's, a well-known barbecue restaurant whose main business is at 405 E. New Bern Road, in the flood zone, and three satellite take-out locations. Kris Hargitt, son of owner Joe Hargitt, said the U.S. 70 restaurant stayed open for two or three days after the hurricane before flooding forced it to close.

Kris Hargitt was working the 405 N. Queen St. location Sunday.

"Sunday, Monday and Tuesday we spent emptying the building out," he said. He pointed to a refrigerator trailer in the parking lot. "I think that's our frozen stuff, there."

Hargitt said that tables, chairs and kitchen items were among the things removed in anticipation of high water. Floyd, he said, had put 2½ feet of water in the building and, from what he understands, Matthew could fill it with 3½ feet. As bad as that is, he said, "We were better prepared for it. When Floyd came, nobody knew what to expect."

He said that business at the satellite locations has been good, and he thought that the closing of stores on U.S. 70 may have increased business elsewhere. "Everybody had cabin fever," he guessed. "They just wanted to get out of the house."

The Queen Street manager Nikita Coleman said he estimated business has been up about 10 percent.

Hargitt said all three satellite offices are

running as usual, and all salaried workers continue to work.

The main restaurant employs around 50 workers, many of whom will be out of work until the restaurant is able to open again — "Optimistically (in) three weeks if we're lucky," he said, "if we're unlucky, maybe in five."

Those workers, he said, are getting at least some compensation through insurance

while they're out. He looks forward to their being able to return, though: "I don't want to put anybody out of work."

Meanwhile, the town may "technically" be two cities right now, Kinston Mayor BJ Murphy said, but he likes to see it another way. "I don't feel that the city is split," he said. "We recognize that we've got to be on the same page."

Although some parts of the city may be





high and dry, he noted, the whole city is affected by the flooding, the resulting transportation problems, and the numbers of people who are out of their homes.

He pointed out that rules that affect the flooded areas affect the others as well, such as a 9 p.m. curfew that will remain in effect for the near future.

"It's kind of indefinite," he said about the curfew. "In my head it's going to be at least

through Tuesday. By Tuesday it will become a daily discussion."

He noted that the city will have to pull together as the flood waters recede — as will the eastern side of the state.

"We have to band together and put together to get help from the federal and the state," he said. "Not as a handout, though. The spirit of the people is, 'We will overcome this.' We're a very positive people." ■

**Flood water creeps up Springhill St. toward Queen St.** reflecting a mural on the side of a strip of buildings. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



**Steve Lewis with the N.C. Forest Service** carries hose through the parking lot as water is being pumped out of the pond behind Neuse Sport Shop on Wednesday. Cleanup efforts are underway to get the store ready for business. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

## Business owners allowed back inside flooded stores

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

“After Floyd, if somebody told me I’d be seeing something like this again, I would have called them a nut,” said former King’s Restaurant owner Wilbur King on Tuesday as he pushed water out of the King’s dining room.

While King may have sold his business to current owner Joe Hargitt years ago, King said he still owns the land the restaurant sits on, giving him a vested interest in getting the business cleaned up and running again.

Tuesday, U.S. 70 was made available to business owners looking to inspect their businesses. The road is now partially open to all motorists, but even the most observant passerby probably can’t determine the scope of the damage done to some of the businesses along the highway.

On the outside, much of the King’s parking

lot was still underwater, though the water level is dropping.

Inside, there is more than half an inch of water and mud in each dining room; ceiling tiles, heavy from moisture absorption, hang with a noticeable droop; and inside the walls, there is possible damage to the restaurant’s electrical systems.

What stayed dry, however, is the restaurant’s food and furniture.

King’s staff loaded most of the tables, chairs and food onto tractor-trailers before the flooding began. What couldn’t fit into the trucks was placed on tables held aloft by cinder blocks, keeping what had to be left behind well out of reach of the water that came inside the business.

“After Floyd, I came back here to 40 tables and 130 chairs all floating and dirty,” King said. “We had to take them outside, clean them, sanitize them and get them back in. This time, all we got to do is

back a truck up to the door.”

After more than a week of seeing photos of the exterior of his business covered by several feet of water, Hargitt said he wasn’t sure what he was going to find when he got inside his business on Tuesday.

“It’s a lot better than I thought, but it’s still not pretty,” he said.

Hargitt said he has a cleaning crew coming to help dry out his restaurant on Wednesday, and an insurance adjuster coming by Thursday to assess the damage.

Once he has an idea of what work needs to be done, Hargitt said plans to repair the restaurant, removing the inside walls, drying out and repairing the electrical system, repainting, and doing whatever else he needs to in order to open up again.

“It cost \$415,000 to fix this place up in ’99, I’m thinking it will cost me at least half-a-million dollars this time,” Hargitt said.

If all goes according to plan, King’s will be back to serving food again in just two weeks.

Next door to Joe, Russell Rhodes, president and CEO of the Neuse Sports Shop was also assessing the damage to his property.

“We expected about four feet (of water), and it looks like we got just shy of that,” Rhodes said. “It appears the water came in and then went down very quickly, and damaged some merchandise on the way down.”

Unlike when Floyd hit, Rhodes said his business received enough of a warning to get most of its merchandise out of the store before it flooded, and most of what was left behind was fishing and marine equipment.

“I know it sounds like that is what some of that is made for, to be under water, but once it damages the packaging, people don’t want to buy it,” he said.

The process of cleaning up and reopening the sports shop is already underway. While speaking with The Free Press, Rhodes was busy trying to get water out of his store and waiting for a cleanup crew to arrive.

Once the inside of the store is dry, Rhodes said his staff has come up with a plan to systematically repair all of the damage caused by the flooding, restock merchandise and repaint the building in a matter of days.

“If all goes according to plan, we will be open in the next seven days,” he said.

Rhodes is still waiting to learn how much it is going to cost him to repair the damage, but said he is insured up to the maximum amount his business could get — slightly more than \$400,000.

“It’s going to cost all of that and then some,” he said. “I don’t know what the loss will be, but we will get it back open.” ■

# Students in Greene, Jones County return to class this week

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**F**or some students, school is back in session. Again.

One week after Hurricane Matthew and the subsequent flooding forced schools in Lenoir, Jones and Greene Counties to close down, classrooms in Jones and Greene Counties are full once again.

"Life is back to normal, except for figuring out who is not where their home is, and whose home is no longer there," Patrick Greene, principal at Greene Central High School, which reopened Tuesday, said.

Greene said teachers have been talking to students to learn who has been impacted by the flood, and what they might need at school.

"The school keeps a small amount of clothes and school supplies on hand, just in case, but our community has really taken care of us," Greene said. "We've had churches taking up donations to give to our students and their families when we need them."

In addition to identifying students who need assistance, Greene said the school is currently trying to make up for lost time. The fall semester was just beginning its sixth week when the flooding happened, and with one week of instruction lost, teachers not only have to pick up where they left off, but make up for lost time.

Greene said his school has begun planning to hold after school tutoring for students, plus preparing extra cram sessions for students who have to take End of Course tests at the end of the semester.

Because Lenoir Community College is currently closed for staff and students, teachers who normally come to the high school or host online courses are not able to teach their classes, leaving some dual-enrollment students with a gap in their education.

Tuesday, most of those students were being kept in the school library, though some, including a group of carpentry students, were put to work on projects around the school.



"I am just kind of glad we are back," said Madison Holloman, a student in the GCHS library on Tuesday. "It was good just to see everybody again."

In Jones County, classes resumed for students on Monday, following a week of waiting on waters to recede and roads to clear.

While there was some concerns in the county about Jones Middle School taking on water, Superintendent Michael Bracy said his district was lucky.

"None of our school sustained any water damage," Bracy said. "We had some water get within five feet of a school, but none made it into any buildings."

The district's biggest problem last week, Bracy said, was a lack of teachers.

"A lot of our teachers travel to us from Kinston, New Bern and Jacksonville," Bracy said.

With roads closures pouring in over the last week due to washouts, flooding and other issues, Bracy said many teachers simply weren't able to make it to work last week.

In Lenoir County, schools are still closed to students through the end of this week. Today, Thursday and Friday are considered optional teacher workdays for staff.

**Levi Miller, 16**, assembles an easel during the time he would normally be attending welding class at Greene Central High School on Tuesday. Miller and other high school students who take Lenoir Community College classes at the high school are unable to attend their classes until LCC returns at their main campus. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

It is not clear how long school in Lenoir County will be out for students, as school can't resume until the roads are safe to drive buses on, according to Lenoir County Public Schools spokesman Patrick Holmes.

Kinston High School is also still serving as a shelter for displaced flood victims.

It is also unclear how many, if any, missed school days students will have to make up when school resumes.

"Our calendar requires us to have so many instructional hours built into it," Greene said. "Right now we are at that number, but it's possible we could lose days to snow or ice this winter."

Greene said he is waiting to hear if state legislators will move to forgive the missed days of school before looking at scheduling school on teacher workdays or cutting other time off from school. ■



## Recovery efforts continue

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**U**.S. 258 south is now open for travel, Lenoir County Emergency Services Director Roger Dail said. Lenoir County Sheriff Ronnie Ingram released information about the fourth fatality at a press conference Wednesday.

"Timothy Richard Fisher, 55, was found in a small metal building in a wooded neighborhood behind the Neuse Sports Shop," Ingram said.

Fisher had been reported missing by his father Tuesday morning and the county sheriff's investigation led to the building where his body was found.

Lenoir County Sheriff's had to take the body out on a boat because that was the only way to access the area.

Ingram said an autopsy would be done to determine the cause of death.

This is the fourth death in Lenoir County related to the flooding and Hurricane Matthew.

Emergency Services officials are reminding residents to continue using caution.

"There is still a curfew for the flood zones that is 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.," Ingram said.

At Wednesday's press conference many city and county officials spoke about the clean-up process and what businesses will do during this clean-up process.

On Wednesday, the Neuse River was down to 22.1 feet according to the National Weather Service. The river crested at a historic 28.3 feet on Friday. ■

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**Lenoir County Sheriff Ronnie Ingram** gives details of Lenoir County's fourth fatality at a press conference at the Kinston- Lenoir Public Library. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

TO OUR EXTENDED FAMILY IN KINSTON AND LENOEX COUNTY. LYCAMING COUNTY AND WILLIAMSPORT, PA WE HAVE YOU IN OUR PRAYERS! HERE IS WHAT WE HOPE YOU BE ONE OF MANY CARE PACKAGES. PLEASE DELIVER TO THOSE IN NEED IN ENC.

# CHEF WISCH + ANN

# HOPE RIVER COUNTRY

# AMERICAN REBELS WORKERS

# CHARLES EDMONDS TRUCKING

# POPS

# LECLERC

# SILENT FRIENDS

# CENTRAL PA FOUNDATION

# ESN WILLIAMSPORT

# WELLSGULLEDGE

# WILLIAMSPORT - LYCAMING

# HAWKS SICKER

# FRYK KINSTONIAN

# WANG TV

# WIRE TV

# DREW HANKS

## Donations come in from other states

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**K**indness has filled the air in Eastern North Carolina, Tuesday after a truck pulled into Vernon Park Mall Wednesday morning.

Todd Bartley, a form Kinston resident who now is now a sports radio host for a station in Williamsport, Pa, heard about the damage Hurricane Matthew caused and wanted to do something big to help his old home town.

"I was talking to my men's group at church and we all decided we wanted to reach out and do something," Bartley said.

Within 72 hours volunteer and donors were loading a truck with 25,000 lbs. of supplies that entered the Vernon Park Mall's parking lot Wednesday morning.

"That community was great to me and our thoughts and prayers are with those who have not only lost their homes but those who have lost their lives as well," Bartley said.

Truck driver Scott Horton said he volun-

teered to take the drive down because he wanted to spread some joy.

"I've been in this situation myself and it's been a blessing to do this," Horton said.

The truck is filled with clothes, food, water bottles, toys, diapers, towels, cleaners, vacuum cleaners and many other daily necessities.

"There were kids down there giving their toys because they wanted kids here to have them," Horton said. "The response was amazing"

Arendell Parrott Academy head basketball coach Wells Gullledge was smiling ear to ear after seeing the many pallets of supplies that were loaded off the truck.

"It's amazing that they put this together in such a short period of time," Gullledge said.

June Cummings, United Way executive director, said this contribution will help many residents who were affected by the flood waters.

"We are so proud of what is happening," Cummings said. "Our community is a good

**A note was written on the side of a donation box delivered by truck driver Scott Horton on Wednesday, Oct. 19, from Williamsport Pennsylvania. Todd Bartley, former Kinstonian, used social media to help arrange the donations. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press**

strong community and we are needing help right now and when people reach out to use it is as heartwarming as anything I have ever seen."

The United Way is currently doing resource development to help those in need with the unmet needs committee.

All the donations were brought into the old Expressions building at the Mall, where volunteers have sectioned out the donations by category, size and need. ■



## City officials thank guardsmen with Grainger field baseball game

**The Guardsmen versus the Minute Men** meet at the plate in the fifth inning as fans look at the Hurricane Relief game Wednesday inside Historic Grainger Stadium. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

BY BILL HAND

If you build it, they will come. The National Guard, that is.

That's probably not what they were thinking about when Grainger Stadium first opened in 1949, but under Hurricane Matthew's floods, national guardsmen are what they got and, at their request, the city is letting the 151st Combat Engineers of Laurenberg play a game complete with umpires, audience and concessions.

City Parks and Recreation Director Bill Ellis, who set up the 6:30 game for Tuesday evening, said it's the city's way of saying thank you for all the work the unit has done.

The 24-member unit showed up a week ago, after it had finished two weeks of duty in Smithfield. They were housed in the Grainger Stadium lockers.

"We wanted to start a small MWR, a morale boost for our soldiers," 151st Sgt. John Kopczinsky said, "(to) give them a little light at the end of the tunnel. Since we're living in a baseball stadium we were really hoping we could get a chance to play a game and have a little picnic."

He said he asked the city to simply turn on

the lights.

Instead, the city agreed to supply the picnic, turn on the lights, prep the field, provide the umpires, invite the community for a free game, and raise some cash by selling limited Pepsi product concessions provided by the Minges Bottling Group.

Kopczinsky said they've lined up two nine-member teams from their ranks with the remainder planning to put in time cheering their favorite side on. Team captains are Kopczinsky and 2nd Lt. Wyatt Koch, and the team members were chosen by lot.

They'll have team names, but Koch said those won't be announced until game time. The Guards have no bats or gloves, but that is being worked on and, if worse comes to worse, Kopczinsky said he's ready for "an old fashioned stick-ball game."

In a giant stadium.

With an audience.

Under lights.

It'll be a friendly game, both men promised, though everyone aims to win. Koch promises to bring a slaughter, Kopczinsky is promising to just have fun.

While one of the players once had an opportunity for a baseball scholarship at a major college, "Most of us are sports

handicapped," Kopczinsky said. "We haven't played baseball since high school."

But he's looking forward to hitting the bags again. "We've been so serious and wound-up. It's nice to have a day to relax."

The 151st will be heading for home Wednesday.

While they were in Lenoir County "we've been doing anything from manning the checkpoints to assessing roads, assessing bridges, assisting DOT," Kopczinsky said. He added that the local citizens have responded well to their presence. "Our soldiers have a really good time building rapport with the community," he said. "We keep in touch with the citizens... they really do see that we care for what's going on in the area."

Chris Hatcher, Kingston native and LA Dodgers relief pitcher, was on hand to greet the Guardsmen and throw out a ceremonial first pitch.

Consider it a prequel to April 1st's opening Carolina League game, when professional ball returns to the city. The ball playing Wednesday night may not be as glorious, and you might see as much comedy as skill on the field. But these soldiers have been protecting your homes and your city, so who cares? ■

# Lenoir Community College holds lone shelter in County

BY JUNIOUS SMITH

**T**he transition from two shelters to one in Lenoir County was completed Tuesday night.

Wednesday marked the first day Lenoir Community College was the lone shelter open, with those previously staying in Kinston High School's shelter being transported in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. Shelter Manager Christina Jimenez said the transition was smooth and there are about 90 people currently staying at the shelter now with solid provisions.

"Everything has been holding steady and there has been a lot of help from individuals and corporations," Jimenez said. "We're stocked to the brim with food and personal items."

Among those providing personal items include the Salvation Army, who have served breakfast, lunch and dinner throughout the area. Gary Eggers, a core sergeant major with the Salvation Army, traveled from Harrisonburg, Va. to assist those in need as a member of the disaster team.

"We've served a little over 1,000 meals at LCC over the past eight days," Eggers said. "The biggest thing for me is to believe in God's plan — He's blessed me in life, and I've had the opportunity to help out others. We just wanted to go out with a positive attitude and show our compassion for those affected here."

Robert McGinnis of Dank Burrito felt the same way. The general manager of the Morehead City restaurant had a food truck on campus to serve those in the shelter for lunch.

"It's close to home, and the Kinston people come see us all the time," McGinnis said. "We really didn't know what we could do to try to help, but we're good at feeding people, so we came out here to feed some folks."

Two children, Ava Bragg and Mijoy Davis,



sought out to help the women at the shelter. Bragg, 8, and Davis, 9, recorded a video on Facebook in hopes of garnering feminine products for the shelter — with great results.

"The kids were out of school and seeing all of the tragedy, they wanted to do something," said Stacy Bragg, Ava's mother. "I told the girls about an organization that collected pocketbooks and they thought it was a great idea. They did a live video on my Facebook which had several thousand views, and they set a collection box, which people filled up with feminine products and unused makeup. Then, an organization called Women Helping Women in West Virginia said they wanted to help out and sent 50 purses filled with products. We sent them (Wednesday) and had about 70 purses in total."

Ava Bragg, a student at Southwood Elementary, said she was thankful for the donations.

"It wasn't that hard to get them," Bragg said. "I felt really happy that we were giving women purses because they were happy they got them."

Davis, who goes to Contentnea-Savannah, said she was excited about making the donation.

"We talked about helping women that were out of the home and giving them the products they need," Davis said. "I was very happy."

Lessette Kornegay provided a different type of donation for those in the shelter, providing spiritual encouragement. The Kinston gospel singer and national recording artist sang for the crowd outside of the shelter and had done the same when

**Micahel Stowe, 11**, stands outside the shelter at Lenoir Community College with his grandmother **Peggy Key**. Stowe and his grandmother escaped the floodwaters with only the clothes and their backs. Stowe has been staying there without any shoes. A pair of shoes was said to be arriving for him later that day. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

Kinston High School was housing Hurricane Matthew victims.

"Sometimes, people need spiritual healing and depression is real," Kornegay said. "Sometimes, we don't know what to do and may not have funding like you want to help, but there are those out there who need encouragement. I know people who have lost everything, and I wanted to help uplift their spirits. Sometimes, you have to put yourself in their place — if I was in their shoes, would I want someone to come and encourage me?"

One of the people encouraged, Octavious Cannon, said he was initially joking around with Kornegay and her producer, Maurice Edwards, before singing with her.

"It felt good to get up there and sing 'Open Up The Floodgates of Heaven,'" Cannon said.

Jimenez said the shelter will be available for as long as people need it.

"Since (N.C. 58) opened, some people have checked out and gone back to their homes," Jimenez said. "It's on a case-by-case basis, but we'll continue to stay open until people can go back home or have made other arrangements." ■



**Ed Thutt**, center, Ronald Reagan High school environmental science and anatomy teacher in Forsyth County, originally from Kinston and staff from Kinston High School unload supplies. Thutt drove down over 1,000 supplies collected in one week from his school with 1,900 students. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

## South side donation center opens today

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

Residents looking for a donation site on the south side of town will be able to bring clothes, food, water, entertainment items like books, movies and toys and many other items.

The distribution center will open today at 9 a.m. at the former Eubanks Video and Tanning building on the corner of N.C. 11 south and Camelia Avenue.

"We are so thankful to the wonderful efforts of those involved and the congregations of the churches for helping facilitate this operation so that it's close to those in need," Lenoir County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety said.

Volunteers from the churches involved will help run the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday location.

"We will also be open Sunday by appointment for those who need it," Rev. Justin Barnett said.

Wednesday, multiple trucks were unloaded from Harkers Island and Morehead City.

"We will be unloading a truck and be bringing in items that have been brought to the other location," Barnett said.

Those who wish to donate can bring in clothes, food, water, hygiene products, towels, household cleaners or anything else they can bring.

The first location was set up in Pink Hill but, organizers decided to move the location closure to those in need.

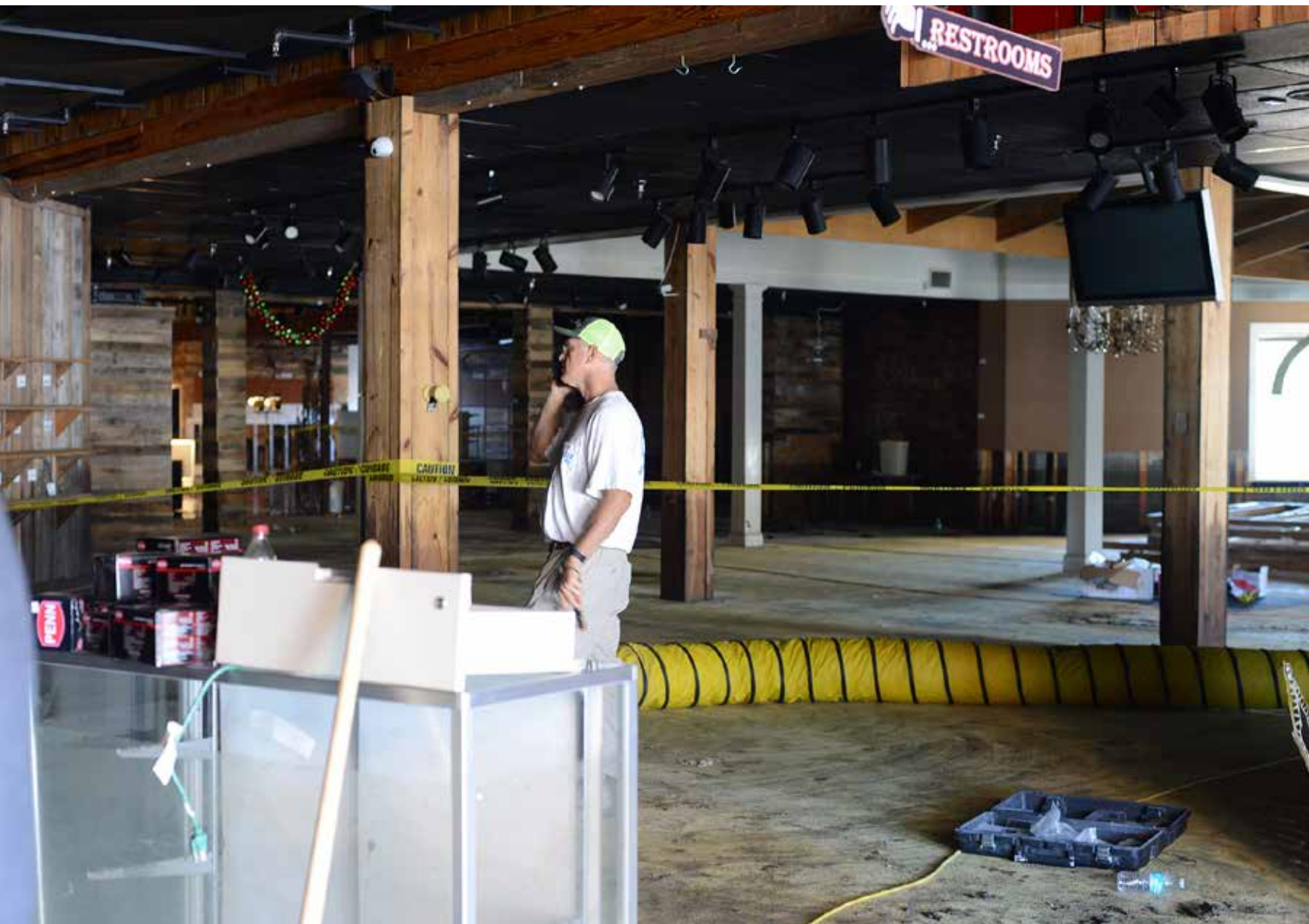
Lenoir County Parks and Recreation has offered the building up for this occasion to help those in need in the southern part of Lenoir County.

Besides the donations, those who wish to donate monetarily can contribute to the donation fund at Jackson Heights Free Will Baptist Church.

"Any funds donated will be used to help folks who are struggling right now from flood damages, or unpaid time off work," Barnett said.

For information about where to bring donated items contact Brian Croom at 252-560-3901 or the Rev. Justin Barnett, of Jackson Heights Free Will Baptist Church, at 252-560-7551.

Residents interested in volunteering or those who have items to donate can also contact the Rev. Josh Whitfield of Deep Run Free Will Baptist Church 252-286-3014 or the Rev. Andrew Shue at Southwood Memorial Church, for more information as well. ■



# Businesses help one another

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**K**ings and Lovick's have been Kinston staples since the 1940's now the owners are helping one another out.

Lovick's Café owner, Steve Lovick spent Wednesday morning helping others in the community by offering them a hot plate of food.

"Today was my giving day," he said.

Lovick drove to Kings and Neuse Sport Shop on U.S. 70 with about 50 plates each for the employees and cleaning crews that are hard at work repairing and assessing the damages from the flood waters.

"They were all really appreciative," Lovick said. "I just wanted to make sure

they had something to eat so they don't have to worry about that while they are dealing with everything."

Joe Hargitt, King's owner, said its nice seeing Kinston come together.

"Everybody has been really good to us through this whole process," he said.

Different restaurants including Sugar Hill Pizzeria have come together to help make sure those in need get a hot meal.

Besides feeding others in need, Lovick made up 50 plates for the Army National Guard and sent them to the armory. After that many guardsmen highway patrolmen came into the restaurant for breakfast.

"We've been here 75years, we didn't get this far without helping our neighbors," Lovick said. ■

**Russel Rhodes, owner of Neuse Sport Shop,** takes a phone call inside his store as a massive cleaning is underway Wednesday after the store was flooded. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

# Washouts still restrict travel

BY CHIS LAVENDER,

Some roads in Lenoir County remain closed including N.C. 55 West as work crews continue to assess the damage caused by flooding from Hurricane Matthew.

More than 30 roads in the county were severely damaged during the storm. Lenoir County Commissioner Roland Best and other commissioners surveyed flood damage areas in the northwest and west areas in the county.

“We are in the recovery stage,” Best said. “Many roads remain in bad condition with broken pavement. A lot of people went through the same thing in 1999 (with Hurricane Floyd).”

Some normalcy returned to Kinston on Thursday afternoon when the King Street bridge and N.C. 11 at Skinner’s Bypass reopened to vehicle traffic. Divers examined the bridge’s lower structure and traffic signals were tested before the bridge was reopened.

Many residents remain displaced including those who were living at the Herritage Court Apartments in Kinston. The apartment complex was among several stops on the commissioners’ tour of flood damaged areas.

“We will see what we can do as commissioners to make sure they have a safe return,” Best said.

N.C. 55 South near Jacksons Crossroads remains closed. Lenoir County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety said three areas of the roadway were completely washed away leaving 80-foot holes in the ground where the road once passed through. The road is likely to be closed for about three months, which has already affected commerce since trucks hauling goods are forced to find alternative routes.

“There is still a lot of work to be done,” Daughety said. “This is one our main thoroughfares. As soon as we get it open



the better because of all the activity on this road.”

The commissioners’ tour included stops at Falling Creek Road, Tulls Mill Road, Oak Bluff Road, and near Bear Creek. Falling Creek washed away a section of Falling

Creek Road, which remains closed.

“What we are trying to do is make sure our county commissioners are fully aware of the extent of damage done county wide,” Lenoir County Commissioner Craig Hill said. “We are also trying to bring attention



**Falling Creek Road** is un-passable after rains from Hurricane Matthew caused a portion of the road to collapse. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

in flood damaged areas. Lenoir County Sheriff Ronnie Ingram said some children were recently discovered playing near one of the washed out roads in the county, which he discourages.

“We encourage all of our citizens to stay away from washouts,” Ingram said.

Efforts are under way to establish an all-purpose center in downtown Kinston for FEMA, the Lenoir County Department of Social Services and other agencies to assist with processing residents’ needs financially with flood recovery. Hill said the center will be housed at the former NOVA building on West Caswell Street.

“My concern is that in some of these areas we have very independent people that have never accessed help so some of them might not come into FEMA,” Hill said.

Daughety said he believed a review is needed on the county’s response to the flooding.

“Going forward I think we need to sit down when this is over and assess as a group with our emergency preparedness folks and review what we commissioners saw on the ground ... and see where we can improve,” Daughety said.

Commissioners Linda Rouse Sutton and Reuben Davis and Linda Rouse Sutton said a top priority should be finding a place for those displaced by the flooding to live until their homes are restored.

“The thing is there are not that many motel rooms and not that much rental property (for displaced people),” Sutton said.

The tour included a stop at the Lenoir County landfill as well. Hill said businesses with goods and merchandise damaged by flooding continue to send these items to the landfill, which are sent to an incinerator in Bertie County for disposal.

Plans continue to reopen Lenoir County Schools for students next week as well.

“The school system is drawing up plans with help from DOT detour routes around here so we can try to ... get our kids back too school next week,” Daughety said. ■

to all areas of the county to make sure that we get resources in the right place.”

The Lenoir County Department of Social Services will start a disaster food stamp application program Saturday through Wednesday at three locations including

Vernon Park Mall at the Old Eckerds’ Drug Store at 834 Hardee Road, Kinston, La Grange Community Center at 410 E. Washington St., La Grange, and Pink Hill Town Hall at 303 S. Central Ave., Pink Hill.

Officials also advised residents to be safe



# Volunteers help residents clean their homes and belongings

**Volunteers unload cleaning supplies from the American Red Cross, at the Woodmen Community Center. Photo by Michelle Taylor/ The Free Press**

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR

**T**he Woodmen Community Center has cleaning supply kits available for residents who need them.

"We have some volunteers coming in Saturday to help those in need clean their houses," Lenoir County Parks and Recreation Director Bill Ellis said.

Right now volunteers cannot access the houses because they are waiting on inspections.

"Once they clear the houses we can start sending people in," Ellis said.

Volunteers will help homeowners remove sheet rock, clean possession and dry the home out. If a resident is renting, they will help them move and clean

their possessions.

The American Red Cross dropped off rakes, brushes, trash bags, mops, brooms, gloves, shovels and containers filled with cleaners, Thursday for residents and volunteers.

Mary Kelly, a resident of La Grange, came to the Woodmen to pick up a cleaning kit.

"I've used up a lot of my cleaning supplies so with this I now have something to finish cleaning with," she said. "There isn't something like this in Grifton, and we're on a fixed income."

While the community center has cleaning kits available, other organizations continue to raise donations and supplies for those affected by the storm.

Willie Poole is hosting a Dream Big 4

Kinston event in Morehead City Sunday to raise funds and supplies for those in need in Kinston.

"I'm trying to help people out who really need it," Poole said.

Poole's family is in Kinston, and he wanted to do something to help those who were affected.

The event will be from 12:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Jacks Water Front Bar. There people can drop off monetary donations, supplies and enjoy some live music.

Six bands are slotted to perform with four of the bands based out of Kinston.

Poole is also planning a second event in Kinston in November.

"Sometimes you have to give back, and this is one of those times," he said. ■



# The aftermath is a 'nightmare'

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**A** trip inside the Lenoir County Cooperative Extension is a wet, stinky affair.

Staff members, volunteers and members of other county extensions were at the Lenoir County Extension on Thursday for the second day of cleanup in the wake of flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew.

Volunteers stacked bags full of water-damaged files, books and other items outside the extensions back door, while still wet carpet splashes inside the building and mold begin to grow on some walls. In some parts of the building, the stench of standing water, wet carpet and molded produce still lingers, even after two days of airing out the building.

"We got a lot of stuff out before the flood came," Tammy Kelly, director of the Lenoir County Extension, said. "We have three trailers full of stuff we were able to get out. We worked right up until the fire department came and told us we had to leave. The water was in the parking lot by then."

Following the first wave of flooding caused by Matthew, Kelly said the extensions bee farm was also relocated, though only time will tell if the colonies can survive.

"We are waiting to see if the queen bees survived. Even if there is a hive right next to them, bees won't abandon the one they are already in," she said.

Unlike when Floyd surprised the region with then record-setting flooding, Kelly said the advanced warning of Matthew's flooding gave the extension enough time to minimize the damage caused by flood waters, but still called the aftermath "a nightmare."

Before they evacuated, Kelly said extension staff stacked tables, chairs, sofas and any other furniture they could on top of tables to keep them dry. While most of the furniture was just out of reach of flood waters, Kelly said she still expects to have to get rid of most of it.

As an organization, the cooperative extension serves as a part of North Carolina State University, disseminating research information and programs to the public. That can mean information from what

**Flood water overtakes a car and house on Cedar Street.** Residents in this area were under mandatory evacuation orders throughout the week. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

growing methods researchers recommend for farmers to information about public service and assistance to families.

"We are lucky this happened at the end of the growing season. If this happened in June it would be even more of a nightmare," Kelly said.

The cooperative extension is currently taking bids to find a company to dry and repair the water damage inside the main building and its agricultural building. Until then, Kelly said it's hard to know how much it will cost to get the extension back up and running.

"Once we get everything out, they can come in and get started," she said. "Until we come back we are looking for a place we can rent for the next six months. If we can come back, that is. This is the second time we have flooded in less than 20 years." ■

# Recovery likely a strain on county, business owners

BY JASON SPENCER

**A**fter being submerged in flood waters for a solid week, Kevin Bell and the crew at the Ultimate Body Shop on U.S. 70 were finally able to get back on the grounds of the business Wednesday.

They've been cleaning ever since. Bell said he hopes the power can be restored sometime next week so the shop can once again start accepting cars that need work.

"I cried when the water was coming up, but since it's been gone, it's been alright," Bell said. "I've got a difference face on now."

He added: "I still haven't slept much. When you have families that depend on you... It's a burden on my shoulders."

Bell estimates the shop sustained \$150,000 to \$200,000 in damages. The business pulls in between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a month in revenue, and every day it's closed, that number takes a hit.

On top of that, the shop's 13 employees are signed up for unemployment, but that doesn't replace a full week's wages.

That's just a snapshot of the kinds of things state and local officials are trying to wrap their heads around to come up with an estimated economic impact of Hurricane Matthew and the flooding that followed.

The N.C. Department of Public Safety released a preliminary statewide damage estimate of \$1.5 billion last week using computer models, though that doesn't account for lost wages or commerce or products that are no longer sellable. An updated estimate was not available Friday, nor was any county-specific data.

"We're still trying to see where our companies are," Lenoir County Economic Devel-

opment Director Mark Pope said. "We had several companies that did close for several days. They're behind. And a lot of it was getting people into work. Those losses will be significant - not counting the displacement of people in the community. ... A lot of stuff still has to come together."

There's about \$125 million worth of property in the 100-year flood plane, which follows the Neuse River from Wayne County to Craven, plus another \$15 million to \$20 million in Tick Bite and surrounding communities. Those areas are where most of the flooding took place.

"Sometimes it takes three, four, five years or longer to be reimbursed for some of the services that are being provided now," Lenoir County Commission Chairman Craig Hill. "So it will be a strain on our budget moving forward."

The city of Kinston is busy repairing infrastructure damage. Mayor B.J. Murphy and City Manager Tony Sears said the city has enough in its reserves to cover the cost of those repairs and employee overtime until state or federal reimbursements come through.

"It's not that important to us. It is important to take care of the residents," Sears said. "And we'll get with FEMA and deal with our issues. That's not a problem."

Until then, recovery slowly trudges forward.

Susie Jenkins, owner of the Kinstonian Family Buffet, estimated the damage to her business to be between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

"The water is out of my building, but we've had to tear out every wall in here," she said. "I'm devastated. I don't know if I'll ever... I don't know what to do. We're waiting on the insurance." ■

## Approximate breakdown of Disaster Relief and Recovery Supplemental Appropriations

Emergency Watershed Protection **\$6,180,000**

Emergency Conservation Program **\$27,513,000**

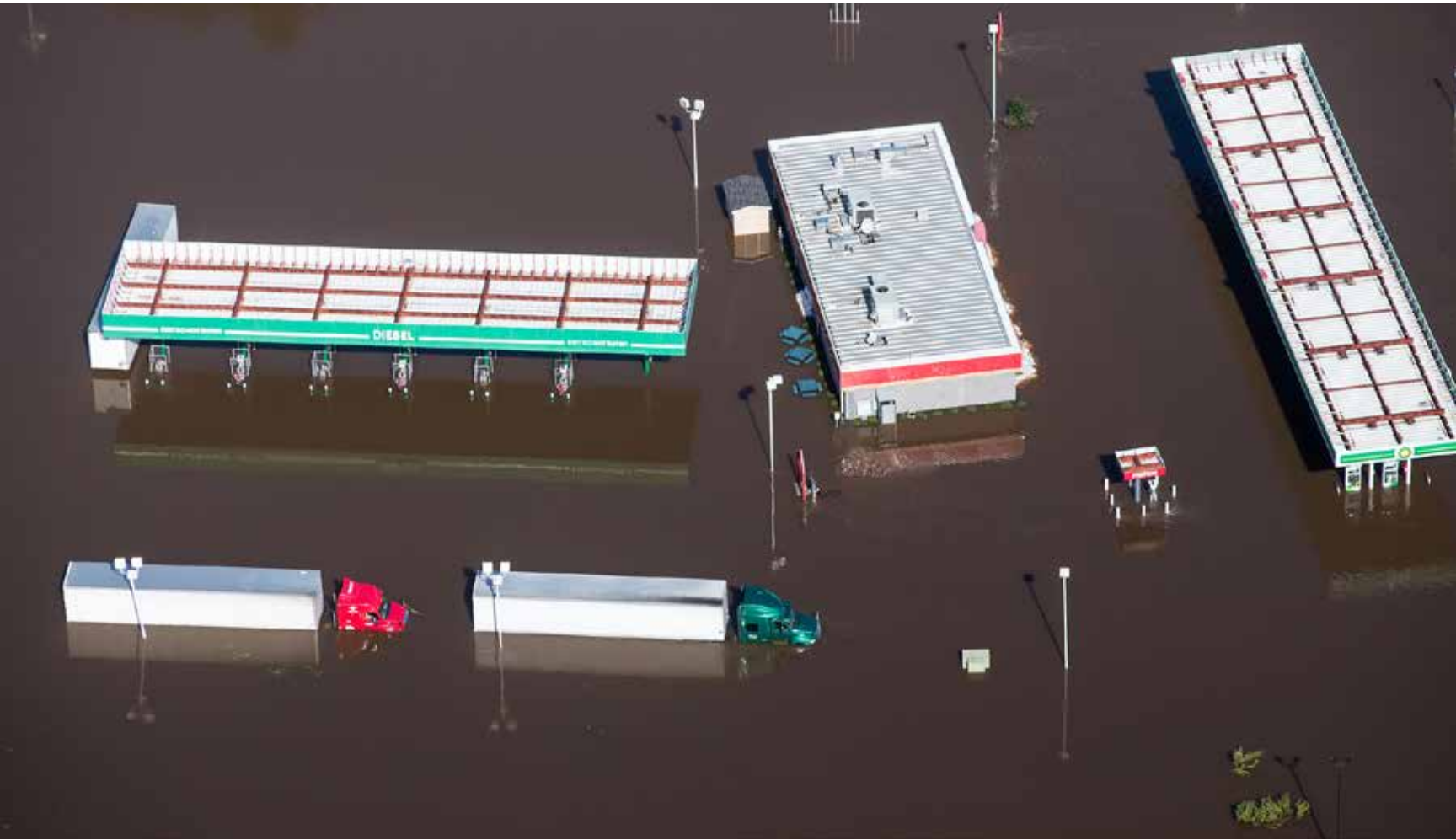
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers **\$83,119,000**

Emergency Relief Highways **\$23,680,000**

Community Development Block Grants **\$193,630,000**

**Totalling \$334,122,000**

Source: Thom Tillis' office



## As flood waters begin to recede, researchers look at what is in the water

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

Much has been made across Eastern North Carolina of rivers flooding of historic levels, but for those who know the waters the best, the story isn't all about how much water there was or where it went, but what is in it.

Duke Energy officials admitted to some amounts of coal ash being released into the Neuse River in Goldsboro, but claimed the amounts were small enough to not be a cause for concern.

For those responsible for monitoring the rivers of Eastern North Carolina, the coal ash is just one in a series of concerns so far.

"There are issues with good amounts of nutrients and bacteria in the water," Heather Deck, who monitors the Pamlico and Tar rivers for Sound Rivers, said.

Deck said much of what is being seen in the Tar and Pamlico Rivers could also be seen in various parts of the Neuse River.

Sound Rivers has also gotten reports of fuel spills, submerged septic tanks, flooded hog waste and other contaminants getting into the water.

"One of the problems we have now is that there isn't a lot of data yet. No one has been able to safely go out and collect samples yet," Deck said.

Deck said that the state has selected 30 research sites along Eastern North Carolina rivers to be tested and has begun sending researchers to those locations, meaning data should start becoming available soon.

Downriver, the effects of the flooding are already being seen, though the long-term effects are still hard to measure.

Ben Peierls, of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill's Institute of Marine Sciences, who studies the Neuse from just above New Bern to an estuary in New Bern, said the kind of water normally found in that part of the river is very different than what it was before the flood.

"There is a lot of fresh water being added, and it's pushing the salt water out," Peierls said.

Peierls said there is some salt water in the deeper parts of the river, the bulk of it is being pushed out.

Peierls said his institute is less interested in what nutrients might be in the water, but what it is likely to do to the ecosystem living in the river and the estuary.

If the right conditions are met, it is possible for algae blooms to spring up, which in turn could lead to a decrease in oxygen in the water, which in turn could lead to fish kills.

"We won't know for sure until things slow down," Peierls said.

Peierls said the institute is hoping to increase the amount of sampling and testing done on the river in the coming weeks, as nothing can be determined about what is in the water and what it will do for the ecosystem without more data. ■

**Stranded tractor trailer trucks** are parked at the flooded Circle K and BP gas station along US 70E in Kinston Sunday. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

# For those still living at shelter, the future is still uncertain

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

As waters continue to recede from flooded areas, some living in the Red Cross shelter at Lenoir Community College have already begun returning home, some have discovered they have no homes to go to and others are waiting to learn what will happen to them next.

Friday, less than half the more than 100 residents staying at the shelter last week remained at LCC.

For those who remain, life is at something of a standstill.

Earlier this week, representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency paid the shelter a visit, speaking with shelter residents to learn who lost what, and who might be eligible to receive aid.

"We filled out an application, but we still haven't heard anything back. We tried calling but they told us we still had to wait," said Luis, a resident who has been at the shelter since Matthew struck the region two weeks ago.

Luis, whose real name has been changed to protect his identity, came to the shelter with his mother, who is living in the country without permission, and his siblings, who were born in the United States and are considered citizens.

While he was not born in America, Luis has been living in-country on a permit, and before a flash flood forced his family to the shelter, was working to support himself and had just paid off his first car.

Earlier this week, Luis and his mother were given a chance to visit their house for the first time since Matthew, and it doesn't look like they will ever be able to return.

Standing water in the house damaged much of the family furniture, and mold has begun to grow in its wake.





**Tommy Taylor, Ty Gay construction**, moves an extension cord as lights are brought in to help illuminate Neuse Sport Shop on Wednesday as staff cleanup the store. Photo by Janet S. Carter / The Free Press

“A church offered to come in and pull out the rugs, help clean up, but now that the mold is there, they are saying we won’t be able to go back,” Luis’s mother, speaking through an interpreter, said.

Luis and his family have lived in their home for more than six years. One of his siblings has asthma and his mother has bronchitis, meaning they likely won’t even be able to go back inside the home to claim their lost belongings.

The family has lived in the house for the past six years. They also aren’t the only ones waiting to hear from FEMA.

Luis said some of his neighbors had already returned home to claim what belongings they could, as they don’t expect any relief to come to them since they aren’t legal residents of the country.

Other shelter residents waiting to learn their future are those who arrived at the shelter already homeless.

“We don’t turn people away just because they aren’t a homeowner,” Kenneth Church, shelter supervisor said.

Church said he wasn’t sure what would happen to previously homeless residents when the shelter closes, but the Red Cross doesn’t plan to just kick people back out on the street.

“We usually try to set them up with other local organizations, see what we can do for them,” he said. “We want to try to help them get back on their feet.”

Classes are set to resume at LCC on Monday, though the shelter will remain in operation for as long as the Red Cross needs it.

“We had the same thing happen after Floyd,” Richy Huneycutt, director of marketing, recruiting and communication at LCC, said. “We will just work around them.”

Huneycutt said the school has already moved classes that would normally take place in the student center, which is currently serving as the shelter, so as not to interfere with the work being done there. ■

# Flood levels recede

BY ADAM WAGNER

The Neuse River's descent from record highs continued Sunday, with the river dipping out of any kind of flood stage designation for the first time since Oct. 9, the day after Hurricane Matthew inundated Eastern North Carolina with wide-spread rains.

As of 4:15 p.m., the river stood at 12.54 feet. Flood stage is at 14 feet, and action stage is at 14 feet. The river peaked Oct. 14 at 28.31 feet, passing the previous 27.71-foot record set by Hurricane Floyd on Sept. 23, 1999.

While the river fell, Kinston residents set about the task of putting their lives back together. At Neuseway Park, one or two people at a time filtered in to check on the Kinston Nature Center or a favorite fishing spot.

They were met by water still standing in spots and, by Earl Tyndall Road, a large tree branch perched on top of a stop sign.

Anthony Wilkes stood by his favorite fishing hole farther down the road, not daring to stand too close lest he draw the attention of the dozen or so mosquitos perched on a railing nearby.

To Wilkes' eye, the area didn't look too seriously affected by the floodwaters that had been standing there only days earlier.

"The only thing bad about it is the mosquitos," Wilkes said.

Behind Mickey's Beach Bingo on N.C. 70, Emilie Bailey pulled up her shirtsleeve and scrubbed a plastic table covered in mud carried there by the Neuse River.

Mickey's, which sits about a half mile from the Neuse, was one of the several businesses in that part of 70 with significant water damage.

"The hardest part we're having to deal with is Clorox for the mold and getting the mud out," said Bailey, whose brother-in-law owns the store.

"River mud is the spawn of Satan," she added.

During Hurricane Floyd, the family



listened to weather reports and believed putting all of its papers and machinery on tables would keep it dry. When the flood waters receded, they returned to a sopping, stinking mess.

This time, when the warnings came, the family moved much of the businesses' property to high ground.

"We don't trust the Weather Channel," Bailey said. "Since Skip Waters died, we don't trust nobody."

Some of the only items that weren't moved were the Halloween, Christmas and other holiday ornaments Bailey's late sister had used to decorate the store. The knick-knacks were stored in a trailer behind the store and Bailey was worried about salvaging whatever she could.

Sunday afternoon, a pair of oversized teddy bears basked in the sun, their artificial fur clumped together, the remnants of the Neuse slowly evaporating away.

Melvin Anderson is one of Kinston's only residents without a Floyd story. He was living in Washington D.C. when the storm came in 1999. Sunday afternoon, Anderson walked out of his Springhill Street home and couldn't help but be amazed at how quickly the water had receded.

Anderson and his family had stood on

**Stakes planted by a resident show the high watermark at Oak Bluff Rd. near Sandy Bottom. The Neuse River crested in this yard at 6 a.m. Friday. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press**

the hill Oct. 13, talking about how the water pushed through a fence at the end of the road and watching it slowly rise up the retaining wall in front of their house. They evacuated later that day, returning Oct. 16 to discover the Neuse had reached their lawn, but not their house.

"It went down real fast," Anderson said. "Every day, it went down faster and faster."

Anderson considers himself and his family lucky, as their houses is still there and nobody was injured during the storm. Nevertheless, he has one wish.

"I hope," Anderson said, "we don't see another one of these for a long time."

This week's National Weather Service forecast for the area calls for dry conditions and seasonable temperatures.

The forecasts lack any mention of flooding. ■



## Impact visible from historic flood levels



Owner Bob Zayyad was able to move some of the cars on the lot at Bob's Auto Sales to higher ground, but some were left behind. At one point they were fully submerged in flood water and are a total loss.

The wall from which **Michelle Anderson** stood to survey rising flood water now stands high and dry on Springhill Street. Water got close, but did not enter the house. Photos by Zach Frailley / The Free Press

BY ADAM WAGNER

Cars, barns and even people only provide scale in the photographs from Oct. 12 and 13.

The water from the Neuse River is the highlight, shoving its way into familiar scenes and taking up much of each frame.

In images from the flooding, the water is nearly to the top of combine cabs at Mills International. This week, a high water mark can clearly be seen etched into now-soggy boxes inside the company's original dealership.

In 1999, Floyd flooded the warehouse to about 10 feet high. Matthew's waterline was about 11 feet off the ground.

"It's a mess. We can't put stuff in here," David Mills, the company's owner, said Monday while taking a tour of the site.

When the river started rising, Mills and a skeleton staff moved as much of their inventory as they could, keeping nearly all new equipment out of the water. Much of the store's used equipment wasn't as lucky.

Next to the old dealership sat about 40

riding mowers, some of them flipped on their sides or entirely upside down. Nearly all of the mowers were caked in river mud.

"It'll take us years," Mills said. "There's still stuff here from Floyd we've probably moved 20 times."

Inside the warehouse, the water had picked tractor tires up off of a rack at the rear of the old dealership and floated them to the front.

The field smelled strongly of pig manure this week, and the water that was left had a fine sheen of who-knows-what in it. The smell was stronger standing on King Street and looking out over the field.

Some tires could be seen on the other side of King Street, having floated under a bridge before being deposited.

"We don't want to leave all this," Mills said, standing on top of the bridge and pointing to the tires, as well as a canopy top that had been in the warehouse before the flooding. "It's our trash, it's our stuff, so we've got to clean it up."

Piles of muddy office furniture, a twisted heap of wet carpet and a knee-high stack of sopping phone books sit outside Bob's Auto

Sales on N.C. 70.

Inside the store, a trio of Bob Zayyad's daughters pushed brooms and scrubbed counters, trying to remove any semblance of the Neuse River from the shop that is their family's livelihood.

"Everything is destroyed," Zayyad said.

Outside, more than a dozen cars stood, totaled by the water that had come flowing from the river. Several of them had clear water lines indicating where the water finally stopped rising when it crested Oct. 14.

At least 14 cars were destroyed entirely, said Zayyad, who does not have flood insurance.

"Put yourself in my shoes," Zayyad said. "How am I going to live? Three weeks, no money in my pocket."

Zayyad reserved a particularly strong vein of anger for the city and county governments who, he said, had not come out to check on the store since he'd returned last Friday.

"This this their job. I need one of them to say, 'Yes, we came here and we checked on you,'" Zayyad said. ■



**Fred Taylor, manager of FatBaby's Country Cooking,** recalls being fortunate enough to not lose power or flood after Hurricane Matthew. He opened the doors to his restaurant at times when it would normally be closed to feed locals, law enforcement and more while flooding cut Lenoir County in half. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press

## When others were without, FatBaby's opened its doors

BY DUSTIN GEORGE

**T**he sign outside of FatBaby's restaurant tells you pretty much all you need to know about the nondescript eatery – “country cooking” is inside.

During a time when many were without power, water or even food, that sign also meant something else – normalcy.

Following Hurricane Matthew's pass over Eastern North Carolina, normalcy seemed like a concept that had been blown away by the storm. The county was cut in half by flooding, roads were washed away and people went a week or more with no power or water.

But FatBaby's was there, and it was open. For more than a week, FatBaby's opened for breakfast, lunch and dinner, providing warm meals for residents who otherwise would likely have gone without.

“They couldn't get to town,” said FatBaby's manager Fred Taylor. “You couldn't get across 70 because it was flooded. We mainly did it for courtesy of the community.”

Taylor said he came to check on his store the night Matthew came through and found the water had nearly reached the doorstep.

“I just knew when I came back down here Sunday morning I was going to have no lights and water was going to be in the store,” Taylor said. “But thank God we didn't lose power.”

Taylor, like most people south of the river, lost power at his home during the hurricane, and, with his restaurant dry, decided to cook some breakfast.

“My oldest daughter and I, we were going to cook a few eggs or something to carry back to the house for the grandbabies and about four cars showed up out front,” he said. “I told her, we'll we may as well just let him in.”

Taylor offered the visitors some breakfast, and before he knew it, his business – which is normally closed on Sunday's – was booming.

“We closed about 3:30 that evening. I bet we served 500 Sunday. We weren't going to shut the doors as long as we could help,” he said.

For the next week, FatBaby's stayed open an hour past its 1:30 p.m. closing time and reopened for dinner, something the restaurant has never done before.

He also fed Duke Power employees, Department of Transportation workers, police, fire and other emergency responders for free during the first week of hurricane fallout.

“We just felt that we owed it to the community,” Taylor said.

For the people who came to the restaurant during that period, new customers and regulars alike, the extra effort was certainly appreciated.

The restaurant stayed full of people during the week following the flood, and

even after life began to return to normal, new customers joined the regulars in patronizing the restaurant.

“He really stuck his neck out a long ways to help people,” Sonny Taylor, a regular at FatBaby's said.

Taylor, along with Janice Spence and their neighbors Tommy and Irma Jean Kennedy frequented the restaurant throughout much of the post-Matthew period.

“I think it's just amazing how dedicated they were. I was amazed at how many people were here. They showed so much compassion and kindness,” Spence said.

“I think it was a real blessing,” Irma Jean said. “I've never been so happy to see a restaurant open.”

With no power, no water and no way to Kinston to get fresh groceries – the stores south of the river sold out shortly after Matthew and were unable to get shipments – FatBaby's was all some people could eat for more than a week.

“(Taylor) never stopped. He stayed open and he fed a lot of people,” Donald Best, another regular, said. “That's just the kind of person he is. You won't find none better than that man.”

Today, things are mostly back to normal at FatBaby's – the restaurant is as busy as ever, thanks in part to an influx of new regulars earned after the storm, and Taylor said he hopes to create a dinner shift in the near future – and as the restaurant showed during the flood, normal is good. ■

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to the SERVPRO® employees for your dedication, hard work and extra hours during the Hurricane Matthew Recovery.



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Time capsule of the stories and photos from the 2016 Hurricane Matthew flooding in Lenoir County.



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