

YMCA Of Catawba Valley Offers Support After Helene

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In the wake of Hurricane Helene, YMCA of Catawba Valley branches across Burke, Catawba, and Lincoln Counties have provided critical support and services to local communities despite widespread damage and operational disruptions.

The YMCA of Catawba Valley extends its heartfelt condolences to the communities of Western North Carolina impacted by the recent hurricane. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who have experienced loss, displacement, and hardship during this challenging time. As part of the YMCA family, we stand in solidarity with our neighbors, offering not only our sympathy but also our commitment to support recovery efforts.

The Phifer Family YMCA remained without power and essential utilities until Tuesday, October 1, facing significant challenges including a drained pool, damage to the group exercise floor, and elevated water and humidity levels throughout the facility. Despite these setbacks, the Phifer Family YMCA opened its doors to more than 400 visitors from the community in the company of YMCA members, offering warm showers and charging stations for those in need. Nearly every outlet in the building was in use, as community members relied on the YMCA to power their devices during extended outages. In addition to this, the Phifer YMCA is actively collecting and redistributing essential goods to help those impacted by the storm.

While all 10 of our afterschool sites in Burke County remain closed, we launched an emergency childcare program for essential personnel in partnership with Burke County Public Schools and local public entities. Thanks to the generous

support of United Way and the Dogwood Trust, this program was offered at no cost.

In Lincoln County, the Sally's YMCA and Lincoln County Family YMCA teams were the first to organize a plan for collecting and redistributing essential goods to the community, even before the branches reopened on Monday, September 30. Each location quickly became a hub for neighbors, providing warm showers, device charging stations, and a place to escape the heat. Students were able to attend Kids Morning Out as the schools were closed until October 2. Damage to the Sally's YMCA and Lincoln County Family YMCA facilities were minimal.

Both the Hickory Foundation YMCA and the Adrian L. Shuford Jr. YMCA reopened on Sunday, September 29. The Hickory Foundation YMCA opened with extended hours to provide much-needed showers for families without power and water, with many Lenoir-Rhyne University students and neighboring families benefiting from the facility. Two churches in the Greenville, N.C. area drove to Hickory Foundation YMCA to drop off supplies they had collected to donate to those in need in Western North Carolina. These donations have already been distributed to local areas and will touch the hearts of those who need it most.

One of our own water aerobic classes at Hickory Foundation YMCA joined in raising money after hearing that many of the local pilots were paying for their own fuel to deliver the donations. The Bethlehem Lions Club collected funds for Operation Helo and after hearing this, the water aerobics class collected over $1,500 for this operation.

Together, both organizations presented a $2,450 check to the pilots of Hickory Airport.

Greg Conrad, water aerobic instructor at Hickory Foundation YMCA, said, "The check was accepted with emotional, teary eyes! As recovery and help is still needed, we are continuing to accept donations for this cause!"

The YMCA's mission of service and community support remains unwavering in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Whether providing emergency childcare, offering a place to recharge physically and mentally, or distributing essentials, our branches are committed to helping our neighbors recover from this disaster. We extend our heartfelt support to Western North Carolina in the upcoming months as they rebuild.