

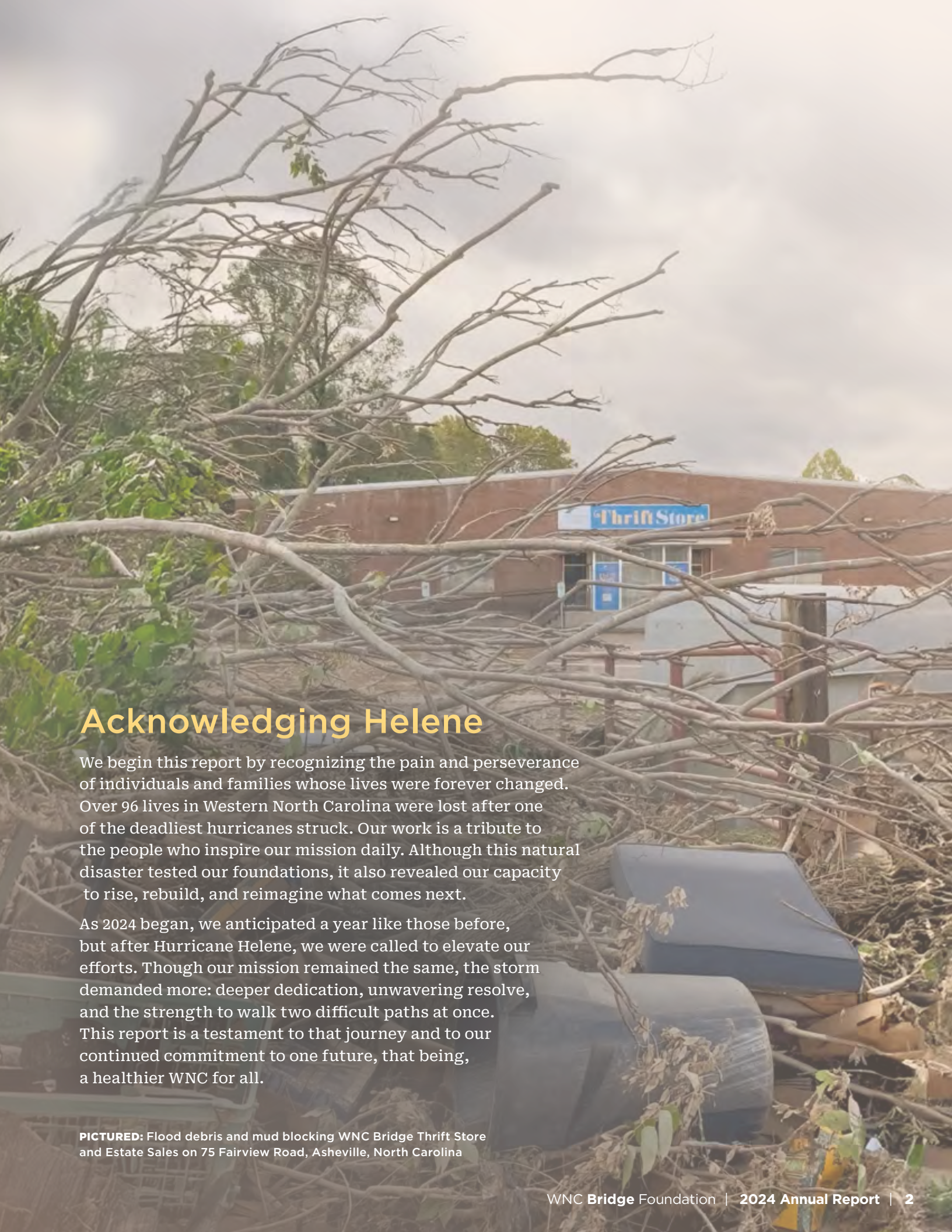


WNC **Bridge** Foundation

A PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTH

Two Paths,
One Future





Acknowledging Helene

We begin this report by recognizing the pain and perseverance of individuals and families whose lives were forever changed. Over 96 lives in Western North Carolina were lost after one of the deadliest hurricanes struck. Our work is a tribute to the people who inspire our mission daily. Although this natural disaster tested our foundations, it also revealed our capacity to rise, rebuild, and reimagine what comes next.

As 2024 began, we anticipated a year like those before, but after Hurricane Helene, we were called to elevate our efforts. Though our mission remained the same, the storm demanded more: deeper dedication, unwavering resolve, and the strength to walk two difficult paths at once. This report is a testament to that journey and to our continued commitment to one future, that being, a healthier WNC for all.

PICTURED: Flood debris and mud blocking WNC Bridge Thrift Store and Estate Sales on 75 Fairview Road, Asheville, North Carolina

Dear Western North Carolina,

We began 2024 with a renewed commitment to our mission of improving lives and strengthening communities across Western North Carolina. But on September 27, everything changed. In the wake of Hurricane Helene, our region was tested in ways we could never have anticipated. What began as a year of steady progress was transformed into a call to urgent action. Our vision shifted from long-term planning to immediate relief and resilience.

After 30 years of service, this marks my final year as CEO of WNC Bridge Foundation. It has been the honor of my lifetime to lead this organization and serve the people of Western North Carolina. As I prepare to step away, I do so with immense gratitude, knowing that when our community needed us most, we showed up together.

Thanks to your unwavering support, WNC Bridge provided over \$4.27M in grants, community initiatives and scholarships with \$1.44M of those dollars going towards Hurricane Helene Relief Assistance.

Farewell Reflection from CEO Scott Buchanan

As I close this chapter with WNC Bridge Foundation, I do so with confidence in the future. The work we've done together is only the beginning. With your continued support, I know the Foundation will keep moving our community forward; resilient, connected, and full of ambition.

I invite you to turn the page and see the real stories, the lasting impact, and the lives we've touched together.



With heartfelt thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott W. Buchanan', written in a cursive style.

Scott W. Buchanan

Chief Executive Officer,
WNC Bridge Foundation

On behalf of the WNC Bridge Foundation Board of Directors, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for Scott's extraordinary leadership and devotion to Western North Carolina.

For more than three decades, Scott has been a steady, inspiring force through his transformational leadership that culminated in his tenure as CEO of WNC Bridge Foundation. Under Scott's guidance, the Foundation has evolved into a true cornerstone of regional support, strengthening communities across 18 counties.

Beyond the numbers and milestones, Scott Buchanan's impact is most clearly seen in the lives touched. Families rebuilding after loss. Students given opportunity through scholarships. Seniors finding dignity through essential support. Community partners empowered to carry forward meaningful change. These stories are the legacy Scott leaves behind, that being a legacy of resilience, compassion, and vision.

Legacy of Resilience, Compassion, and Vision

As Scott prepares to retire at the end of 2025, please know that his leadership has left an indelible mark not only on this organization, but on the entire region. You have set a course for the Foundation that ensures its strength and relevance for generations to come.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Scott for his wisdom, his dedication, and his unwavering belief in the power of community. We are profoundly grateful, and we wish him joy and fulfillment in the next chapter of his life.

With deep appreciation,

Matt Groome

Current Board Chair
WNC Bridge Foundation

Community Initiatives

Our Community Initiatives include Children's Services Fund, WNC Greatest Needs Fund, WNC Health Scholarships, and Rathbun House. Funding to support these initiatives comes from donations and profits from our retail operations.

Getting a Couple Back in Business

WNC Greatest Needs Fund restores Helene-damaged car

Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding in Buncombe County, breaking two dams behind Jacob and Sara Bullock's home. Floodwaters surged in quickly, leaving no time to plan. Jacob recalls, "It all happened so fast that no one even had time to think."

In a desperate attempt to escape, Jacob, Sara, and their dog Ramsey forced open the front door and swam to safety as the water rose rapidly. The downstairs of their townhouse was completely flooded, with everything pushed up to the ceiling. "The flood waters brought in so much clay and mud that nothing was really salvageable," Jacob said.

Sara's catering business, *Sara's Event Services*, was also heavily impacted.

"All the equipment used for the business was downstairs," Jacob explained. "And her car was flooded too. She was heartbroken. Everything she needed to keep her business going was destroyed or out of commission."

Restoring Sara's car was a crucial step toward helping her restart her business and get on steady footing again. "Getting her car fixed would help her start doing charcuterie deliveries again," Jacob added.

Thanks to the WNC Bridge Greatest Needs Fund, emergency assistance was provided during this crisis. Jacob and Sara are deeply grateful: "We almost lost hope, but the help we received really helps us get our lives back on track."



They sincerely thank the donors to WNC Bridge Foundation for their support. "Your generosity during this challenging time means everything to us. WNC Bridge Foundation, we greatly appreciate you and everyone involved that went out of their way to help us."

Community Initiatives

AT-A-GLANCE

WNC Greatest Needs Fund

Emergency funding for specific, immediate needs such as domestic safety assistance, mobility support, transportation, home modifications, rental and utility assistance, medical assistance, and urgent needs.

Children's Services Fund

Helps purchase specialized equipment to address developmental or neurological disorders. Underwrites equipment, materials, and home improvements to enhance the daily lives of children.

QUESTIONS | request@wncbridge.org

Comfort During Upheaval

Helene Recovery Fund ensures McDowell County family have comfortable furnishings in temporary housing.

Candice, a devoted single mother of three daughters, has faced more than her share of challenges in recent months. All three girls are enrolled in McDowell County Schools and were thriving until the disaster struck. After the hurricane damaged their rental home beyond repair, the family was suddenly displaced. With no safe place to return to, Candice and her daughters moved in with her sister while seeking a longer-term solution.

Thanks to emergency assistance, Candice was able to secure a camper as a temporary home for her family—a crucial first step toward stability and independence. However, the camper lacked basic furnishings, and the girls didn't have a proper place to sleep.

Working through the Children's Services Community Initiative with

support from our Helene Recovery Fund, Candice's daughters will now have twin mattresses to ensure a comfortable, restful space in their temporary home. This purchase made through Community Initiatives represents so much more than just a sleeping space, it's a symbol of safety, dignity, and forward momentum.

Hurricane Helene's Impact on Community Initiatives

ASSISTANCE REQUESTS BEFORE HELENE

37% Medical equipment

26% Utility assistance

INCREASED REQUESTS AFTER HELENE

76% Throughout WNC

100% In Buncombe County

49% Rental assistance

24% Utility assistance

Rathbun House

Rathbun House provides a caring environment for out-of-town caregivers and families accompanying patients who are receiving medical care in Asheville. Guests can stay up to 14 days for no charge—many are referred by local medical staff. WNC Bridge Foundation is responsible for supporting the annual operations and upkeep for Rathbun House.

An Indispensable Resource Rebounds

Community support led Rathbun House's recovery

During the heartbreaking days surrounding Hurricane Helene, our hearts were with the community we serve. While Rathbun House remained physically intact, we were forced to close our doors on October 1. At the time, 12 guests and our staff were safely evacuated. Sadly, our much anticipated 30th anniversary celebration was also canceled.

We faced major challenges, including loss of water and electricity, and extensive cleanup due to fallen trees on and around the property. Although we couldn't accept new referrals during this period, we stayed connected through social media and by telephone and were uplifted by an outpouring of support. Donations poured in from across the country, including

emergency food and water from individuals in Texas, Cracker Barrel, Incyte Pharmaceuticals, and messages of concern.

We reopened on December 1, quickly assisting 23 individuals within that month, including one family with a newborn in Mission Health's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Through it all, the support from WNC Bridge Foundation and our extended community gave us strength.



With resilience and collective effort, we remain a trusted space for support and recovery. We appreciate your ongoing partnership and support.

In 2024 Rathbun House served 786 individuals, including 53 NICU families, with support from 34 dedicated volunteers.

LEFT: Christ School students are among Rathbun House's exceptional volunteers. Pictured here with Rathbun Volunteer Coordinator, Fernando Castillo.

Health Scholarships

WNC Bridge Foundation is committed to meeting the health challenges that face our region.

Congratulations 2024 Scholarship Recipients

 JACKSON BAKER Tucker High	 AMBER BLALOCK Orange High	 BROOKE BREWER Juno High	 BRIE BUDZINSKI West Henderson High	 NEHELA CASTELLON St. Bonaventure High	 OLIVIA COFFEY Peters High	 ALLISON CRUZ Franklin High	 CASPER DALE Marshall High	 HESTER FLETCHER Pitt County High	 HESHEY FRAPP Forsyth High	 KASEYLYN FRAZIER East Wayne High	 BRIANNA GENTRY North Henderson High	 FERNANDA GLAGAU Berkley High
 BRIBERY GLEASON Tucker High	 MACKENZIE GORE Seno High	 HALLEY GRIFFIN Rutherford High	 MARY HURT Seno High	 ELLA LEDFORD Seno High	 SETH LEE Henderson High	 KATIE MCNABB Henderson High	 BYLEE PARRISH Henderson High	 NANCY PEREZ ORTEGA North Henderson High	 HAN PHAM Forsyth High	 HOLLY REYER St. Bonaventure High	 CAROLINE RICE Seno High	 ABBY RICHARDSON Berkley High
 GEORGE SANDORE Carter High	 HOLLY SHAW East Henderson High	 GRACIE STEVENS Asheville High	 AYDEN SURBER East Henderson High	 SHELBY TINLEY Kannon High	 JOSELIN VELAZQUEZ Class High	 BROOKE WALSH Kannon High	 ASHLEIGH WORRICK St. Colum High	 AUTUMN WOOLLEY High High				

We believe a crucial part of that commitment is ensuring our communities have exceptional healthcare workers. Each year, we award scholarships to high school seniors pursuing health-related occupations and have been identified by teachers as potential impactful contributors to healthcare.

In 2024, we proudly awarded 35 Health Scholarships to students from 36 high schools across WNC, supporting their aspirations to enter fields ranging from nursing and anesthesiology to pediatric care and public health.

Community Support

AT-A-GLANCE

Rathbun House

Located on 17 wooded acres and just blocks from the Mission Health campus and several rehabilitation facilities, Rathbun serves as Western North Carolina's only hospitality house.

BEDS AVAILABLE | 36

LOCATION | 121 Sherwood Road
Asheville, NC 28803

Health Scholarships

Each January, we invite high schools in the 18 counties of Western North Carolina and the Qualla Boundary to nominate a deserving senior for a Health Scholarship, based on their commitment to pursuing a career in a health-related field.

TIMEFRAME | Awarded in April

Grants

Grants are WNC Bridge Foundation's large scale philanthropic programs funded by Foundation investments. Applications are committee-reviewed with input from board members, community members, and staff.



UNETE partnered with Bounty & Soul, Hearts with Hands, and the YMCA to support food distributions in Buncombe County, serving over 1,000 individuals (260 families) with fresh produce and household essentials.

NOW Grants AT-A-GLANCE

NOW Grants

To address the funding gap faced by WNC nonprofits with limited options for immediate support, NOW Grants offer rapid funding decisions. The application process is simple and results are delivered quickly. Events in September 2024 shifted the focus on grants addressing Helene relief.

TIMEFRAME | Awarded monthly

RIGHT: UNETE Community Health Workers and volunteers taking action for Hurricane Helene Recovery.

Hurricane Helene NOW Grant Powers Community Health Care Workers

CHWs are essential for deploying effective disaster response

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are vital to reducing health disparities and improving community well-being. They serve as trusted links between healthcare systems and underserved populations, providing education, support, and services. During 2024, the impact of CHWs was especially clear after Hurricane Helene, when the need for accessible resources and assistance sharply increased. Many people faced challenges in navigating recovery, highlighting the critical role of CHWs in disaster response and community resilience.

In response to this urgent need, an emergency Hurricane Helene NOW Grant was awarded to UNETE, a grass-roots nonprofit dedicated to health equity and human rights in Western North Carolina. UNETE could deliver immediate relief and promote sustainable change in the lives of storm-affected families and individuals, emphasizing community-led solutions and cultural sensitivity.

With grant support, UNETE expanded its Community Health Worker team, enabling them to assist more people. The expanded CHW program provided health education, resource navigation, and emotional support during recovery. This effort ensured vulnerable populations received care and guidance to rebuild their lives amid challenging circumstances.

The Hurricane Helene NOW Grant allowed CHWs to:

Provide direct support to 252 individuals completing FEMA applications and appeals.

Support 254 families applying for D-SNAP benefits.

Complete 292 referrals for critical services such as: housing assistance, medical care, mental health support and more.



An Anchor for Families

Christine W. Avery Center Provides Speedy Support

For the past decade, the Christine W. Avery Learning Center (CWA) has been a driving force in early education and youth development across Buncombe County. Founded in 2015 by CiCi Weston in honor of her mother, Christine W. Avery, the center began as a modest after-school and summer program. Today, it has grown into one of the largest

mobilized quickly, distributing food, diapers, clothing, and baby formula to families in need and offering respite care from their Gaston Street location in Asheville. Even in crisis, they remained a reliable and responsive presence, keeping families informed and supported. Thankfully, the Valley site in Swannanoa is once again operational today.

“We are deeply grateful to WNC Bridge Foundation for the three-year IMPACT Capacity Grant, which has been a cornerstone in strengthening our operations. This investment has empowered The Christine Avery Learning Center to grow with purpose, sustain our dedicated team, and continue serving as a catalyst for change in the lives of families across our community. Because of this support, our mission is not only possible, it’s thriving.”

— CiCi Weston, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, The Christine Avery Learning Center

childcare providers in Buncombe County, serving over 200 children daily across three sites and offering high-quality early learning, after-school, and summer programs grounded in community voice.

CWA’s deep commitment to the community was never more evident than during Hurricane Helene. When the storm damaged CWA’s Valley site in Swannanoa, it could have brought operations to a halt. Instead, CWA

A three-year IMPACT Capacity Grant from WNC Bridge Foundation enabled CWA not only to weather the storm but to lead through it. Grant funding strengthened the organization’s fundraising capacity by 300% and supported CWA’s commitment to paying staff a living wage. CWA’s resilience and unwavering service during Hurricane Helene reaffirmed its role as a trusted anchor in the community, making a lasting impact when families needed it most.



DID YOU KNOW

The average cost of child care in Asheville is approximately \$2,558 per month.

Source: care.com



IMPACT Grants AT-A-GLANCE

IMPACT Grants

In 2024, we concluded our multi-year IMPACT Capacity Building Grant program. Through this initiative, selected organizations received three years of support to strengthen their internal effectiveness, build general operating capacity, and deepen organizational knowledge. Many used these grants to upgrade technology, expand fundraising efforts, and invest in staff and programs.

TIMEFRAME | Annually (beginning in 2025)

ABOVE AND LEFT: Children at CWA engaged in hands-on learning and discovery.

Partnerships

The Partnerships program creates innovative and targeted strategies to deliver our Partnerships for Health. Funding comes from outside grants and WNC Bridge Foundation endowment funds. We partner with established Grants program recipients, referral sources to our Community Initiatives, and WNC municipalities.

Swift Response Brings Shelter After Hurricane Helene

“You said if I ever needed help I could call you. Well, I’m calling you to help the county with literally life and death situations right now.”

These urgent words from Dr. Ellis Matheson, Buncombe County Public Health Director, came during a tense call. The Foundation had previously been involved in brainstorming potential public health partnerships after receiving a public health fellowship from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in late 2023. However, this call for help was coming in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which had devastated the community on September 27, 2024.

Dr. Matheson needed a safe, welcoming environment to establish a notification center for missing and

deceased community members. Despite initial concerns about the Foundation staff’s lack of training for such a task, the staff recognized that the Foundation had the essential resources: a large space with access to water, electricity, and Wi-Fi. This space could accommodate law enforcement officers, FEMA resource staff, Red Cross chaplains, funeral home and mortuary providers, and others involved in the solemn process of identifying those lost in the storm.

In response, the Foundation staff adapted swiftly to the dire circumstances. They transformed half of

the building—from the lobby to the conference rooms and kitchen—within three days. They set up public health’s large black box privacy screens, gathered all available tissue boxes, and procured bottles of water and nonperishable snacks from supply sites for guests. They also placed stuffed animals provided by the Red Cross and faith groups to offer comfort to young family members, a stark reminder of all that had been hurt.

This remarkable effort by the WNC Bridge Foundation staff exemplifies their dedication and adaptability in the face of unprecedented challenges, providing critical support to the community during its darkest hours.

Shiloh Celebrates Neighborhood Development Milestone

Strategic partnerships propel community revitalization efforts



ABOVE (L-R): Shiloh Community liaison Norma Baynes; President Sophie Dixon, holding the keys to the first purchased property at the closing; and Treasurer JeWana Grier McEachin.

The Shiloh Community Association embarked on a journey in 2022 with the WNC Bridge Foundation as an IMPACT grantee. This initial relationship blossomed into a robust partnership with both the Dogwood Health Trust and WNC Bridge Foundation by June 2023, aimed at supporting Shiloh’s association transition into a **Community Development Corporation** (CDC) to spearhead neighborhood revitalization.

Over two years of dedicated effort culminated in the formal application process for CDC status, which began in early October 2024. Despite the setback caused by Hurricane Helene, which disrupted electricity, water, and Wi-Fi for two weeks, the Shiloh community, led by President Sophie

Dixon and the Board, demonstrated remarkable resilience. They continued to meet the application requirements, leveraging email communication whenever Wi-Fi was restored. The strategic guidance of project consultant and architect Nick Forest, legal expertise from Roberts & Stevens, attorney Abbie Hornberger, and the unwavering support of WNC Bridge Foundation Partnerships Officer were instrumental during this period. Their combined efforts ensured the timely submission of the application in October. In November 2024, the Shiloh Community Association’s vision since 2010 became a reality with the approval of their CDC status. By December 2024, they began accepting transferred and purchased assets, marking a milestone in their neighborhood revitalization. This achievement underscores the power of community collaboration and unwavering commitment to a brighter future for Shiloh.

Retail Operations

WNC Bridge Estate Sales & Services and Thrift Store serve as the Foundation's outward face to the community, providing a visible connection for local residents and visitors who shop at our stores—many of whom first learn about the Foundation this way.

Rebuilding After the Flood

A Message from Foundation Retail Director Skip Wade

The floodwaters from the Swannanoa River devastated not only Biltmore Village but also our retail stores on Fairview Road. Our front parking lots were submerged under more than eight feet of water, with over two feet flowing into the thrift store, stockrooms, and the estate sales showroom.

When the waters receded, I vividly remember approaching the building through two feet of mud and debris. Inside was an overwhelming scene of complete ruin in the space we had built with such care.

Everything on the floor or low shelving was destroyed. Despite insurance, our losses were significant. Our three box trucks, parked outside, had been completely submerged and unsalvageable. Replacing the trucks alone would cost over \$80,000 each.

There's no manual for flood recovery, but as Retail Director, it was my responsibility to bring our business back to life. We made a plan, adapted as needed, and poured our hearts into it.

We began the enormous task of cleanup. Day after day, we hauled damaged goods out of the building, first to the back lot, then to dumpsters and the landfill.

Drivers Matt Stone and Luke Self went above and beyond leading much

of the cleanup, clearing debris, and making countless trips to the landfill.

It took weeks to clear the building and demolish damaged fixtures and walls to prepare for professional remediation. Once the space was sanitized and safe, the hardworking crew began rebuilding by reconstructing sales counters, building and painting walls, and restocking inventory.

Along the way, power and water were restored even while many of us returned home to houses without utilities.

Through it all, we consider ourselves fortunate. None of our staff or volunteers were harmed, and we were able to rebuild and reopen within two months. Many neighbors in Biltmore Village are still struggling, and our hearts go out to them. And I can only imagine the pain of those who lost property and loved ones. Their strength is unimaginable.

Today, our stores are open. Donations are flowing in, estate sale consignments are rising, and we're optimistic about a successful 2025.

I am eternally grateful to my team who stood beside me every step. Thank you to everyone who supported us with your words, donations, time, and heart. We couldn't do it without you.

With gratitude,
Skip Wade, Retail Director,
WNC Bridge Foundation



ABOVE: Estate Sales box trucks were destroyed after being submerged in floodwater that rose above their cabs.

Retail Operations AT-A-GLANCE

Estate Sales & Services

Clients who are moving, relocating, downsizing, or settling estates have used our service to pack, move, inventory, and liquidate furnishings, rugs, household items, artwork, and jewelry. Proceeds from bi-weekly sales are split equally between the seller and WNC Bridge Foundation, with no other fees.

HOW WE SERVE

All proceeds from retail operations and other fundraising efforts go to support the Community Initiatives of WNC Bridge Foundation. Whether you donate items or shop in our store, you are making a difference in our community.

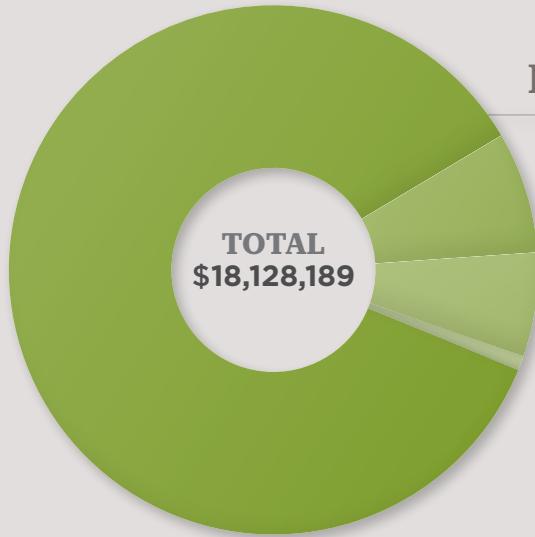
LOCATION | 75 Fairview Road, Asheville



LEFT: Skip Wade, left, raises a grateful toast to clearing the building of storm debris.

(R-L) Matt Stone, Kayla Hutchinson, Dave McClintock, Lyndia Stauffer, Tammy Boomer, Luke Self, Paul Adams

Financial Information



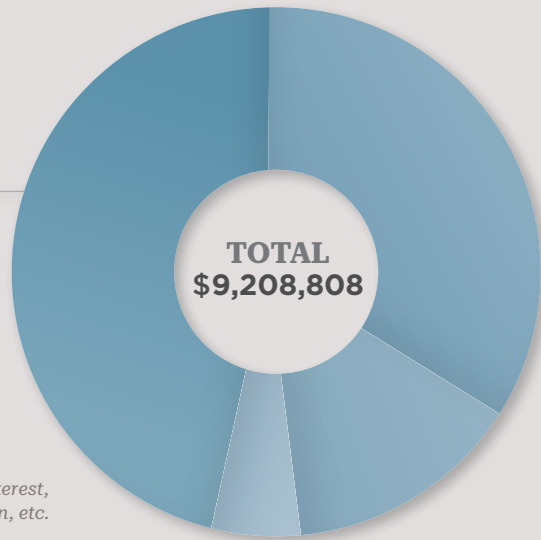
Revenue

- Investment Income
\$15,489,161
- Grants & Donations
\$1,368,815
- Retail Operations
\$1,173,173
- Rental Income
\$97,040

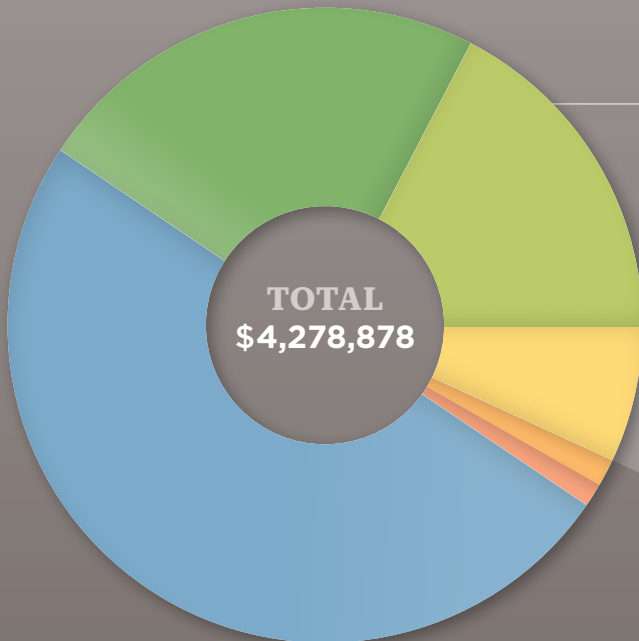
Expenses

- Foundation Dollars at Work
\$4,278,879
- *Administrative
\$3,095,851
- Retail Operations
\$1,327,884
- Rathbun House
\$506,194

** Includes investment fees, loan interest, business insurance, depreciation, etc.*



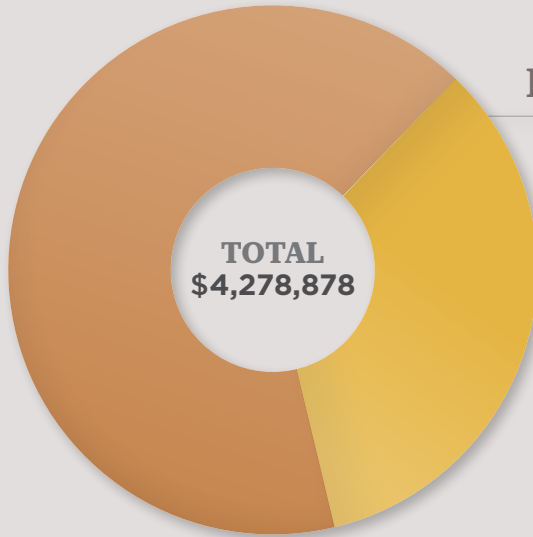
Foundation Dollars at Work



- IMPACT Grants
\$2,134,179
- NOW Grants
\$992,406
- Partnership Grants
\$749,468
- Health Scholarships
\$59,000
- Special Appropriations
\$49,774
- Community Initiatives (itemized)
\$294,051

WNC Greatest Needs	\$145,379
Children's Services	\$111,530
Hurricane Helene	\$37,142

Hurricane Helene vs Grants



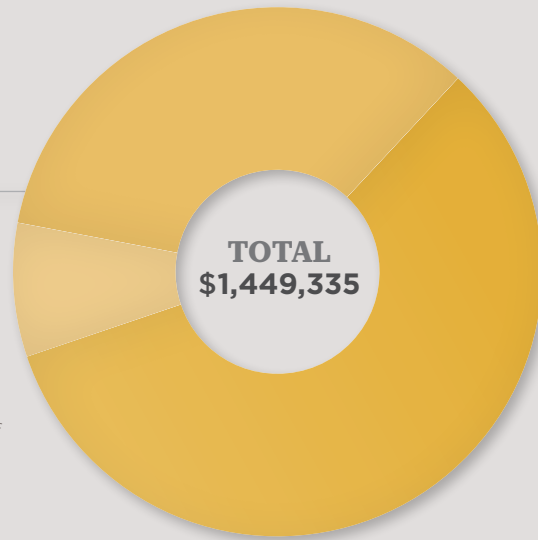
- Core Program & Community Grants
\$2,829,543
- Hurricane Helene Relief Assistance
\$1,449,335

In 2024, WNC Bridge Foundation supported 88 organizations and awarded \$1.4 million for Hurricane Helene support.

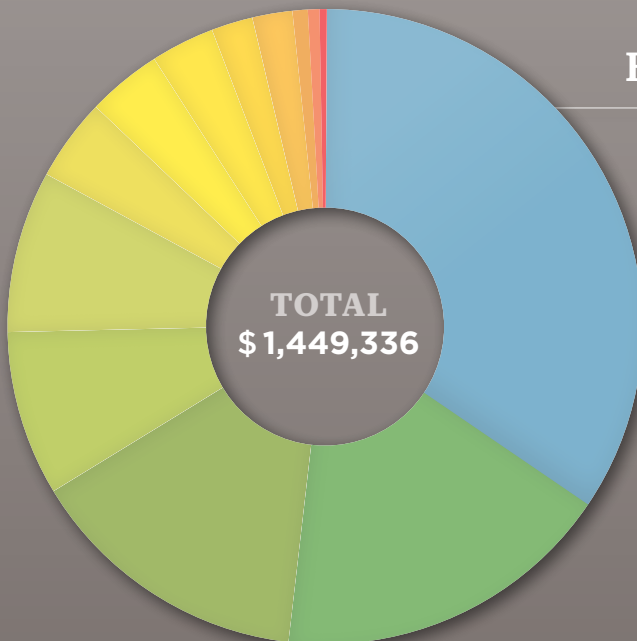
Hurricane Helene Grants

- NOW Grants
\$839,561
- *Partnerships
\$500,000
- Community Initiatives
\$109,774

**To Community Foundation of WNC's Emergency Relief Fund*



Hurricane Helene Request Type



- Emergency Relief Fund
\$500,000
- Operational Support
\$252,561
- Basic Needs
\$210,000
- Financial Assistance
\$120,000
- Building Remediation
\$120,000
- Home Repair
\$60,000
- Rental Assistance
\$55,150
- Mental Health
\$47,000
- Rescue Equipment
\$30,000
- Home Improvement
\$29,342
- Transportation
\$11,511
- Utilities
\$8,193
- Medical
\$5,579

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Linda Frankl
Estate Sale Coordinator

Kayla Hutchinson
Lead Cashier

Dana Maxwell
*Business Manager,
Retail Operations*

Michelle Parparian
Estate Sale Coordinator

Luke Self
Driver

Matt Stone
Driver

Skip Wade
Director, Retail Operations

Our Mission:

WNC Bridge Foundation exists to connect our communities to a healthier future and to create lasting change through local partnerships. Our efforts are focused on expanding access and equity for vulnerable populations in our communities.

We are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization; contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

CONTACT US

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Asheville, North Carolina 28803

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Web WNCbridge.org
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TO GIVE TO WNC BRIDGE FOUNDATION
Make a secure donation online at WNCbridge.org,
call 828.277.4815, or scan code.

THRIFT STORE and ESTATE SALES & SERVICES

75 Fairview Road
Asheville, North Carolina 28803
Main number 828.575.2509

**In-home or virtual estate sale
consultation** 828.575.2509, option 2

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