



NEWS RELEASE

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New MAHEC Report Shares Stories and Stats of Response to Hurricane Helene

"Caring for Western North Carolina: Hope After Helene" impact report now available

Asheville, NC, April 2025 — "When there's a fire, you can run *to* the fire or you can run *away* from the fire. MAHEC runs *to* the fire. Whether it's maternal fetal health disparities, opioid use disorder, COVID—you name it—we have run to the fire. We're going to continue to do that."

Those were the words of William R. Hathaway, MD, the CEO of the nonprofit organization Mountain Area Health Education Center, in a video launched in September 2024 in conjunction with an event celebrating MAHEC's 50th anniversary. Exactly one week later, Dr. Hathaway's words proved once again to be true when Hurricane Helene swept through Western North Carolina.

"When disaster struck, MAHEC did what we've always done: We showed up," said Hathaway, "staffing emergency shelters, caring for mothers and babies, providing mental health counseling, and restoring healthcare services in the hardest-hit communities."

A new report, *Caring for Western North Carolina: Hope After Helene*, shares some of the stats and stories of the ways MAHEC "ran to the fire" when the storm devastated the region. Examples of what readers will find in the 16-page report include the following:

- Within 72 hours following the storm, MAHEC was already helping to staff emergency shelters, including the one at A-B Tech's Ferguson Center, set up to serve those dependent on power for medical equipment.

"When we in Buncombe County government called Dr. Hathaway [about staffing the emergency medical shelter] and he said, 'We've got this,' it was a huge relief. We knew we didn't have to worry because of the skill, capacity, and quality MAHEC brings to any situation, including COVID. We are so grateful for that." —Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder.

- MAHEC providers also helped staff pop-up clinics in Swannanoa, Black Mountain, and Lake Lure, treating more than 1,000 patients.
- With four days, MAHEC had a fully functioning walk-in clinic to provide care to the community; 1,031 patients from 12 different counties were seen there in the first two weeks following the storm.

(MORE)

Mountain Area Health Education Center

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- In the month after the storm, MAHEC providers safely delivered 45 babies and provided care to 2,214 expectant mothers. Nineteen high-risk pregnancies were managed in MAHEC's Maternal-Fetal Medicine unit, the region's only provider of this specialized care.
- MAHEC psychiatrists and licensed therapists saw 2,255 patients immediately after the storm and throughout the following weeks.
- With contributions from more than 150 donors nationwide, MAHEC was able to establish an emergency relief fund to assist 82 MAHEC employees who lost homes, vehicles, and more.

View the online version of the "Caring for Western North Carolina: Hope After Helene" impact report [here](#). Printed copies are also available upon request; contact MAHEC Communications Manager Kathi Petersen at Kathi.Petersen@MAHEC.net.

More about MAHEC

Established more than five decades ago, [MAHEC—Mountain Area Health Education Center](#)—is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. MAHEC's impact can be felt across Western North Carolina, with patient care offered at our main, 14-acre [Asheville location as well as at numerous satellites](#). Our providers can be found in 200+ medical practices, hospitals, and other clinical sites, while nurses, therapists, and oral health providers care for children in schools.

As an academic health center, MAHEC offers countless professional development opportunities and also serves as a branch campus for UNC schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and public health. The largest of nine Area Health Education Centers in North Carolina, MAHEC is also a Federally Qualified Health Center and private, [501\(c\)3 nonprofit organization](#). It is one of the largest nonprofit employers in the mountain region with more than 1,000 employees. For more information, visit mahec.net and follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#).

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