

SEPTEMBER 2026

HURRICANE HELENE TWO-YEAR REPORT



American
Red Cross



“I thank everyone here and God above for sparing me, so I could be here in this moment.”

MS. LAUREL, YANCEY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

When we told Ms. Laurel that the Red Cross and our partners would help rebuild her Helene-ravaged home in the North Carolina mountains, she was skeptical: Many people had made promises and then never came back. Boosted by Red Cross financial assistance and a recovery grant, along with the hard work of our partners Baptists on Mission and Operation Helo, that promise became a reality. Even Ms. Laurel's salvaged door knocker, reading “This house will serve the Lord,” was incorporated into the rebuilt home.

At a key ceremony celebrating the completion of this work, Ms. Laurel was joined by family members and representatives of the partners who helped restore her home, including local Red Cross chapter executive Adrian Mines and Red Cross Community Recovery Manager Lynn Huff. They also helped with some finishing touches, like mounting the American flag and sharing a Red Cross preparedness session with go bags for the family.

The financial assistance Ms. Laurel received, as well as the recovery grant that supported the work of our community partners, would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors. The day of her key ceremony, she shared, “I thank everyone here and God above for sparing me, so I could be here in this moment.”

Above: Ms. Laurel was joined by family, friends, Red Crossers and our recovery partners at a key ceremony celebrating the repair and rebuilding of her Helene-damaged home in Yancey County, North Carolina. Photo by Jillian Robertson/American Red Cross

Cover photo: Ms. Laurel, a Helene survivor who lives in Yancey County, North Carolina, hangs an American flag on the porch of her newly repaired home. She was assisted by Adrian Mines, executive director of the Red Cross Western North Carolina Chapter. Photo by Jillian Robertson/American Red Cross

A LETTER FROM

Cliff Holtz, President and CEO, American Red Cross



Two years ago, Hurricane Helene devastated parts of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee, with significant impacts as far as West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. This massive storm brought catastrophic floods and widespread destruction to communities across the Southeast and southern Appalachians — including places where flooding on this scale had rarely been seen. Homes, businesses and entire neighborhoods were swept away, leaving families to cope with heartbreaking losses and an uncertain future.

Thanks to the generosity of donors who stepped up to help people in need, the American Red Cross could respond immediately with essential aid. Our disaster teams braved flooded roads, damaged infrastructure and challenging terrain to deliver safe shelter, meals, clean water, health services, compassionate care and financial assistance to tens of thousands of hurricane survivors.

In a visit to western North Carolina following Hurricane Helene, I witnessed firsthand both the immense need and the extraordinary dedication of our Red Cross disaster responders, most of whom are volunteers. Their compassion, perseverance and commitment brought comfort and hope to families facing some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Two years later, much progress has been made and our recovery work continues. Across the hardest-hit communities, the Red Cross and our partners have helped strengthen local recovery efforts through investments in housing and community support services, food access programs, resilience hubs, preparedness education, lifesaving training and other initiatives designed to help communities recover and better withstand future disasters. We have also provided additional financial assistance to many of the hardest-hit individuals and families, helping them overcome obstacles on the road to recovery.

Throughout this difficult journey, survivors have demonstrated incredible resilience, determination and care for one another. We are deeply grateful for your support, which made this work possible and continues to help families and communities rebuild their lives in the aftermath of this historic storm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cliff". The signature is stylized with a cursive, flowing script.

Cliff



IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Thousands of Red Cross disaster workers mounted a massive response to help people impacted by Hurricane Helene. They have:



Reached an estimated **473,300 people** with relief and recovery services, including **\$31 million** in financial assistance



Served more than **3.3 million meals and snacks** with partners



Provided nearly **56,500 overnight shelter stays** with partners



Provided more than **149,000 households** provided with relief items

*Cumulative figures for responses in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana as of August 26, 2026.

Red Cross Disaster Responders Delivered Essential Aid to Helene Survivors

When **Hurricane Helene struck in September 2024**, it left heartbreaking devastation in its wake—from Florida's Gulf Coast to communities throughout the Southeast and Appalachia. A high storm surge and powerful winds damaged homes and businesses along Florida's west coast, while historic rainfall triggered catastrophic flooding far inland. Western North Carolina, including Asheville and many surrounding mountain communities, experienced some of the worst devastation as flash floods overwhelmed neighborhoods, roads and critical infrastructure.

In response, **the American Red Cross launched one of our largest disaster relief operations in recent years** to help hard-hit families and communities **across 10 states**. Despite washed-out roads, damaged communications networks and limited access to many affected areas, **Red Cross volunteers worked 24/7** alongside local partners to **provide safe shelter, meals, clean water and relief supplies** to tens of thousands of people impacted by the storm. Red Cross shelters also served as vital community hubs where residents could find the latest information, access free Wi-Fi, charge their devices, and connect with essential relief and recovery services.

For many survivors and communities, **the impacts of Helene continued long after the storm ended**. In some of the hardest-hit areas, families faced

Above: Betzabel Escobedo and her mom, Maria, from Asheville, North Carolina, stopped by a comfort care and distribution site in Swannanoa, North Carolina, for hot meals and relief supplies following the devastation of Hurricane Helene. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

extended power outages, limited access to clean water and significant transportation challenges. Dedicated Red Cross disaster response teams remained on the ground for weeks, providing health services, such as replacing lost medications and eyeglasses, offering emotional support and helping family members reconnect with loved ones separated by the hurricane.

Alongside this traditional disaster aid, **the Red Cross provided specialized support to meet the unique needs of Hurricane Helene survivors.**

In western North Carolina, through Operation Mountain Hope, Red Cross teams worked with local partners to reach flood-ravaged mountain communities with generators, meals, safe drinking water, power banks and other essential supplies. Across the most heavily affected states, we also helped isolated areas and economically vulnerable residents connect with available assistance, transition from emergency shelters to more stable housing and access disaster mental health support to cope with the trauma of the storm.

To date, the Red Cross has distributed approximately \$31 million in direct financial assistance to help Helene survivors with their most pressing needs.

We Provided Cash Assistance to Help Individuals and Families Recover

Powered by the compassionate support of generous donors, the Red Cross also provided a **multi-phase financial assistance** program to support residents whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged by Helene.

Right after the hurricane, we provided flexible emergency funds that empowered survivors to make decisions based on their unique circumstances. Whether used for groceries, fuel, temporary housing, transportation, utility bills or other expenses, this support helped families take the first steps toward rebuilding their lives.

A few months later, a second round of financial assistance delivered additional funds to help the most severely affected households overcome barriers to their recovery. This assistance is meant to bridge the gap when a disaster destroys the community's ability to help itself recover and other large-scale resources may not yet be available. Families often use this round of financial assistance for a wide variety of recovery needs, such as paying for home repair expenses, replacing damaged furniture and appliances, health care needs and more.

Two years since Helene's landfall, we are now distributing a third round of direct financial assistance for families that are still experiencing obstacles to their recovery. The Red Cross provides this round of financial assistance later in the recovery timeline, focusing on individuals and households that continue to face significant roadblocks and seeking to reach those with the greatest needs.

To date, the Red Cross has distributed approximately **\$31 million in direct financial assistance** to help Helene survivors with their most pressing needs. We talked to a few recipients of this most recent round of recovery financial assistance, and they generously shared their stories with us.

ZOYA'S STORY: Zoya has lived in North Carolina for more than 30 years, but Helene brought a new challenge to her doorstep — and an unwelcome visitor crashing into her house. When the hurricane swept through Swannanoa, her home suffered major damage, including a flying tree branch that punched a hole through a wall just above her front door. Zoya was living on a fixed income when Helene hit, and she told us that the direct financial assistance she received from the Red Cross will help pay for repairs to her home — specifically, the kitchen.

"This is really helpful," Zoya said. **"By myself, I'd never recover from this ... I'd end up living under a bridge,"** she added, with a rueful laugh.

JOYCE'S AND JAMES'S STORY: Joyce and James, a mother and son living in Greenville, South Carolina, were among the tens of thousands who received Red Cross financial assistance in Helene's wake. During the storm, a fallen tree damaged the roof and cut off the power to Joyce's home. Thanks to the funds from the Red Cross, Joyce and James, who lives close by, could hire an electrician to make necessary repairs and get her power back on. The family struggled in the months after Helene, but this latest round of Red Cross support gave them hope.

"Am I out of the woods yet? No," said James. **"But I can see the light."**

"I can't believe it was that easy," she said. I appreciate you guys so very much."

MELINDA, ELIZABETHTON, TENNESSEE

MELINDA'S STORY: As Hurricane Helene approached her Elizabethton, Tennessee, home in September 2024, Melinda and her partner, Jeremiah, decided to leave and weather the storm at his parents' house. When they returned home, the damage they found was devastating.

The couple went through three chainsaws trying to clear the debris from their property, including a large tree that crashed through their trailer. Since Helene, Melinda said they "have put every penny into it trying to repair it, emptying our savings."

About a year after Helene, Melinda received financial assistance as part of an additional round of Red Cross support launched to help households struggling to overcome persistent recovery obstacles. "It's one thing after another," Melinda said of the slow, difficult recovery process. The cash assistance from the Red Cross, and the ease of accessing it, were bright spots.

"I can't believe it was that easy," she said. **"I appreciate you guys so very much."**



Red Cross Community Grants Help Power Long-Term Recovery Support

Thanks to generous donors, the Red Cross provided rapid response impact grants to partners in the early stages of the operation. We also launched long-term recovery efforts to help people and communities as they continued to rebuild. Along with providing financial assistance to households, the **Red Cross has awarded community recovery grants to partner organizations across the hardest-hit states: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.**

These grants help nonprofits and community-based organizations expand existing services and create new programs that support recovery and strengthen resilience. The funding supports critical needs, such as home repair, food security, mental health services and legal assistance for hurricane survivors. Grants also help communities lead their own recovery efforts and build preparedness for future disasters.

As of August 26, the Red Cross had funded approximately **\$61.5 million in response impact grants** and long-term recovery grants. Read on for just a few examples of the impact of these grants and the dedicated work of our recovery partners.

“Grateful doesn’t even begin to cover it ... we’ll be giving thanks with full hearts and a roof over our heads.”

A FLORIDA FAMILY WHOSE DAMAGED ROOF WAS REPAIRED WITH SUPPORT FROM A RED CROSS RECOVERY GRANT AFTER THEIR HOME WAS FLOODED BY HELENE.

Rebuilding Together Greater Florida (Home Repair)

The Red Cross provided a recovery grant to Rebuilding Together Greater Florida (RTGFL), which is **funding repairs to homes damaged by Hurricane Helene and Milton**. One family described what it meant to be returning home: “Grateful doesn’t even begin to cover it...we’ll be giving thanks with full hearts and a roof over our heads.”

Another Helene survivor helped by RTGFL was 101-year-old veteran Fred “Fritz” Kojzar, whose home took on several inches of water during the storms. The wet flooring was immediately removed but remained unfinished and uneven for quite a while. RTGFL — along with the Red Cross and other partners — worked together to fund and complete the repairs to the home.



One of many Florida families whose homes were repaired after suffering severe storm damage, thanks to compassionate donors and the hard work of Red Cross partner Rebuilding Together Greater Florida. Photo by American Red Cross

Despite the hardships he had endured, Kojzar focused on pushing through it. “If I just sit down and do nothing, it’s not me,” Kojzar said. “I like to keep it going.”

The truck has been a game-changer, helping Feeding Avery Families safely deliver fresh food to neighbors who need it most.

Feeding Avery Families (North Carolina, Food Security)

Our Long-Term Recovery team visited Feeding Avery Families (FAF) in spring 2026 to see firsthand how Red Cross Hurricane Helene grant funding is making a lasting impact in Avery County, North Carolina. Thanks to this support, **FAF expanded its mobile food distribution with a new refrigerated box truck — now fully operational and serving rural communities heavily affected by Hurricane Helene.** The truck has been a game changer, helping FAF safely deliver fresh food to neighbors who need it most.

In visits to a bustling food warehouse, which transforms each week into a client-choice market, and to mobile distribution centers like Pine Grove United Methodist Church, a long-standing community partner, we saw how FAF’s dedicated volunteers have fostered strong local relationships. It’s a commitment that goes beyond food — supporting students, checking on client wellness and strengthening recovery across Avery County.



Volunteers from Feeding Avery Families stand outside a new refrigerated box truck, made possible by a Red Cross grant, which is being used to expand their mobile food distribution in rural North Carolina communities that were heavily affected by Hurricane Helene. Photo courtesy of Feeding Avery Families

Community Organized Relief Effort (Georgia, Home Repair and Hazard Mitigation)

Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE) received a Long-Term Recovery grant from the Red Cross to **implement a home roofing replacement and hazard mitigation program in Lowndes County, Georgia.** This partnership aims to expand and enhance the services CORE provides to address critical housing needs for low-income and socially vulnerable residents who were impacted by Hurricane Helene.

“Through this amazing program, we’ll be able to continue offering critical support and preparing communities for future disasters, which are becoming all too frequent and devastating.”

**ZACHARY BROOKS
MILLER, CORE VICE
PRESIDENT OF PROGRAMS
AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Earlier this year, members of the Red Cross Georgia Region joined CORE staff members as they met with clients like Tangula Mitchell, of Valdosta. Through a \$270,000 Red Cross CORE Grant, homeowners like Tangula have received help with critical roof repairs, making their homes safer and lifting some of the burdens caused by Helene’s devastation.

“We’re grateful for the Red Cross’s support in our ongoing response to the impacts of Hurricane Helene. Even a year later, we know there is still such a tremendous need in the region,” said Zachary Brooks-Miller, CORE’s vice president of Programs & Partnerships. “Through this amazing program, we’ll be able to continue offering critical support and preparing communities for future disasters, which are becoming all too frequent and devastating.”



In Valdosta, Georgia, Tangula Mitchell meets with a local Red Crosser in front of her home, which received critical roof repairs thanks to a Red Cross grant to recovery partner Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE). Photo by American Red Cross

Long-Term Recovery Groups

In addition to grants for community recovery partners, another critical facet of the Hurricane Helene Long-Term Recovery Operation is **strengthening the capacity of long-term recovery groups (LTRGs)**. Several grants have been awarded to these important local organizations to help them better serve their communities. These investments will help speed recovery now while also building a stronger foundation for the future. Because these groups will remain active after the current recovery effort, they can quickly respond and support their communities again if future disasters occur.

For example, in North Carolina, **AMY Wellness Foundation and Community Foundation of Henderson County are partnering to bring long-term recovery support to Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties through a \$3 million Red Cross grant**. This funding puts critical resources into the hands of local organizations, helping families in heavily damaged mountain communities rebuild after Hurricane Helene.

“Our neighbors have been through so much. This grant ensures we can keep sending volunteers to rebuild homes, case managers to guide families through the process and resources to fill the gaps no one else can.”

**STEPHANIE PITMAN,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MITCHELL COUNTY
(N.C.) LONG-TERM
RECOVERY GROUP**

The grant will help launch and strengthen the counties' Long-Term Recovery Groups, which repair homes, provide disaster case management, coordinate volunteers and connect families with the support they need to recover. While the storm has passed, many families are still living in damaged homes, facing repair challenges and working through insurance issues. This funding will help restore not only homes, but also stability, hope and peace of mind for those affected.

“Our neighbors have been through so much. This grant ensures we can keep sending volunteers to rebuild homes, case managers to guide families through the process and resources to fill the gaps no one else can,” said Stephanie Pitman, Executive Director of the Mitchell County Long-Term Recovery Group.

The Red Cross will remain by the side of those whose lives have been forever changed by Hurricane Helene as they continue the long journey to recovery. This vital donor-funded recovery aid — from direct financial assistance for affected individuals and families, to long-term recovery grants and LTRG support — will help people rebuild their lives in the wake of Helene's devastation and help their communities become better prepared for future emergencies.



Red Cross emergency response vehicles delivered meals to people all across northern Florida who were affected by Hurricane Helene, including residents of hard-hit Cedar Key. Photo by Marko Kokic/American Red Cross

Caring Donors Make Relief and Recovery Possible

Thanks to the generosity of caring donors, the Red Cross has raised **\$174.4 million**¹ designated for our Hurricane Helene response to help people impacted by this disaster—including the value of critical donated goods and services. As of August 26, 2026, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately **\$163.0 million** on relief and recovery efforts for Hurricane Helene. We will continue to program the remaining funds, as well as funds from our combined Hurricanes Milton and Helene designation, to provide and support services for both individual and community long-term recovery for people impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Hurricane Helene Expenses and Commitments^{2,3,4} (in millions) As of August 26, 2026

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery & Resilience	Total	Expense %
Long-term recovery programs to help unmet needs	—	—	\$28.1	\$61.8	\$89.9	55%
Financial assistance, food, shelter and other relief items	\$17.8	\$0.7	\$2.9	\$0.5	\$21.9	13%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$7.9	\$1.2	\$1.9	\$0.3	\$11.3	7%
Temporary disaster hires	\$1.2	\$0.3	\$0.5	\$7.5	\$9.5	6%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.9	\$0.1	\$0.5	\$1.7	\$4.2	3%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$2.9	\$0.4	\$0.7	\$0.1	\$4.1	3%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$2.4	—	—	—	\$2.4	1%
IT, communications and call centers	\$1.3	\$0.1	\$0.5	\$0.1	\$2.0	1%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$1.5	—	—	—	\$1.5	1%
Total Program Expenses	\$36.9	\$2.8	\$35.1	\$72.0	\$146.8	90%
Management, general and fundraising ⁵					\$16.2	10%
Total Spent & Committed					\$163.0	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$10.4	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$1.0	
Total Budget					\$174.4	

¹ Does not include \$51.7 million raised through the combined "Hurricanes Milton and Helene" designation. These funds are being programmed as needed to help people affected by hurricanes Helene and Milton.

² Dollar figures are rounded to the nearest \$100,000; therefore, expenses \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

³ Includes Hurricane Helene responses in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

⁴ Includes expenses reimbursed by the State of Florida.

⁵ Management, general and fundraising expenses support our work at its core and are indispensable to running the organization and helping people in need. They include the people and systems to maintain our enterprise-wide computer and telecommunications, HR and payroll systems to support nearly 18,000 employees and more than 325,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. Through June 30, 2026, ninety cents of every dollar spent for Hurricane Helene supported the delivery of care and comfort for people affected by this disaster. As of July 1, 2026, that figure has increased to 91 cents of every dollar spent or remaining to be spent, reflecting our efforts to maximize the resources available to deliver our humanitarian mission.



Your Support Made a Real Difference

The extraordinary generosity of the public helped tens of thousands in need after Hurricane Helene.

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of more than 60,000 disasters each year — including home fires, severe weather, floods and wildfires. Those in need turn to the Red Cross in their darkest hours because they know they can depend on us right after the disaster and throughout their recovery. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. We are grateful for your trust.

The extraordinary generosity of the public helped tens of thousands in need after Hurricane Helene. To learn more about our response and some of the people we've helped, please visit our **Hurricane Helene Stewardship Story Map** at redcross.org/hurricane-helene.

Thank you!



**American
Red Cross**

Above: "What a surprise," said Donna Napier when Red Cross volunteer Erica Santella delivered hot meals in her St. Petersburg, Florida, neighborhood to help those affected by Hurricane Helene's destructive storm surge. "Thank you so much for giving us your time and coming here from all across the country to help." Donna took two dozen meals to distribute to her neighbors who were working in the heat, piling their destroyed belongings on the curb and beginning to rebuild their lives. "This is going to cheer everybody up," Donna said. "Just knowing someone cares makes a difference." Photo by Marko Kokic / American Red Cross