



BETTERTOGETHER

'24 - '25 IMPACT REPORT HURRICANE HELENE RELIEF & RECOVERY

OPERATION
BLESSING

WHYNOT
INTERNATIONAL AID

World Vision

MERCURY
ONE

adventures
RELIEF

VALLEY HOPE CHURCH

EXCEL
College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CORE COALITION PARTNERS.....	3
COMMUNITY MEALS.....	5
VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT.....	7
HOME REBUILD PROGRAM.....	9
SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT.....	11

A NOTE FROM LOCAL PARTNERS AT VALLEY HOPE CHURCH

To all who have prayed, volunteered, and given over the past year:

Thank you for walking with us in our time of greatest need. One year ago, Hurricane Helene turned our mountain home from a place that once felt like heaven on earth into a scene of devastation we could hardly recognize. Roads disappeared, homes were destroyed, and we were all left without access to food, water, gas, communication, and many without safe passage. Yet even in the midst of such overwhelming destruction, we saw a richness in the depths of our community we never fully realized was there.

We saw neighbors empty their pantries to care for one another. We saw volunteers travel across the country, wading through mud and streets turned into rivers, to bring critical supplies. Many of you were among them, and your friendship has forever changed us.

And then there were our partners...faithful friends who prayerfully asked, "What can we do?" They answered by staying when the waters receded. Together, they became a living reminder that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted. Through His abundant provision, God has poured out more than \$10.8 million worth of humanitarian aid and assistance to our community on behalf of the Better Together Coalition.

Because of your generosity, homes and businesses are being rebuilt, stability is being restored, and hope is bursting forth across Western North Carolina. As Mike Bassett of World Vision said, "this partnership has been a beacon of light in the darkest of times."

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for standing with us, for reminding us we are not alone, and for helping us believe again in the promise that all things will be made new.

With gratitude and praise to the One who holds it all,

Lindsey Barnett (Director of Relief & Restoration)
Amy Berry (Director of Discipleship)
Anthony Rodriguez (Pastor)



"For me, this is about far more than houses and materials, it is about love in action. It is about showing that Jesus Himself is the One who moves us, and that His heart never forgets the cry of the most vulnerable."

FELIPE GONZALEZ
WHYNOT INTERNATIONAL AID



The success of the Better Together Coalition in the wake of Hurricane Helene is a testament to the power of collaboration and the unique strengths each partner brings to the table, compelled by compassion and submitted before one another for the glory of God.



CORE COALITION PARTNERS

EXCEL COLLEGE

Excel College, a Christian college in Black Mountain, quickly pivoted to respond to the needs of the larger community in light of the overwhelming devastation caused by Helene. They ran a distribution center that pushed out over 2 million pounds of life saving supplies before, in an extraordinary act of faith and commitment, investing more than \$2M to provide the properties and infrastructure that became the cornerstone of our logistical operations. This investment provided the crucial infrastructure needed to house thousands of volunteers and establish massive warehousing space. Through this central hub, millions of dollars in building materials and donated labor have been able to flow through the region, accelerating the pace of rebuilding. Excel continues to facilitate warehousing while also providing hands-on support for small business and home restoration.

MERCURY ONE

As a nonprofit focused on disaster relief, Mercury One Charity has provided a powerful boost to our on-site efforts. At the request of local partners, they have generously purchased and supplied millions of dollars worth of building materials, ensuring that our teams have the right tools and supplies to meet the diverse needs of the community.

WORLD VISION

World Vision has been committed to the long-term recovery of Western North Carolina from day one. Their generous spirit is reflected in their investment in the warehouse tent and their consistent provision of in-kind building materials. This steady flow of critical supplies has been a backbone of our rebuilding efforts, empowering our volunteers to make swift and tangible progress on the ground.

VALLEY HOPE CHURCH

Located just a block away from the Swannanoa River, Valley Hope Church became a gathering place of safety and refuge to an area that saw much destruction. A small EPC congregation with a passionate heart for serving its neighbors, the church transformed into a critical hub for food, water, supplies, and solidarity. As church members and neighbors experienced critical gaps in the recovery effort first hand, Valley Hope was able to react quickly, pioneering essential new initiatives, including the rapid and efficient mobilization of skilled volunteers to repair more than 160 homes, over \$300,000 in small business support, and weekly community meals that have continued to foster friendship and community long after the storm's initial impact.

OPERATION BLESSING

Operation Blessing is a humanitarian organization providing strategic disaster relief and other critical services to those in need. They have been a steadfast partner since the very beginning, providing foundational support that was instrumental to the Coalition's launch. Their significant financial investment helped to purchase and install the main warehouse tent and bunkhouses, while their logistical expertise was key to establishing the large-scale operation that is now serving the community. Operation Blessing has continued to show their ongoing support by having a constant staff presence on the ground and investing in a number of local small businesses to ensure that livelihoods are restored.

While these organizations represent the core group of founding partners who have weekly walked arm in arm, we have been immensely blessed to have had a number of other groups support us in this journey. Without each of these groups, the work of this Coalition would not be the same: **CORE, Mercy Chefs, United Cajun Navy, and YWAM.**

ADVENTURES RELIEF

Adventures Relief serves as a core engine for volunteer operations, bringing an inclusive approach to community mobilization. With extensive disaster response experience, they established base camp operations and continue to engage a diverse force of volunteers, from families and church groups to skilled craftspeople. Beyond mobilization, Adventures Relief sustains a long-term presence in disaster-affected communities, pursuing holistic recovery that restores homes, hope, and spiritual well-being through relationships with homeowners. They also equip local churches and ministry partners to meet unmet needs through a shared database, ensuring recovery continues long after initial aid.

WHYNOT INTERNATIONAL AID

With a steadfast commitment to loving neighbors through action, WhyNot International Aid has been instrumental in bringing vital resources, partnerships, and collaboration to Western North Carolina. As strong believers in the values of the Better Together Coalition, they have championed a unified approach that ensures the widest possible impact for families in need. Their leadership and advocacy remind us that true recovery happens when we come together, and their work has embodied the very spirit of being "Better Together."



COMMUNITY MEALS

514,610

MEALS PROVIDED BY MERCY
CHEFS, OPERATION BLESSING, &
VALLEY HOPE CHURCH



9,896

MEALS PROVIDED ON AVERAGE EACH WEEK ACROSS THE REGION

275

PEOPLE GATHERED TO EAT TOGETHER EACH NIGHT

“

“These meals continue to be the crossroads of our physical needs for a hot meal and intangible needs of community and connection.”

AMY BERRY,
VALLEY HOPE

NOURISHING BODY & SOUL

In the days after Hurricane Helene, when neighbors were cut off from food and water, Valley Hope Church became a lifeline. Members emptied their own pantries to feed others, and soon hundreds of people from across Swannanoa gathered in the church parking lot. There, they found more than just meals: they found strength, dignity, and a sense of belonging.

What began as an emergency response grew into a daily rhythm of care. For weeks and months after Helene, 250–300 people continued to

gather around these tables, nourished by church after church that stepped forward to serve. Across Asheville, Black Mountain, and beyond, partners like Operation Blessing and Mercy Chefs provided warm meals and hope, reminding Western North Carolina that they were not forgotten.

Together, this movement of neighbors and volunteers has shared more than 514,610 meals in just one year. Meals that not only fed bodies but also sustained the spirit of a community determined to rise, rebuild, and heal together.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT



AN ESTIMATED

\$4,402,944

IN LABOR COSTS SAVED

HANDS & HEARTS AT WORK

We stand in awe of the extraordinary corps of volunteers whose hands and hearts have rebuilt more than homes and businesses—they have rebuilt hope. From families to skilled contractors, each person brought dignity, compassion, and bolstered resilience for neighbors facing unimaginable loss.

More than 2,300 volunteers have been hosted by Adventures Relief at the Excel Better Together Base, with many more flooding into the region through Valley

Hope Church, Operation Blessing and other partners. This past summer alone, 150 volunteers arrived each week, and thanks to the generosity of Mercy Chefs and Operation Blessing, every one of them was sustained with meals as they shoveled mud, repaired walls, and restored hope.

One homeowner, whose house was swallowed by the Swannanoa River up to the rooftop, shared that without the Better Together Coalition he would have had no way to rebuild. Yet, as thousands of volunteers showed up to restore what had been lost, he described the experience of the past year as the most amazing of his life. To every volunteer who has served, your sacrifice has created ripples of healing that will echo for generations, restoring hope one home, one family, one act of love at a time.



“Every time someone shows up to serve, hope rises, light pushes back the darkness, and whole communities catch a glimpse of God’s love in action.”

**CHRIS HORVATH,
ADVENTURES RELIEF**



139,776
VOLUNTEER HOURS DONATED

3,680
VOLUNTEERS

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a black hoodie and brown overalls, is kneeling on a dark wood-look plank floor. She is looking down at the floor. In the background, there is a white door with a decorative panel and a hole in the wall with some debris. The overall scene is dimly lit, suggesting an interior renovation project.

HOME REBUILD PROGRAM

\$5.5 MILLION
IN BUILDING MATERIALS DONATED

GIFTS THAT REBUILD

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of partners like World Vision, Mercury One, Operation Blessing, and WhyNot Aid, more than \$5.5 million in building materials has been donated to restore homes and businesses destroyed by Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina.

Combined with the tireless efforts of volunteers, this support has dramatically reduced rebuilding costs, stretched every donor dollar further, and made it possible to restore hope and stability to many more vulnerable families. These building materials became the very foundation of recovery, turning loss into new beginnings.

As Mike Basset of World Vision reflects, “This tremendous rebuilding effort would not have been possible without the compassion, collaboration, and unity shown through the Better Together Coalition. This partnership has been a beacon of light in the darkest of times.”

“We believe that God’s plan for the world is best lived out through ordinary believers using their gifts, time, and talents to love their neighbors and their community.”

**ANDREW CHAMBERS,
EXCEL COLLEGE**

500+

FAMILIES & HOMES
SUPPORTED WITH
BUILDING SUPPLIES

232

HOMES RESTORED
THROUGH REPAIRS

\$1,250

AVERAGE COST FOR
BASIC HOME REPAIRS

\$26,000

AVERAGE COST OF
TOTAL HOME REBUILD*

*Average rebuild cost for Valley Hope projects



SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT



\$895,000

IN SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

BREATHING LIFE BACK INTO OUR COMMUNITY

As a fall tourism destination, a natural disaster right before the peak leaf season made the hit even harder for many of our communities' small businesses in the food and beverage, arts, and entertainment industries.

Research shows that one of the most critical indicators of a community's recovery after disaster is whether its small businesses can rebuild. In the wake of Hurricane Helene, Excel College, Operation Blessing, Mercury One and Valley Hope Church united to ensure that local business owners had the tools, materials, and financial support needed to get back on their feet.

For artisans, tradespeople, and entrepreneurs who lost not only their inventory but also their livelihoods, this investment has been a lifeline, restoring more than just businesses, but the heartbeat of our community.

“In the wake of Hurricane Helene, restoring these businesses has meant restoring families, stability, and the very fabric of local life.”

**DREW FRIEDRICH
OPERATION BLESSING**

In a region defined by creativity and craftsmanship, helping small businesses recover is helping Western North Carolina itself rise stronger and more resilient.

From some of the hardest hit businesses like Foundation Woodworks and the Marquee in the River Arts District of Asheville, to local bee and flower farmers in Black Mountain and Swannanoa, we wanted to make sure that no one fell through the cracks, ensuring the entrepreneurial spirit and economic heart of Western North Carolina can once again thrive.

400+
BUSINESSES
SUPPORTED



THANK YOU FOR WALKING WITH US!



Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

BETTERTOGETHER