

Hurricane Helene Shows Us Horse Heroes

In the wake of Hurricane Helene come reports from the equine community, detailing acts of kindness and support that are selfless, gracious and awe-inspiring.

COLDEN, NY, UNITED STATES, October 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway."~John Wayne.

With the raw courage it takes to run toward rather than away from disaster, horse people and organizations and their trusted animals have stepped up to bring aid, supplies and compassion to people and animals impacted by Hurricane Helene. In western North Carolina this monumental storm struck with vengeance and left a trail of deaths, destruction, missing animals and people. Parts of this state are inaccessible due to destroyed bridges and highways.

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Michele Toberer, Mountain Mule Packers

alternative means of delivery are necessitated.

“Mules are perfectly suited for getting supplies and important needs to remote areas inaccessible by other means. Each mule carries about 200 pounds, one packer with a string of mules transports nearly a ton of supplies to people that would otherwise be unreachable.”, said Michele Toberer of Mountain Mule Packers.



Dylan, Lisa and Billy Smith with part of one of the many loads of supplies they delivered to those in need following the hurricane.

Mudslides and flooding have destroyed entire towns, farms, homes, fences and pastures. Surviving residents and their animals have been left stranded where motorized vehicles cannot reach them. No supplies, no power and no means of getting them, made these survivors vulnerable in ways they never experienced.

As search and rescue crews looked for and rescued missing and stranded persons, horse positive organizations organized, gathered and packed necessities for animals and their humans. With roads impassable,

"It's critical that people realize the topography could not be worse for search and rescue. Bringing in equines is the only way to reach those in need. Animal organizations have come together, bringing what is needed, working with respect, camaraderie and collaboration that serves the animals. We are a community and we'll get through this as a community.", said Allison Bowling of Red Feather Equine Sanctuary who has been devoting her time to collecting and delivering donations to those who can reach survivors.

A serious look at both history and our current crisis tells us that where we are is truly where we have always been. We are dependent on our equine companions. They allowed us to build this country, they carried us into and out of battle. From Lincoln's favorite 'Old Bob' to Caroline Kennedy's pony, 'Macaroni', they had a place at our nation's most famous house, they brought the country doctor to our births and escorted us to our final rest.

Equine advocate, Scott Beckstead offered, "As they've done for thousands of years, trusty equines have stepped up yet again to help humanity in our greatest hours of need. These resilient heroes are showing once again why they deserve nothing but kindness and respect, and why anything less is a betrayal of dear, trusted friends. My heart goes out to all impacted by hurricane Helene, and to all the heroes, human and equine, who are giving their all in a mission of courage and compassion."

*Rescue Organizations and Individuals
we were able to locate and name.*

Apologies to the countless individuals, horse farms, rescues and organizations we missed. You have jumped into action, offering your trailers, barns, money and homes, organizing a mass movement of resources and donations.

You are in our hearts and have our endless gratitude.

**Advocates For Wild Equines
Billy, Lisa and Dylan Smith
Bissel Pets
Brenna Wright
Britta Hesla
Cajun Navy
Equine Collaborative International
Fleet Of Angels
Horse Plus Humane Society
Mountain Mule Packers Ranch
Red Bell Run
Red Feather Equine Rescue
Samaritan's Relief
Stony Rock Farm, Hillsboro, NC
Tawnee Priesner
Tractor Supply, S.Elm St., Greensboro, NC
19 Human/Dog Teams- Urban Search And Rescue
from these Task Forces (TF):
Missouri TF 1, New York TF 1, Massachusetts TF 1,
Virginia TF 1, Florida TF 2, Pennsylvania TF 1,
New Jersey TF 1, Nebraska TF 1, Colorado TF 1**

A thank you note from Equine Collaborative International, Inc.



Mountain Mule Packers taking much needed supplies through rough conditions to those in need in areas inaccessible to all vehicles.

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Now, Mother Nature has dealt a terrible blow, we are again dependent on the equines. The pack mules and horses ridden and lead by people of formidable courage are packing up supplies that have been gathered and coordinated by groups close to the disaster zones. They are delivering water, food, medical necessities, etc to the people and animals that have lost everything except their lives. Without these heroes, equine and human, those lives would also be lost.

Britta Hesla, legislative liaison for Equine Collaborative International, Advocates For Wild Equines and Horse Plus Humane Society said, "Horses built this country. As these kinds of storms increase in frequency there won't be any being more important than the horse, never has been, never will be. They built us, have saved our lives time and time again and; behold, they may have to rebuild us again."

Search and rescue teams and those delivering collected goods face the unmitigated horrors left behind, yet they saddle up, pack up and move in the direction of the problem, as a firefighter runs towards fire. Respect is such a small word for the overwhelming feeling of gratitude that we extend to these individuals and groups that have made themselves available and put themselves on the front line.

Tennessee Horse Trainer, Maryanna Poe, as she was driving to her next rescue effort, said, "Our horses are capable of getting to places vehicles and ATV's cannot, they are bringing supplies up and people down."

First Responders, Lisa and Billy Smith and their son, Dylan, from Stony Rock Farm, Hillsboro, NC, met Britta at Tractor Supply to transport her purchases, from monetary donations, to those in need. Billy said, "Living in a farming community, we always help our neighbors. These neighbors are 3-4 hours away. The equine community is a vital part of this effort." Lisa added, "The outpouring from the equine community is overwhelming. Sending 6 trailers now, 3 tomorrow." Dylan finished, "I love that communities come together in times like this. Even though we don't know each other, we are all family."

Cars, trucks and ATVs cause us to forget and neglect the importance of these glorious animals. This storm is the reminder that we need to protect and preserve them. Not just in the immediacy of disaster, but at all times. We honor their history and we prepare for the next crisis, hoping it will never come. Equines are partners we need now, and in the future. Be they wild or domestic, big or little, plain or fancy, protections for equines should be in place in every part of this country, saving them from slaughter and extinction. The time is upon us, and surely will come again, when we will need them. With good hearts they will step up to save us again.

When Mark Twain said, "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear.", he perfectly described the partnership of horse and human. They both know fear, but together, drawing strength from each other, they surmount it.

When, in the face of adversity you chose to do the right thing, go forward without fear for an

army of angels marches before you. Sometimes angels have hooves rather than wings.

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