

THE CHOWAN HERALD

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Isabel unleashes its fury on community

Widespread damage, outages are endured

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Managing Editor

Residents of Edenton, widely known as "the South's prettiest town," and Chowan County, were left to endure widespread water shortages and power outages last week by Hurricane Isabel. The hurricane, which roared ashore at the Outer Banks with a wind speed of 105 miles per hour, hit Edenton with winds clocked at 90 mph.

Heavy rains soaked yards across the community. With the soil already softened by rainfall earlier in the week, the merciless wind gusts yanked many of Edenton's oldest trees out of the ground and sent them crashing through some of North Carolina's oldest homes. During the worst part of the storm, some local residents experienced 10-foot waves walloping their picturesque homes along Edenton's waterfront.

But in the days that followed, Chowan County residents showed grit and grace under the pressure of living conditions that were far from ordinary.



After the fury unleashed by Hurricane Isabel the historic Chowan County Courthouse still stands in stately elegance in stark contrast to the confusing jumble of broken tree limbs and twisted signage crumpled at the bottom of the Courthouse Green. (Staff photo by David Crawley)

Peter Rascoe, public information officer for Edenton and Chowan County, joined Chowan County EMS Director Doug Belch and other town and county officials joined forces with a local volunteer organization, Chowan County Interfaith Disaster Relief Council, to begin addressing the most immediate human

needs. Using the EMS (Rescue Squad) building in Edenton as its headquarters.

Corporate neighbors Winn-Dixie and Food Lion scrambled to truck in free ice and water, and to keep bread, milk and other food items on their shelves in Edenton with stores powered by generators.

They were joined by many

volunteers and organizations that assisted with providing additional ice, water, hot meals, and tarps for roofs of local homes damaged by falling trees.

In the pages that follow, The Chowan Herald will try to share with our readers a bird's eye view of those heroic, dedi-

cated efforts and their response during some of the darkest hours ever experienced by people who never expected to experience such devastation from a Category 2 hurricane.

Along with stories from citizens from all walks of life, we will also be sharing the most recent information on everything from getting prescrip-

tions refilled to how to apply for assistance.

(Editor's Note: As the staff of The Chowan Herald goes through this tragic experience with you in the days and weeks to come, we remain very proud to be your neighbors and your newspaper. We will do our very best to reflect with candor and accuracy the resiliency of this community.)

Open letter from our Mayor

Dear Citizens of Edenton: Isabel hit us squarely in the gut, the aftermath of which is disastrous. We are severely damaged but from the rubble is lifting forth the greatest display of ministry and community spirit that anyone could have imagined.

Angels of mercy are among us now, both from within and from outside our community. The Golden Rule is alive and well in Edenton and God's Grace will see us through to the other side of this catastrophe.

Our greatest challenge going forward is how we control our emotions and preserve our patience. Please continue to reach out to others, comfort each other with hugs and encouragement and remember that our Angels are working tirelessly to return us to a normal way of life.

May God's Peace be with you and yours in the days and weeks of trial that lie ahead.

Roland Vaughan
Mayor of Edenton

Waterfront residents recount horror

BY DAVID CRAWLEY
Publisher

EDENTON — More Edenton homes than not suffered serious damage from Hurricane Isabel, including the waterfront home of Mayor Roland Vaughan.

Vaughan and his wife, Peggy Ann, were riding out the storm as was their neighbor, Charlie Creighton, when a virtual tidal wave hit without warning about 3 p.m. The crash of water from the Albemarle Sound rushed through every bottom floor room of Vaughan's house and the estimated ten foot tall surge ripped off the front porch of Creighton's, depositing it in the street.

"We were scared to death," Peggy Ann Vaughan said, describing how the water at times came up to her neck.

Creighton described his ordeal with equal horror.

"We were trapped inside with the water ramming on the front of the house," said Creighton. "The whole house was shaking and it went on for at least an hour."

On Friday, storm debris, toppled trees and downed power lines cluttered Edenton's streets and littered the city's waterfront, where all the houses suffered water damage. The storm marred the facades of the city's historic buildings, chipping away mortar.

It also ripped apart the front of a downtown department store and flooded a building on Water Street that housed the Northeast Partnership and the Department of Commerce. About 5 feet of water still stood in the building late Friday afternoon.

Leading a damage assessment meeting at the Edenton EMS building Friday morning, Vaughan gave no hint of the damage his own home had suffered, nor the frightening ordeal he had been through with his wife and neighbors.

Access to downtown Edenton was blocked for most of the day Friday. As crews began clearing downed trees, their work was sometimes interrupted by cu-

rious onlookers who walked through the work sites and into town.

The city has asked residents and onlookers not to park and walk around downtown so crews can continue working. Only residents, their families, insurance officials and contractors are being allowed into downtown Edenton.

"We're going to overcome this, and we're going to get past this," Vaughan said.



Local homeowner Charlie Creighton experienced a terrifying ordeal as Hurricane Isabel ripped through his neighborhood. (Staff photo by David Crawley)

County manager urges calm

Dear Citizens of Chowan County:

No resident of Chowan County will ever forget September 19, 2003. Unfortunately, there was one fatality. Our sympathies are extended to the victim's family. Fortunately, there were few other casualties.

All agencies — county, town, and state and federal — performed heroically during the storm and have sustained that effort during the initial recovery phase. As I write this letter Sunday night, I am surrounded by emergency personnel who have not been home since Wednesday. Many heroic rescues took place that shall be recounted later, and certainly, at a later time, official recognition will be given to the collective efforts.

But Isabel is history — and good riddance to her! Chowan County will recover quickly and will be an even nicer place to live and work. Our commitment to recovery will be sustained and no one will be overlooked. Today's paper contains information on many recovery programs. More information will be forthcoming.

In the meantime, please remain patient and remain thankful that we are alive and well.

Cliff Copeland
Chowan County Manager

A note to our readers...

If you submitted news items and/or photos for this week's newspaper, please be assured that they will appear in our next edition.

However, in the wake of the terrible devastation visited on our community by Hurricane Isabel we wanted to share with you the good news that our community still stands, united and strong. We will survive.

The Chowan Herald Staff

If you need to reach us...

482-4410

is The Chowan Herald's temporary telephone number