November: Give Thanks

As we move forward towards Thanksgiving and Christmas, it is a great opportunity to reflect on the events of the past month, especially as we reflect on the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Parts of Smyth County were affected terribly by the storm, while much of the county saw little to no damage whatsoever. In a similar vein, in the midst of tremendous damage, many unsung heroes stepped up to help their neighbors. Some of these heroes had damages of their own to overcome, but they volunteered their time, talent and machinery to help their neighbors.

So, let’s give thanks and look at some of the goodness that occurred and also perhaps learn a few things about ourselves along the way.

First of all, asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Were there instances of people asking for help that really didn’t need it? Sure. But far too often, help was offered and refused by people (especially older farmers) who could have really used a helping hand.

To be sure, working on one’s own problems can be a great escape from the grief suffered after a tragedy. Still, when you accept help from someone, what you are really doing is recognizing their ability to bring worth and value in addressing the situation.

If you have ever volunteered to help someone, you soon learn that you received more of a blessing than the person you were sent to help; therefore, if you can use some help, ASK! Not only will you have some extra hands and feet to multiply your own efforts, but you will also be sharing a great blessing to those who help you as well. I know that asking for help isn’t natural to many of you…. ask anyway!

Another bright spot of all this was the overwhelming number of people that wanted to help, and believe me, overwhelming is exactly the correct word. We had so many people wanting to help that getting them organized and throttled back was challenging at times. While not unexpected, this effort perfectly demonstrated three immutable facts about donations.

* Only send what is needed and in quantities that match the need.
* Send donations in a way that can be easily unloaded and handed out without sorting.
* Be patient.

The final point is so important. Many victims need time to process what has happened to them. Their loss is so great, they are at a loss for where to start to rebuild. Over time, the push to “get in there and help” fades, especially after a new disaster pushes the current need from the spotlight.

Being of service weeks, months, even years after a catastrophic event is easier, safer, and likely more helpful, after some aspects of normal life return. Even as you read this, several schools, including those in Carter and Johnson County Tennessee haven’t returned to class yet. Hampton High School likely won’t be back in their building until 2025. The need for help will be there well into the coming year.

While there are needs to meet, Smyth County is awfully lucky. We have power restored. Our schools are open, and our children are back in their oh so important routines. Our roads are open or at least we can avoid bad sections by taking an alternate route. Our stores are open and stocked so we can supply and restock ourselves and our farms.

This season of Thanksgiving, we have a lot to celebrate!

Upcoming Events

Nov 4 Cattle Handling Grant sign-up begins, Smyth County Extension Office

Nov 5 VQA Sale 7pm

Nov 11 VQA Steer Take Up

Nov 13 VQA Heifer Take Up

Nov 18 Private Pesticide Recertification Course, Extension Office 6 PM

Nov 20 Private Pesticide Recertification Course, Extension Office 8 AM

Nov 28 Thanksgiving Holiday

Dec 2 VQA Sale

Dec 9 VQA Steer Take Up

Dec 11 VQA Heifer Take Up

Jan 7, 2025 VQA Sale

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodation to participate in this activity, please contact Andy Overbay or Pam Testerman at 276-706-8339 /TDD (800) 828-1120) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.

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