

Catastrophic summer rainfall, flooding leave establishments picking up the mess

BY ABBY WOJCIK

St. Louis experienced unprecedented thunderstorms that resulted in record-breaking catastrophic levels of rainfall on July 26 and 27. In the metropolitan area, roughly 25% of normal yearly rainfall fell in 12 hours, according to the National Weather Service.

Interstates, homes, businesses, schools, public transit and more



Shelving, equipment, displays and inventory were lost at Left Bank Books due to water from backed-up storm sewers.

were flooded all across St. Louis. In the Central West End, community establishments were heavily affected, and these places have been hard at work repairing damage and restoring their business.

At Left Bank Books, the entire lower level filled with 6 inches of water within 20 minutes, primarily from overburdened storm sewers. Shelving, equipment, displays and some inventory were lost. Owner Kris Kleindienst reported that they've spent \$55,000 related to the flood (not counting labor), and expenses are still coming in.

"Having our lower-level sales floor, including our used book department, being non-operational for two months was a big strain," Kleindienst said. "Also, the intensity of the clean-up and disinfecting, plus working in offices filled with stuff now being stored while the sales floor was rebuilt, was a huge strain on the staff."

LBB also was flooded with donations and volunteers willing to help with the clean-up endeavors. Over \$20,000 was raised toward flood recovery, according to KSDK Channel 5.

"The help from volunteers was invaluable to both getting the debris out (two 15-cubic hard construction dumpsters) in a timely fashion," Kleindienst said. "It allowed us to have staff upstairs so we could be open. It was a huge boost for staff morale as well. And then there



New City School's playgrounds and lower level were quickly flooded from heavy, pouring rain on July 29.

were the donations that poured in, without which we would not have been able to repair and rebuild and reopen easily."

Similarly, the Italian eatery Edera was hit hard by the July flooding, with water coming into the basement from backed-up storm sewers. Their damages exceeded six figures due to expensive equipment that had to be replaced, food thrown out due to potential contamination, and overall wreckage.

"The most difficult part was having to be closed for 10 days while restoration was underway," said Bob Koplal of Koplal Properties Inc. "If there was any silver lining, it's that when crises like that occur, it reveals true character. I was heartened to see our team spring into

action to limit the damage and get the place back into shape."

Koplal's team, including General Manager Tim Foley, Assistant GM Rachel Stuber, chefs Andrew Simon and Katie Hernandez, Facilities Manager Nathan Ambus, as well as many others, truly banded together in order to reopen as swiftly as possible, Koplal said.

For New City School on Waterman Boulevard, the flooding is still very much in the forefront of the staff's minds.

Water rose into air ducts on the lower level, causing a three-day delay to the start of the school year to Aug. 29. New City had to rebuild 10 classrooms, the dining hall, innovation lab and kitchen.

"We continue to be touched by the outpouring of support from our community members in response to the damages that we sustained during [July's] flooding," New City School announced on its website. "So many of you have offered to help ..., and we appreciate each and every one of you."

This devastating rainstorm that caused such destruction has taken a toll on those in the CWE, but businesses are trying to move forward and get the message out to patrons that they are still here, newly renovated and ready to provide for the CWE community.

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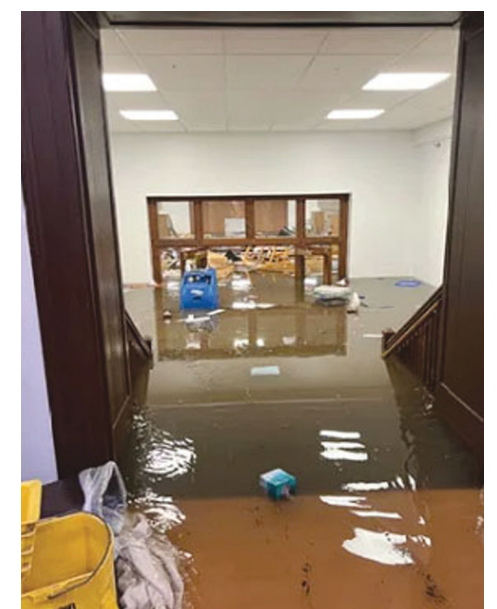
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An interior hallway at New City School.