

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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Articles prior to December 5, 2018

Strand Theatre Weekly Email: September 17, 2010

Written by David on September, 16 2010

(Please read this whole email....you will be glad you did)

First things first.....this Saturday THE WIZARD OF OZ. Movie tickets are still available. You don't want to miss this treat, it will look and sound fantastic at the Strand. Remember, the balcony is open. Everyone gets free popcorn and a drink.

Second, Shelby Senior Services had a fantastic concert on Sunday. Everyone had a great time. South Pacific Sunday night was a hit. We had a great mix of teenagers, and teenagers at heart. There is nothing like a dame, or watching this classic in a theatre like the Strand.

Now to Saturday night. We were getting ready to show Carnival of Souls. We needed a bigger audience, so our fire system decided at 7:41PM to invite the Shelbyville Fire Department, the Shelbyville Police Department and the Shelby County Health Department. Here's the story.

Our old Cretors popcorn machine decided to retire. Unfortunately it went out in a blaze of glory. There were only 4 volunteers in the theatre when it caught fire. At that point training kicked in. The volunteers were unable to access the fire extinguisher only feet away from the machine due to the heavy smoke. Within seconds, an extinguisher was brought from the auditorium with the pin pulled. Another volunteer did what we are trained to do, when you squeeze the trigger, don't stop until it is empty. That did the trick. It completely extinguished the flames. The smoke was very thick and the two remaining volunteers exited the theatre.

During this time our fire system activated and our alarm company immediately dispatched the fire department. At the same time one of our volunteers called 911 from the sidewalk and informed the dispatcher that everyone was out of the theatre. Within seconds the Shelbyville Police Department had Harrison Street blocked off so the fire equipment could get through. The fire fighters donned their oxygen masks and entered the smoky lobby. They wheeled the smoldering popcorn machine out onto the sidewalk. It made a very unceremonious exit of its home for the past several decades.

Within minutes a high powered fan was placed to clear the smoke. A lucky thing for the Strand is that (warning, tech talk ahead) our auditorium ventilation system maintains the auditorium at a higher pressure than the lobby. The spaces are separate. The higher pressure kept the smoke and fire extinguisher dust from entering the auditorium. Within minutes the Strand volunteers were able to get into the auditorium to cover our sound board, light board and projector. This kept the corrosive dust from that extinguisher from ruining any equipment. It was evident from the first step into the auditorium that hardly any smoke or dust entered that space. As a precaution we turned off the balcony air handler.

Now is when our AMAZING community took action. The events that you are about to read are something that each and everyone one of us can be proud.

Within 15 about minutes of the fire (8:00PM), we had 13 volunteers at the theatre. Between Facebook and cell phones, everyone found out quickly. The fire department and police department had to contact the Shelby County Health

Department because the fire was in the concession stand. After about thirty minutes we were able to get back in. About this time Robert Lewis from the Shelby County Health Department, came to give us advise on what needed to happen in order to get our concession stand back into shape. Not only did he come with advise, as owner of the Bear's Den with his wife Anita, he brought a popcorn machine for us to use!! He knew the problem and took action. While not as big as our old unit, it will certainly get us going again. He didn't ask, he just did what needed done!!

Next our volunteers took action. We were able to clear the smoke quickly and get to work. We had a crew in the balcony making sure it was completely clean. The Lobby is directly under our air handler for the balcony. They cleaned every seat and every surface. That is 211 seats in all!! They found little evidence of fire extinguisher dust, but made sure anyway.

Other volunteers were hard at work in the lobby. Before 8:30PM our insurance agent Mike Warble arrived. He was able to give us further advise on what we needed to do. All the concessions items that need destroyed were inventoried and bagged. Everything that wasn't bolted down was removed from the lobby. The fire extinguisher dust was everywhere. 11 volunteers cleaned every surface multiple times, and within 30 minutes we had a carpet shampoo machine, provided by Mickey's T-Mart, working away on the dust impregnated carpet. One of the casualties was our popcorn oil. We use pure coconut oil in 50# pails. It stays solid until 71°, needless to say it was very much liquid. We had about 25# that had to be destroyed. You just can't throw that stuff in the dumpster. Cagney's to the rescue. A quick call, and they told us to bring it over and they would dump it in their grease and oil recycling dumpster. Problem solved.

In the mean time, we still knew we needed to be ready for the two shows the next day on Sunday. Popcorn would be an issue. All our popcorn and supplies were thrown away. A quick call was made to Studio 10. They arranged for us to pick up popcorn. They offered to pop our popcorn until we can get back on our feet. Now think about that....our for-profit movie theatre is helping our not-for-profit theatre. This is a great community. By 9:00PM we had enough popcorn ready for the next day's show, courtesy of Studio 10!!

Next problem was our air handlers. We couldn't take the chance that any of the dust would be blown about by the ventilation system. At 10:00PM Shelby Heating & Air Conditioning was able to provide us with a complete set of replacement filters for our balcony and stage air handlers. These are large, very specific filters. Within another 30 minutes the old filters were out, and the new filters were installed. This is at 10PM on a Saturday night!

Next was our ice machine. This lives right next to the popcorn machine. Since the flames were confined to the inside of the popcorn machine, the ice machine only had the fire extinguisher dust and dirt to content with. All 100 pound of ice were removed and a complete tear down and cleaning was performed. There are procedures that flush the system and special cleaner that is used. Quickly everything was clean, sanitized and producing ice. We, at the advise of the Health Department, discarded the first several batches of ice. After that, clean as a whistle.

Work continued and by 11:00pm our lobby was spotless. The walls glistened, pictures cleaned, carpet shampooed, concession area restocked, ice machine ready and a big bag of popcorn for Sunday's events. The clean scent of lemon wafted throughout the auditorium and we were ready to go. There was no evidence that anything happened. The last volunteer left the theatre at 11:10.

The Strand would like to thank everyone who helped with this unfortunate incident. The Public Safety crews, the volunteers, our vendor partners and our friends who all stepped up to help when help was needed. We had an auditorium full of people by 2:00PM Sunday enjoying the sounds of Kent Lockman and his group Dishpan Pie. No one knew what happened, and those that knew couldn't believe that anything as wrong...the Strand was ready to go.

As you drive by this week, think about what happened to a little theatre last Saturday night, and how your community reacted. We are truly honored to be located in the heart of Shelby County. Thank you for your support.

Images on this post:

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