

FloorCraft's Wilmot Warehouse Destroyed by Fire

Dedicated employees back to business as usual

Beacon staff

Thursday, November 14, started like any other day at the family-owned FloorCraft store on Route 11 in Wilmot, just over the Andover line. But by mid-afternoon, the store's warehouse, across the parking lot from the showroom, was gone, consumed by a raging fire that sent flames 30 feet into the unseasonably cold November air.

Wilmot Fire Department, assisted by mutual-aid fire departments including Andover Fire Department, responded to the four-alarm blaze. One lane of Route 11 had to be closed as firefighters battled not just the fire, but the threat of ice accumulating due to temperatures in the 20s.

Andover's Emergency Services Auxiliary was also on the scene with pizza and coffee to keep the responders fed and hydrated.

"Thankfully, no one was hurt," said

Tobyn Olson, who owns Floorcraft with her husband Ken. The fire consumed not only the warehouse, but all the materials stored in it. So Ken and his whole team immediately began scrambling to reorder everything so as to impact their customers' projects as little as possible.

"And now, thanks to our wonderful, dedicated employees and suppliers, we are back to business as usual," Ken and Tobyn are happy to report.

FloorCraft has been part of the local community for 27 years. Ken's parents, Carl and Gail Olson, started the business in New London in 1992. The firm moved to Route 11 in Wilmot in 1995 in order to have a larger showroom and warehouse space. Ken and Tobyn joined the business in 2001, and in 2012 they became the owners.

The state Fire Marshal's office investigated the origin of the fire, but could not find a definitive source. Tobyn indicates that the company plans to build a new warehouse in the spring.



The charred remains of the smoke house/catering trailer where The Refinery cooked their menu's barbecue items. Photo: Shelley Geoghegan

The Refinery Restaurant Has Close Call With Fire

Building undamaged, but trailer a loss

Beacon staff

November 8 was cold and windy. As luck would have it, a spark from the smoke house trailer, where The Refinery Restaurant was barbecuing their meats, was turned into a raging inferno by those winds around 11 AM.

Fire departments from surrounding towns responded, but they could not contain the fire; the trailer was a total loss. Fortunately, the main building escaped serious damage.

While the trailer was insured, the loss caused a major inconvenience, as half to a third of the business consists of barbecue sales. However, Brian, an owner, said that as soon as they saw the flames and smoke, he and co-owner A.J. already had Plan B in place. They would simply serve more grilled meats, such as steaks, until a replacement smoker could be obtained. They don't anticipate any down-time and continue to plan for Christmas and New Year's events.

Brian said the support they received from the community was "awesome."



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The Andover Community Hub Wants You!

Over the past five years, two groups of Andover residents (1) organized a non-profit community association to "offer programming to engage people of all ages in social, educational, cultural, recreational and economic activities," and (2) secured the old Town Hall for community use.

These two groups, now united under the banner of The Andover Community Hub, estimate that 4,700 participants walked through the doors during 2018 to take part in a variety of classes, meetings, community services, and events. We're on track to have a similar number by the end of 2019, and as the variety of programs continues to grow, we expect the numbers to also grow in 2020.

As a result, volunteer support will need to grow as well – particularly in these areas:

- serving on the board of directors, to address building needs, outreach opportunities, and efficient management of a growing budget;
- serving on several committees now being formed, to better figure out community needs the Hub can help meet and to develop new programming as well as income-producing opportunities to support those needs; and
- contributing assistance of all kinds (thoughtful, financial, hands-on) on an occasional, as-needed basis for ongoing activities, for new ones as good ideas come along, and for maintaining and upgrading our Hub building.

Volunteers of all ages and interests are welcome. Can you help? To learn more, please contact us at TheAndoverHub@gmail.com. We'd love to talk with you. And financial donations are also always welcome, as are donations of time and talent.

Thank you!