



Industry Again Unites After Ellicott City's Second Devastating Flood

On the afternoon of May 27, 2018, Ellicott City's historic Main Street flooded again after the region got more than eight inches of rain in the span of two hours. Businesses, including numerous bars and restaurants, were heavily damaged. And National Guard member Eddison Hermond Jr. lost his life trying to help people. The town was still recovering from a July 30, 2016, storm that dropped six inches of rain on the community, produced massive flooding, killed two people, and damaged and destroyed businesses and homes.

Maureen Smith, Executive Director of the Ellicott City Partnership (ECP) echoed what many interviewed for this article had said: "This time around has been very different from 2016!" she exclaimed. "With this latest flood event, the Ellicott City community has an understanding that parts of town may need to be envisioned anew to ensure long-term sustainability. The ECP is working closely with all stakeholders, including county, state, and federal entities to significantly increase the resilience of Ellicott City."

She noted that, so far, all but one of the members of Old Ellicott City's bar and restaurant family have decided to stay. June indeed saw the reopening of the Manor Hill Tavern, The Wine Bin, Judge's Bench Pub, La Palapa Grill & Cantina, the Matcha Time Cafe, and the Syriana Cafe. "They will be joined in July by Pure Wine Cafe, and the second floor of The Phoenix Emporium will be open to welcome guests," she noted. "It's also worthy to note that The Trolley Stop, located just across the Main St bridge in Baltimore County, took no damage and never closed its doors. Sadly, one of our local coffee shops, Bean Hollow, has decided to relocate."

Some of the businesses were prepared this time, having already gone through disaster two years earlier. Among them was E. Ran-

dolph "Randy" Marriner, President and CEO of the Victoria Restaurant Group and proprietor of Manor Hill Brewing. He said, "Fortunately for us, after the 2016 flood, we rebuilt the back sides of our buildings and raised the foundation walls with 18 inches of reinforced concrete ... in essence, creating our own storm water management system that collects and channels all the rain water to the side alley. It worked. The only damage we sustained was food and beer spoilage from three days without power."

He added, "After our power was restored, we were ready to reopen on June 1. However, the town was closed due to the State of Emergency. So we decided to 'open' from Noon to 5 p.m. every day to feed, provide air conditioning, and clean bathrooms to anyone that was credentialed to be there, be it the first responders, Public Works employees, business owners, or residents. All for free, and to be that beacon of hope for everyone else. We were the first restaurant to reopen to the public on June 16."

Another operator on the verge of re-opening when we chatted just before the July 4 holiday was Timothy Kendzierski, owner of Ellicott Mills Brewing Co. He said, "We should be open next week. We're doing better, and part of it is because of some of the things we did structurally to our building. It also helped that the county was so responsive this time. We got the water on quick. We got the electricity on within a day. We

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Maureen Smith,
Ellicott City
Partnership

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were able to save the beer. We couldn't have saved the food, of course. I think it's definitely been important that everyone at the top of the hill where we are is opening up and their lights are on. Once Main Street is open, that will breathe a lot of life into the town."

Businesses and other stakeholders in Old Ellicott City once again benefited greatly from an outpouring of support from their fellow bar owners, restaurant operators, breweries, and other related businesses in Howard County and statewide who banded together to hold multiple fundraisers. One of the first to mobilize was Hysteria Brewing, holding a fundraiser on Memorial Day, May 28, donating 50 percent of all proceeds from the day's sales.

Event and Marketing Director Gina Mattera stated, "We reached out to local businesses such as Bullhead Pit Beef and Giggy's BBQ to serve food, both of which also donated a portion of their sales. A mother of a local 7-year-old reached out who wanted to host a lemonade stand, which raised over \$300! Our neighbors Lost Ark Distilling opened up for their doors for the day and also donated 50 percent of their proceeds."

In addition to announcing the event on various social media platforms, Mattera and her colleagues relied on word of mouth and various local news and media sources to spread the word so soon after the tragedy. "Our fundraiser raised about \$5,000," she said, "Our customers were overwhelmingly supportive. Some arrived early to offer to help set up. Others offered pop-up tents and folding tables when we needed more due to the weather. And, of course, many showed their support by

attending the event!"

On June 7, Heavy Seas Beer donated 50 percent of all revenue for the evening in their tap room to the Ellicott City Partnership. Amanda Zivkovic, associate brand manager handles Heavy Seas' tap room charitable events. "Back in 2016 when the first flooding happened in Ellicott City," she recalled, "we held a fundraiser here at the brewery to help raise money and to collect items to help clean up Ellicott City. Because the past fundraiser was so successful, we knew we had to do it again."

In addition to Heavy Seas' donations from the event, the Pieces of Eight onsite food truck donated 10 percent. Like Fisher, Zivkovic promoted the event mainly through social media. "Our Facebook event for the fundraiser had over 4,000 folks interested," she said. "The event was definitely a success. We were able to raise over \$4,000 for the EC Partnership in one night. We had folks coming up to us all

night, clearly moved by the amount of people coming together for a cause. It is humbling to be a part of a community that is so dedicated to its people. At the end of the day, that's what beer is all about ~ coming together."

The proprietors of Pub Dog Pizza & Drafthouse hosted a fundraiser at their Columbia location on Tuesday, June 19 from 7 p.m. to close, where 25 percent of all sales were donated to the Ellicott City Partnership to help the residents and businesses in Old Ellicott City rebuild. Caitlin Fisher, Marketing Manager for Pub Dog, remarked, "I mainly promoted the event on social media and created a Facebook event that

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generated a lot of interest in the weeks before the event. The fundraiser was a huge success, and we were able to donate \$1,384 to the Partnership. All of our customers were in high spirits for the event, and it was amazing to see so many people come together for a great cause.

One of the more recent events as this article approached press time was the June 23 one hosted by Jailbreak Brewing. Becca Newell, Director of Marketing for Jailbreak, declared it a huge success. "We had six Main Street vendors ~ businesses that lost their storefronts in the flood ~ that set up pop-up stores in the brewery, selling goods, such as women's accessories, T-shirts, house wares, records, freshly made beignets, and hand-crafted chocolates. We also had bar staff from The Phoenix Emporium at a pop-up bar in the brewery, crafting 'beertails,' including a Feed the Monkey Orange Crush and an Infinite Old Fashioned. Fifty percent of that Saturday's beer sales, along with proceeds from a basket auction, were donated directly to those businesses. More than \$5,000 was raised."

She continued, "The most rewarding part was seeing everyone at the fundraiser



having a good time, whether it was drinking a beer and sharing food with friends, or purchasing something from one of the vendors, or hanging outside in our pop-up beer garden with their dogs. The support from those who attended was amazing! The challenging part was making enough room in the brewery for each vendor. The original plan was to host the entire event outside, but due to the unfortunate weather forecast, we had to move everyone inside. It was a rush to get it

done, but it all worked out in the end."

Other Maryland tavern and restaurant businesses that held special benefits included: Laurel's Tampico Grill, which donated 50 percent of all alcohol and food proceeds ~ including to-go meals ~ from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. on June; The Guinness Open Gate Brewery & Barrel House in Relay, which donated half of all sales in its Test Taproom on June 9 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Armand's Chicago Pizzeria in Silver Spring, which donated

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20 percent of all sales on June 10 from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Not to be outdone, Paulie Gee's and Baltimore Whiskey Co. teamed up for *A Drink for Ellicott City*. Held on June 8 from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m. at Paulie Gee's, the entire bar tab for the evening was donated to the Ellicott City Partnership.

Kendzierski and his neighbors played key roles in putting together the July 15 Resurrect Festival at Game Baltimore in the city. Running from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., it was a day of music and comedy, food and drink that benefited the Ellicott City Partnership and displaced restaurant employees. "The Resurrect Festival has gotten our minds off of things a little bit," Kendzierski said in his early July interview. "It's allowed us to all do something positive together while we've all been waiting to open. Just the collective 'watching people come together' has been a pretty amazing thing."

The human factor hasn't been forgotten either. Restaurants and other businesses across the Baltimore metro area quickly responded with an outpouring of job offers for flood-affected employees. "Keep Ellicott City Working," a Facebook page created after the 2016 flood to connect people with jobs, listed well over 50 opportunities immediately after being revived in late May.

Even non-industry players got involved this time around. The sci-fi, superhero, and fantasy fans that run Galactic Comic Con sent all proceeds from the June 16 event's auctions, raffles, and special Lego sales to Ellicott City. The event

was held at the Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship. The Woodstock Maryland Music Festival on June 24 sent part of its proceeds to the Ellicott City Partnership. St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City hosted its Banjos, Blue Jeans & BBQ event on July 1, with all proceeds donated to relief efforts. Tickets were \$15 per person.

Still to come is the 2018 ECStrong 5K, an event that began in remembrance of the 2016 flood. This year's event will support relief efforts for the damage sustained this year, as all proceeds from the \$35 registration fee and additional donations will go to the Ellicott City Partnership. The course will wind its way near downtown Ellicott City.

Smith of the Partnership remarked, "Old Ellicott City's strength is community. From the local who pours the perfect cocktail to the

patron who enjoys it, we're all family. Our family has faced more than its share of hard times but it has pulled everyone together. Area establishments have given displaced Ellicott City staff jobs for as long as they need them. Restaurant and bar regulars go out of their way to attend as many fundraisers as possible. They've even answered the call to help their favorite businesses dig out of the destruction. We stand united and #ECStronger together."

Jailbreak's Newell added, "In short, we believe in supporting our local community. The longer version: We love our Ellicott City neighbors and were devastated to hear about the flooding. Over the last couple of years, we've been part of the Ellicott City SpringFest and the Main Street Music Fest, where we've become friends with many of the local business owners. So, we knew whatever fundraising we did, we wanted to ensure it supported them directly!"

But the future doesn't seem quite as rosy and optimistic this time around as it was in 2016. Two devastating storms and floods in as many years will do that. Kendzierski lamented, "It was sort of like experiencing the same death twice in a row. People are saying it's worse this time because the damage was more widespread. It wasn't just our little town. It was Elkridge and Catonsville and Baltimore City. It was all over the place this time. Also, it's an election year, so people want to blame politicians who have been there two years for 40 years of bad planning. The narrative in the media has changed somewhat, too,

from ECStrong and 'Rebuild!'

to 'Why are you even bothering?' Hey, we own our building. We've been here for 21 years. Some people have been here for generations. It's like asking people to kill an entire community."

Marriner echoed this journalist's exit question back to him. "So now what?" he parroted. "Some have said 'Give up, don't re-

build, walk, no run away

before it happens again.' Others have said, 'Fix the problem before you rebuild.' There is no easy solution. Some very hard decisions need to be made about potentially removing some of the hardest hit buildings on lower Main St. to widen the river channel to better manage and control the flood waters and eliminate future opportunities for loss of life. In six years, Ellicott City will celebrate 250 years since its founding. I plan to be here!" ■

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