



Springfield's South End recovering from tornado

Published: Wednesday, June 08, 2011, 8:40 PM



By **Jack Flynn, The Republican**

SPRINGFIELD – The lunchtime crowd was back at the **Red Rose Pizzeria** Wednesday, another sign that the South End is recovering from last week's **tornado**.

Just before noon, customers began arriving at the Main Street restaurant, filling tables and booths in the dining room. By 1 p.m., the restaurant was near capacity, and a group of lawyers was holding a lunch meeting in the bar.

"It's great to be back," said owner Antonio Caupito, whose parents opened the landmark eatery in 1963.

Like other South End establishments, Red Rose shut down after a **freak twister** struck last Wednesday, damaging homes and businesses and turning the neighborhood into a flying debris field. The tornado, which began in Westfield, carved a 39-mile path to Charlton, killing 4 and injuring 200.

Housed in a squat, brick building, the restaurant escaped with only minor damage while nearby buildings – including the South End Community Center – were pulverized by the storm.

Still, the roof needed repairing and the property was inundated with debris, giving Red Rose employees work during the seven-day shutdown.



[Enlarge](#)

Mark M. Murray, The Republican

06/07/11 Springfield- Republican Photo by Mark M.Murray - Workmen on a lift moves in with plywood to cover broken windows of this apartment building on Park Street following tornado damage.

[Springfield Tornado Clean Up Continues](#) gallery (27 photos)

"I wanted to keep them on (the payroll)," Caputo said. "And there was a lot of cleaning up to do," he added.

To allow for cleanup and demolition work, Main Street was shut down at the State Street intersection, cutting off traffic to much of the South End business district. Sections of Main Street were reopened as work progressed, leading the reopening of Red Rose and Appliance Plus Wednesday.

Other businesses, including La Fiorentina Pastry Shop, Langone Florist, and Fenton's Sporting Goods, have already reopened.

In a gesture of support, Mayor **Domenic J. Sarno**, U.S. Congressman **Richard E. Neal**, D-Springfield, and other officials converged on the Red Rose for lunch.

"We are committed to getting our business community up and running again as quickly and safely as possible," Sarno said.

"I encourage the public to come back and visit our loyal businesses and help support them through this as they are making tremendous steps to recover and rebuild."

The mayor noted that demolition and repair work are continuing in the neighborhood, and the public should use caution. Anyone with questions about street closures can call the customer service center at 3-1-1 or (413) 736-3111, Sarno said.

At **La Fiorentina**, there was scant evidence of the battering the bakery took from the storm, which blew out windows and ripped several 3,000-pound air conditioning units from their mounts on the roof.

Owner Leo Daniele said the bakery reopened on Saturday, serving customers willing to walk 4 or 5 blocks to get there.



Photo by Dave Roback

"We have the most loyal customers in the world," he said, adding that former customers called from San Francisco, Chicago, San Diego and other far flung spots to make sure the bakery survived.

Photo of storm damage to the front door of Red Rose on Main Street in Springfield's South End.

Daniele attributed the lack of damage to good luck and good construction technique.

Still, a week later, the damage to the South End remains hard to believe, Daniele said.

"I've been in a earthquake, a hurricane, floods and now a tornado, and believe me, the tornado was the worst," he said.

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