



STORMS DON'T LAST FOREVER

My life was rewritten by a F5 tornado that demolished everything I knew and owned, totally. At ten years old, I had no house, no school, no church, no clothes & no toys! The rug was pulled out from under my feet, and I learned to fly! I had family & my own creativity! It was a magical summer of exploring and learning.

Well, this covid storm blew in like a tornado, swirled for months like a hurricane, destroying what we knew & did at the Corning Opera House; then came the hail, hitting our rentals hard; then the winds blew and rocked our tours; then the water rose drowning out events. Our ship (business) has been battered, our rudder is bent, and our sails torn. Seventeen months of no income, yet bills keep coming, things keep breaking, and the rooms remain empty of laughter, conversations, & music!

Next came the questions, why? What? How are we going to respond? The decision was made, our ship's crew (board of directors) is staying the course. We decided not to throw things overboard because we need those props, costumes, table settings, dishes, to survive for future event. As we drifted along this past year and a half, the thunder in the distance echoed, yet we did what we could. The deck (stage) was painted; the elevator & smoke alarms were inspected; the closets were organized, new gutters built, and we stood firm.

We are adapting. Instead of asking why people left, now we ask, what can we create in this historic opera house? How can we reach a new audience? How can we expand our rentals? There are things you learn when weathering a storm. Our business learned patience & focused on #spreadingsmiles at upcoming events. The marketing plan shifted: a) class reunions receive a code for a ticket discount, b) advertised wedding rentals and website on Maryville's KNIM, the Vil, c) advertised & gave away tickets to shows on Atlantic's, KJAN, d) flyer insert in the Creston Chamber of Commerce newsletter, e) coupons sent to small businesses in Creston and Corning, & f) ads placed on

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Facebook & Google. Other good stuff: a) photo booth opportunities, b) planning a Halloween scavenger hunt, c) searching for individuals to teach classes, d) creating a video using a drone, e) live entertainment on August 6 & 27, & f) more exciting ideas are in the works.

This building has weathered hundreds of storms in her 119 years on the corner of Davis Avenue and 8th Street in Corning! We stood in this storm, the wind blew, and we adjusted our sails! We are not the same, but we are coming back sharper, wiser, and more alive! Because after the storm the rainbow shimmers, the sun sparkles & after an end there's a new beginning. Come sailing with us!

De Heaton,
Corning Opera House
Executive Director