

The Ultimate Sign of Recovery

Thu. 9/27/2018 by Catherine DuBay

On this one year anniversary of the fires I was looking at the [email I sent](#) to our members, that Monday morning last October 9, addressing the fact the club would be closed for a few hours.

Little did I know at the time the club would not be able to fully reopen until 7 days later.



I recall the first time we tried to re-open on Wednesday morning. Members came in dazed and confused and frankly, just looking for a place to sit, charge their phone and tell their story.

This didn't last long as the fire Marshall asked us to vacate the area again due to a shift in the wind and the lingering threat of spreading fire.

When we finally re-opened on Friday, we opened our doors to anyone who needed a shower, a cup of coffee or a shoulder to cry on. We invited the high school cross country teams to come inside and run on the treadmills to avoid the outside air. We waived all guest fees for members of Fountaingrove so they could continue to workout while they waited on the status of their club.

We begin to tally the number of staff and members who lost their homes and when the number grew to over 100 we knew the club and the community was forever changed.

We listened to the stories of members and staff as they escaped just in the nick of time and with great sadness we learned that one of our charter members perished in the fire-unable to escape his home in a rural area off of Rieibli Road.

As we resumed regular hours and the club started to fill up with members and guests,

the somber tone started to lift a little as the healing power of exercise started to work it's magic.

However, it wasn't until months later that I started to notice an affect from the fire that I would not have predicted. This was the toll on the health and well being of the fire victims.

I should have know given what was going on in my house in the weeks just after the fire. My sister and brother in law were staying with us after losing their home. Each night after work we would all gather to share our fire stories of the day, listen to KSRO and watch the baseball postseason. Along with this we would have a bottle of wine (or 2), a less than healthy dinner (read: Mombo's pizza) and most often ice cream or cookies to follow.

A common way to grieve is to be with friends and family and often this involves alcohol and food. Eventually my sister and brother in law found permanent housing and our household returned to pre-fire normalcy.

The lives of many fire victims did not. Months and months of insurance paperwork, property clean up decisions, living arrangement decisions, replacing basic needs, rebuilding decisions, and oh yes, working full time and raising a family. Clearly no time to exercise or actually put any focus on their well being. They were too busy taking care of everything else in their lives with nothing left over for themselves. It should come as no surprise that many of these folks were unable to keep a consistent exercise routine or a healthy diet.



As signs of recovery surround us, from new construction to new growth on burned Douglas Firs to our once closed parks now full of life both from nature and from the hundreds of visitors using the trails, we know that our community will rebound.

And as wonderful as all these signs of recovery are, the ultimate sign of rebound has taken a little longer. But it is starting to happen and it is truly a wonderful sight. Many of those who lost their homes are starting to come back to the club. They have shared their struggles of finding motivation to workout and are just now starting to feel a desire to get back into a routine.

Exercise is hard enough. Add a lack of exercise clothes, a new home perhaps further from the club, a day full of other priorities and it is understandable how hard it must

be to find the mojo to get here.

But it is starting to happen and this is a sign of rebounding at it's best. When these victims can finally focus a little attention on themselves after a year of utter disruption and chaos in their lives, this is the ultimate sign of recovery.

We are here to help and if you need anything from an ear to bend, a suggestion for a trainer to a class to get you back into your pre-fire shape, please let us know.

To all of our members on this year anniversary, thank you for a year of patience, understanding and most of all helping out those who needed it the most. We have quite an amazing family at Montecito-I am so lucky to be part of it.

Catherine DuBay-General Manager

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