

*Dear friends, patrons and supporters of The Grand –*

*As most of you have probably surmised, The Grand is still not operational after Hurricane Ike. Galveston Island scored a direct hit from Ike and most of the Island suffered some type of damage (flood or structural). The island is still without power and clean-up efforts are just underway.*

*I was fortunate enough to get on the island to view the damage to the theatre. Fortunately our Grand “gal” suffered no structural damage (at least viewable to the naked eye) but did suffer flooding in our street level (and basement level) areas. This includes (unfortunately) our backstage lower dressing rooms, the orchestra pit as well as some water damage to the first few rows of seats in the auditorium.*

*The stage has some silt from water but our beautiful painted curtain (the “Staley curtain”) as well as the other curtains, are all fine. The star dressing room backstage suffered some water damage as well but our “star” photos that line the room are all okay.*

*The box office area, entry stairs and Edna’s Room all withstood about 6 feet of water (add another two feet from curb to street!) and are wet and muddy – but will recover.*

*The good news – all our records, (ticketing, patron records, historical records) are high and dry in our offices on the third floor. As soon as power is restored to the island we can communicate with our patrons through regular channels and let them know just when we will be back up and performing!*

*As we were in the middle of renovation efforts when Ike hit – we fortunately had all the windows boarded up and they kept the buildings upper levels safe and dry. All of our lobby areas are free from damage. I guess it goes without saying that we will be postponing our season until the theatre has been cleaned and polished and free of Ike’s visit. As soon as we can access our records, we will be contacting all our patrons and keeping them abreast of our plans.*

*We will try to get information on our website, but as I am in a family’s home that also suffered a power outage – I’m having trouble with internet access at the moment.*

*An update on The Grand’s staff – I am very happy to report that all of our staff was able to evacuate the isl and and all are safe. The situation with our homes (in many cases) mirrors the theatre. My personal home (as well as my parents and in-laws home) all suffered 4-5 feet of water damage. Other staff members have reported 2 feet of water, and others have yet to assess their homes and damage.*

*I just cannot describe to you the heartbreaking site as I entered my home yesterday. It was an astonishing site to see all our belongings and furniture strewn through the house interior, yet the outside had no structural damage! It was as if some two-year old child had a temper tantrum with their dollhouse and tossed the furniture everywhere.*

*Everything is wet and mildew and mold have begun their march through the house. We also had some trees and fences that suffered damage. Its really strange the things you notice. In all the topsy-turvy mess that the interior of my home received, we would find some random toy of my son’s sitting upright on a floor as if he had just left it and would return to continue playing soon. The dining room table (with chairs) still had the tablecloth and centerpiece but had all been moved (together) about 10 feet 20 into the next living area – as if you could sit down to dinner right there!*

*The “look and leave” that the city afforded us ended all too soon and I must admit that on my way out of town I had to pull off the highway and give way to sobbing. Please don’t think that I am not grateful to be alive and healthy and to have all my family the same but the heartache just caught up with me. I can only imagine the intensified feelings of those who have lost entire structures and their loved ones must feel.*

*I hope we can get back to our island soon – the sooner we can get back in and clear out our home – the more we can salvage. I know many, many wonderful folks are ready and willing to help us put our beautiful Island back in order.*

*I have been in constant contact with The Grand’s executive director, Maureen Patton. She is safe at her daughter’s home in Friendswood – without power, but safe. We have repeatedly said how eternally grateful we are to Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas and City Manager Steve LeBlanc and all the city staff who have worked so diligently to clear out as much debris as possible to aid in restoration crews accessibility on the island.*

*Maureen also has received numerous emails and calls from other historic theatres throughout the country expressing support of The Grand, and has also heard from our artists and agents who were scheduled for this season all are extremely willing to work with us to reschedule their performances and convey their thoughts, prayers and support of the theatre.*

*I personally want to thank our Mayor, City Manager and all those who “rode out the storm” to protect our island and its citizens. I remind everyone that these folks have homes here as well – and they have probably suffered the same fate as I and many others, yet have been giving 200% towards our city this past week. Thanks also to all the police officers, sheriff officers, beach patrol and the hundreds of volunteers who have been so generous to those folks who chose to stay behind, as well as to all those who are now coming and going trying to restore power and keeping our island as safe as possible.*

*Thanks also to all of you, our friends and patrons and supporters thank you for your continued prayers and for your continued support.*

*Please be patient – as soon as is humanly possible – The Grand will be up and performing again!*

- *Kathy Van Dewalli, marketing director, The Grand 1894 Opera House*