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Candy store maintains sense of humor despite damage to store

BY MICHAEL STRASBURG
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Minnesota's Largest Candy store in Jordan is keeping its signature sense of humor on display after a car crashed through the wall of its building early Sunday morning.

"Yes we're open! Drive thru closed," their marquee sign outside the large, yellow building read Monday morning.

In an effort to recognize the crash and keep spirits light, owner Robert Wagner commissioned Le Sueur artist Lana Beck to paint a mural

of the car — embedded in the side of the building — at the point of impact.

"She does good artwork," Wagner said. "She's fast and she's prompt."

Beck completed the mural Monday afternoon and said she took some artistic liberty, so there will be a few surprises.

"We have a photo so we know the color and what model and make," Beck said. "We don't have the license plate, but the hatch was open, so who knows what was in there — we'll decide."

It's all part of an effort by Wagner and company to take the serious accident in stride. Minnesota State Patrol said alcohol is believed to be a factor in the crash, which occurred at about 1 a.m. on Aug. 11 when a Chevrolet Equinox, driven by Jovan Davell Brown, 42, of St. Paul rear-ended a Honda Odyssey minivan, driven by Rye Martin Lange, 44, of Waterloo, Iowa on southbound Highway 169. The Equinox veered off the road to the west and crashed into the front of the candy store.

Passengers in the Odyssey reported no injuries, according to a state patrol crash report. Brown sustained non-life threatening injuries and was transported to St. Francis Hospital.

"Jovan Brown I guess you could hit the broad side of a barn," a series of signs said along Highway 169 leading up to the store.

The point of impact was only about 20 feet away from the store's Guinness-certified world's largest jigsaw puzzle. The 40,000-piece Disney-themed puzzle was assembled by Jim Shoemaker of Minneapolis and installed only four days before the accident.

"That would've been a tragedy," Wagner said. "The gentleman donated 428 man hours to assemble it. There is only a small number of people that can take on puzzles like that."

The world record puzzle may be priceless, but the merchandise inside is not. The collision demolished Peanut Place — the store's section of peanut butter candy — and struck a 60-foot table the holds more than \$50,000 worth of imported German and gourmet chocolate.

"We're happy to say that everyone is OK. But what about the chocolate!?" the store posted to its Facebook page Sunday morning. "Well, come in and see for yourself! 80% of the chocolate table was untouched!"

The Jordan Fire Department notified the owners shortly after the accident occurred. Wagner said he didn't expect the damage to be nearly as bad as it was, and after working a 15-hour day,



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL STRASBURG

In an effort to recognize the accident and keep spirits light, owner Robert Wagner commissioned Le Sueur artist Lana Beck to paint a mural of the car — embedded in the side of the building — at the point of impact.



A painting depicting a Chevy Equinox lodged in the side of Minnesota's Largest Candy Store was completed by Lana Beck Monday afternoon. The painting will be displayed on the new exterior wall.

told authorities he'd take care of it in the morning.

"Then the fire department said 'You have to take care of it now because the building is open and compromised — the car is in the store,'" Wagner said.

Wagner arrived at the store around 2 a.m., shortly after the car was removed from the building. Dead tired and in a state of disbelief, Wagner didn't know what to think when he first saw the hole ripped into the side of his business.

"I was in shock because I was not thinking clearly. It was a combination of shock and still waking up," he said.

The full scope of the damage wasn't known to Wagner until he and his family started cleaning the store in the pre-dawn hours.

"Once you started getting into it, it was more and more," Wagner said. "At first it looked like it was just this wall area here, then we started seeing remnants 40 feet away, so now we're talking all directions."

They cleaned up the debris in a whirlwind effort and phoned their carpenter, who assessed the damage and sealed the wall — all before customers started lining up for the store to open at 8 a.m.

"At 7:30 they're here, waiting to come in," Wagner said. "We opened up and most customers didn't have a clue, they didn't know it had happened."

From inside, the damage is barely noticeable, aside from an empty section of shelves. In the meantime, Wagner is ready to get things spruced up and continue business as usual.

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