



Campus coffee shop under new management

Brevard College now managing Bill's Boiler House

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At the beginning of the semester, Bill's Boiler House had its grand reopening, becoming part of the school's dining plan. Formerly, the shop served coffee from Appalachian Coffee Company. With the switch, students can now get their caffeine fix from Pisgah Coffee Roasters, which is owned by a former Brevard College student.

In October, the school came to the conclusion that they would be able to take on the financial responsibility of sustaining the coffee shop themselves.

"We really wanted it to be a place for students," President David Joyce said.

However, many members of the campus community were confused by the sudden change in the coffee company as well as the change in employment from outside sources to being run almost entirely by work study students. The sudden change left the rumor mill to run rampant.

President Joyce described the switch from Appalachian Coffee Company as an "amicable divorce." For many former customers and employees, however, the situation left them with a bitter taste in their mouths.

The employees of Appalachian Coffee Company were told they had until the end of the year to move out of the building, but that date kept moving further and further ahead until it came to the day after the students left for Winter Break.

All of the employees for Appalachian Coffee Company were laid off and many of them are still left unemployed and searching for jobs.

Jordan Laws, who was a barista at the Appalachian Coffee Company and a former student of Brevard College, was working in the coffee shop on Dec. 14, 2018, their last day of business, when Brevard College Facilities staff began coming in to dismantle things while the shop was still open for business.

"I was just inside the shop trying to wrap up operations for the day," Laws said. "We thought we were going to be there for the entire duration of the business day, which was from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., but then things just started to pick up speed all of a sudden.

"That morning started off just like any other morning," Laws said. "We opened up, operations began, we had our normal community customers who would come in and students as well.

"We were running out of some essentials because we didn't know how much to buy because we didn't want to buy too much since we had to be out of there that day," Laws said. "So, we ran out of milk and another employee went out to grab some, then they went to the post office and came back and they were flustered and visibly shaken.

"After that it was pretty much just pick up and go," Laws said. "The maintenance crew showed up not long after and started taking our pictures off the walls and trying to dismantle things while we still had customers.

"We didn't hear anything from the Brevard College administration on us having to shut down early and it being nonnegotiable," Laws said. "Maintenance just came in and started moving stuff and even physically moved a customer, a local, who was sitting at the bar against the wall. They just kind of muscled their way through.

"They took the Appalachian Trail map off the wall," Laws said. "They started going into the back office without permission, checking out the water heater and stuff. Granted it is their space, but we needed that day to clean out our merchandise, our coffee, the stuff that we weren't leaving for the new operations.

"They did all that until the Appalachian Coffee Company owner called us and just said to close down if this how it's going to go," Laws said. "Just close early and leave. Then he personally came and helped to close up the shop. We tried talking to the maintenance staff to tell them to come back later and they just said no, we have to do our job, we were told to do this and if we don't do this we'll lose our jobs.

"I'm a former student at the college," Laws said, "and just seeing the way the college handled that entire situation was just sad because I know that the college is better than that. We were told around mid-October, when our lease came up, that we had to find a new location.

"After being told that, during my shift," Laws said, "Dr. Joyce would come in with his wife and just sit at a table and talk about the changes that they would make and they weren't even being quiet about it. Other customers heard and they would ask me questions that I couldn't really answer."

Employees of Appalachian Coffee Company were notified around mid-October that by the end of the year, they would be out of the building.

"I was attending the college when they took down the big iron gates that used to be at the front of the campus," Laws said. "To me that really helped to make the community and the campus just not two separate entities that existed on their own.

"The coffee shop was another way to help make those ties stronger," Laws said. "I was very disappointed to learn that the coffee shop was closing and moving to be completely managed by the school. It's just a shame to see that community-college connection gone and just destroyed like that."

Bill's Boiler House is open on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on weekends from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Students can use their dining dollars to buy drinks and pastries as well as use a meal exchange, which includes one pastry and one 16 oz. drink.