

Smack Dab Community Rallies Around Rogers Park Brunch Restaurant After Nearly \$20,000 Equipment Crisis

More than \$3,000 in gift cards, 14 new five-star reviews, and returning guests help independent restaurant recover after back-to-back equipment failures

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, July 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- One week after Smack Dab announced that back-to-back equipment failures had created nearly \$20,000 in unexpected expenses and lost revenue, the Rogers Park community responded with an extraordinary show of support.

Over the course of seven days, supporters purchased more than \$3,000 in Smack Dab gift cards, returned to the restaurant once full service resumed, and posted more than 14 new online reviews praising the food, staff, atmosphere, [catering](#), and private event experience.

"We knew people loved us, but this was a whole different level of showing up," said Teeny, co-owner of Smack Dab. "People bought gift cards, came in to eat, left the sweetest reviews, shared our posts, and sent us messages that genuinely made us cry. The last couple of weeks have been expensive as hell, but they have also reminded us how deeply loved this little [brunch](#) restaurant really is."

The response followed the failure of Smack Dab's 10-year-old walk-in cooler compressor, which caused approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 worth of food to become unusable. The breakdown occurred only two and a half weeks after the restaurant's convection oven stopped working and had to be replaced.



smack dab chicago logo



Smack Dab Chicago Counter

Between the cost of the new oven, the compressor replacement, lost food, and a temporary closure for restocking and preparation, Smack Dab estimated the total financial impact at approximately \$19,500.

The restaurant closed for one day, reopened with a limited menu, and returned to full brunch service on Friday.

THE COMMUNITY ANSWERS THE CALL

When Smack Dab shared news of the equipment failures, the restaurant invited supporters to help by purchasing gift cards, dining in, ordering takeout, sharing social media posts, booking future catering, or leaving an online review.

The community responded in every way.

More than \$3,000 in gift cards were purchased within a week, providing immediate cash flow as the restaurant worked to absorb the cost of the repairs and lost inventory. Customers also began returning for brunch, drinks, takeout orders, and weekend gatherings as soon as the full menu was restored.

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Teeny - Owner

The restaurant received more than 14 new reviews, many of them praising Smack Dab’s welcoming staff, inclusive menu, and neighborhood-centered hospitality. One reviewer described the food as fantastic, the staff as friendly, and the chive mayo as “a true star.” Another shared that Smack Dab is their favorite place to host personal birthday parties and gatherings. Others highlighted the restaurant’s vegan and gluten-free options,

homemade donuts, breakfast sandwiches, catering, and comfortable atmosphere.

“Listen, we are never going to argue with someone declaring the chive mayo a star,” Teeny said. “But beyond that, every review means somebody took time out of their day to tell other people why this place matters to them. That is such a gift. Reviews help new folks find us, but they also give our team a chance to see just how much their care, hard work, and brunch wizardry are being noticed.”

HUMOR, HONESTY, AND A POSITIVE ATTITUDE



Smack Dab Pride

Smack Dab's original announcement was candid about the financial impact while still maintaining the restaurant's characteristic humor. The post included jokes about mercury retrograde, operational chaos, and the possibility of replacing the restaurant's usual buy-one-get-one promotion with a hypothetical buy-two-get-one deal.

Community members responded by praising Teeny's positive attitude and the restaurant's ability to communicate openly without losing its sense of humor.



Smack Dab Chicago Inside

"I do want to be clear that I was not floating peacefully through the restaurant whispering affirmations to the broken equipment," Teeny said. "There was stress. There were spreadsheets. There were probably a few deeply dramatic sighs. But panicking publicly was not going to fix the oven or resurrect the compressor. We figured we might as well tell the truth, make a few jokes, and trust our people to understand what we were going through."

Behind the humor was a serious challenge faced by many independent restaurants. Major equipment failures can interrupt service, destroy inventory, reduce revenue, and create thousands of dollars in unplanned expenses. For Smack Dab, the community response made that burden feel far less isolating.

"We are still paying for all of this, so the math has not magically disappeared," Teeny said. "But it feels completely different knowing we are not carrying it alone. This community wrapped its arms around us in a very real way, and I do not think any of us will forget that."

SMACK DAB RETURNS TO FULL BRUNCH SERVICE

Smack Dab is now fully open and serving its regular menu, including breakfast sandwiches, biscuits and gravy, grits bowls, vegan and vegetarian dishes, gluten-free options, seasonal cocktails, and brunch favorites. The restaurant is also accepting inquiries for upcoming catering orders, private gatherings, birthday celebrations, office meals, and community events.

"We are back, the full menu is back, and the team is doing what they do best," Teeny said. "So come eat brunch, order anything we serve, add the chive mayo, bring somebody you love, and let us keep feeding all of y'all."

ABOUT SMACK DAB

Smack Dab is an independent, queer woman-owned brunch restaurant located in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. Known for scratch-made breakfast sandwiches, biscuits, creative cocktails, catering, [private events](#), and extensive vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options, Smack Dab serves its community with a commitment to joyful hospitality, accessibility, and care.

Teeny Forrester

Smack Dab Chicago

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