

Businesses giving generously to help with search for Lauren Spierer: www.heraldtimesonline.com

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Mr. Copy owner Tom Seeber just happened to be in the office that Saturday, when Rob and Charlene Spierer walked through the door of his East 10th Street print shop.

They'd just flown in from New York after receiving the disturbing news that their 20-year-old daughter, Lauren, was missing.

"They showed up here with a picture of her and a magic marker trying to make posters," he recalled. "Rob ran out to get a roll of masking tape and they went out on their own to hang up posters. You couldn't really look at them and not help."

Since then, Seeber's business has donated more than 95,000 posters, fliers and handbills to the search effort. The posters blanket the city and surrounding area. Lauren's face smiling at passers-by, while fliers help direct the hundreds of volunteers who massed to search for the Indiana University student.

"I feel responsible," Seeber said Wednesday afternoon, manning the desk at his comfortably cluttered shop. "They sent their daughter to our town. She's one of us. ... Here they were, 700 miles from home ... you just wanted to do everything humanly possible for them."

Dozens of other businesses and organizations in Monroe County have also stepped in to help, so many that organizers at the search command center now headquartered at McNutt residence hall on the IU campus have compiled a lengthy list of them.

That includes the Scholars Inn Bakehouse, which general manager Julie Ranz said has donated bagels and pastry for volunteers on a regular basis. Scholars Inn executive chef Jake Brenchley also donated a private dinner for Rob and Charlene Spierer.

"This is our community, and we have to take care of the members of our community," she said. "We need to extend our support and show we're all in this together and we're willing to help in whatever way we can. Small contributions can add up. A bagel here, an hour searching there. It can all add up."

Ellettsville True Value hardware donated rolls of clear packing tape to hang up posters, manager Neil Pursell said.

"It's a very unfortunate thing, and we don't want to see anybody suffer like that," he said. "We wanted to do what we could to help."

Smithville Digital, a division of the Ellettsville-based technology company, donated Internet access and television service for the initial search headquarters at Smallwood Plaza, according to media and promotions coordinator Beth Johnson.

"It was the right thing to do, to help her and to help her family," she said.

And Olympus Properties has donated one of its downtown apartments to the Spierer family, which workers scrambled to prepare in time. Leasing agent Hanna Cherry said the company's Comcast cable representative even drove out of town to get a television box in time for family members to move in, so they could watch media reports in the fully furnished apartment that comes complete with kitchenware.

"You feel so helpless with the family going through such a traumatic thing like that," she said. "This is the way we can help. ... Our hearts are poured out to that family, and we wanted to give them everything they needed that we could provide."

Copper Cup owners Dean and Leichen Foster opened the doors to their shuttered downtown location, which served as search headquarters until efforts moved to the McNutt facility. The site gave volunteers who, up until then had been camped out on the sidewalk, a place to escape the sun, grab a bottle of water or a snack and use the bathroom, as well as spread out maps and other paraphernalia.

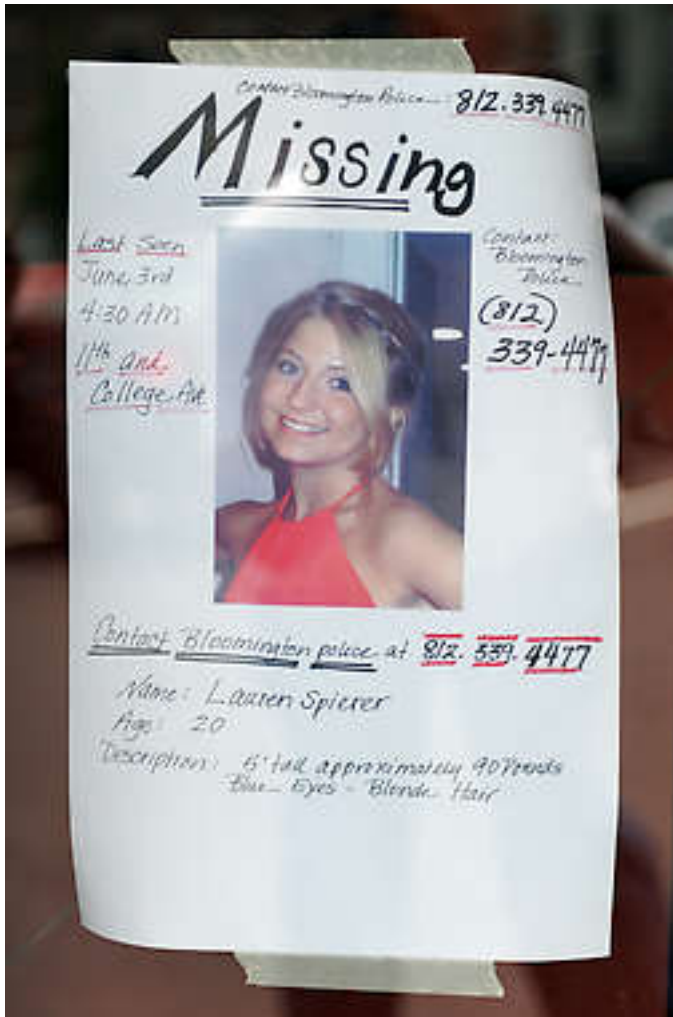
"Allowing the downtown Copper Cup location to be used as search headquarters is the least my husband and I could do in a situation like this," Leichen Foster said Wednesday via email. "We are local Bloomington residents with children of our own, and care deeply about the safety of our community. The Smallwood Copper Cup location is a beautiful space, and it is our hope that it has provided some measure of sanctuary for the Spierer family, members of media, and all of the tireless searchers."

LAUREN SPIERER PAGE: More on the search for the missing IU student

PHOTO TIMELINE: Interactive photo timeline retracing the last known whereabouts of the IU missing student on June 3

PHOTO TOUR: 'Photosynth' of more than 200 photos retracing last known whereabouts

This design was the first of many fliers used to publicize the search for missing Indiana University student Lauren Spierer. Chris Howell | Herald-Times



Tom Seeber, owner of Mr. Copy, has donated nearly more than 95,000 copies of fliers, posters and handbills to the search for missing Indiana University student Lauren Spierer. Chris Howell | Herald-Times

