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# OPEN FOR BUSINESS

## River Region businesses prepare for comeback

Western New York enters phase one of Cuomo's 'New York Forward' reopening plan

**BY JOSHUA MALONI**  
 GM/Managing Editor

Something happened Tuesday in the River Region that hadn't happened in two months.

Doors opened.

May 19 was the day in which Western New York entered into phase one of "New York Forward," Gov. Andrew Cuomo's reopening plan for nonessential businesses shut down by his "New York State on PAUSE" mandate.

Lewiston merchants were preparing to offer product for curbside pickup. Artist and retailer Kathy Pignatora of Inspirations on Canvas placed a table by her

store's front entrance. Patrons could browse and purchase items in sort of a "drive-thru" setup as they walked down south Center Street.

"I've set up a little front way there where you can see some of my wares, but we came and I repainted. I've got new products. I wanted to get excited. I got a new backdrop: 'Good vibes only.' I've got dreamcatchers in this room now," she said.

Cuomo "PAUSED" New York in March to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Pignatora said she understood the decision – she shut her doors

before the governor's edict was announced – but it left a lot of questions.

As she pondered new ways to reach customers, it became clear restrictions would continue throughout the summer – most notably, events with large gatherings would be canceled.

"My first initial reaction was, 'I'm not going to make it.' Like, 'This is not going to work. How can this possibly work?' Because I could see right away, I thought, 'There's going to be no festivals,'" Pignatora said. "I have been here three-and-a-half years, and I've haven't done business in the sum-

mer without festivals and tourism. Without all of that, my biggest question and fear was, 'How do I make it?'"

After feeling all the feels, Pignatora said her family motivated her to reach people in a different way.

"When you're faced with these obstacles, you either rise to the occasion, or you're going to become obsolete. It took me a few weeks and my family encouraging me – 'You can do it; you can do it.' It just seemed too overwhelming, too hard. I can't imagine Lewiston in the summer without what we're used to working; and I've got a system to how the summer helps

me get through to Christmas, and Christmas helps me get through the long, cold winter," Pignatora said. "I feel like it pushed me to do things out of my comfort zone, out of my box. And I feel empowered by the things that we have tried; and that have worked; and it's amazing.

"I feel like my daughter here, Olivia, she helped me with Tik-Toks. We just tried anything. And my motto is always, 'Throw it at the wall and see what sticks.' So, I wanted to engage."

Pignatora began creating animal art, painting pets and gaining

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