

Local businesses implementing safety measures to protect staff, customers

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rave reviews from the online community. Though she couldn't welcome people into her store, "We've engaged our following in a way I haven't before," she said.

"I've always posted on Facebook and Instagram and whatever, but I've never had the engagement. I've done live videos of sales and, honestly, things I should have been doing in January, February, March. I'm bringing the products to people.

"I started a webpage I didn't have before. I'm selling on Society6. I didn't have that before. You can download items with my designs on them. I'm using Facebook and Instagram in a totally different, storytelling, engaging kind of way."

"I'm trying to do things that are fun and put a smile on someone's face," she added.

Pignatora said, "I have to say I feel so much love and support. More than I've ever felt in my three-and-a-half years here from this community. I've literally gotten messages: 'You're not going anywhere. We're gonna keep you going. We believe in you. You're part of Lewiston.' I mean, I can't say this without getting teary-eyed. I felt like I mattered, and that just kept building and building and building. So, it's what's keeping me going - my own drive - but the energy I'm feeling, the support and love I'm feeling from Lewiston, it's amazing."

Judy Munzi of Antique to Chic said, "This has actually motivated us to improve our online presence and you can now 'tour' the store on our Facebook page. We have our reopening plan almost in place and we'll be doing everything possible to make sure our customers feel safe and still have a great shopping experience.

"Of course, this has been a challenge for us and we will open gradually, with online purchase opportunities, days when you can make an appointment for a virtual tour, and days when someone will be present for curbside sales. We hope our customers will watch the outside of the store, because more items will be coming in and there will be revolving sidewalk sales."

More Phases to Come

As New York enters phase two, it's expected customers will again be allowed into retail stores.

"When people walk in, I've already bought a table - that's where the hand sanitizer is going to go. I expect everyone to wear a mask - I will be wearing a mask. I have Plexiglas. ... And just spacing it out," Pignatora said. "I be-



Top row: Mayor Anne Welch is shown with Inspirations on Canvas owner Kathy Pignatora. • Spicy Pickle has a sign on the door: "No Mask = No Burrito." Inside the restaurant, Plexiglas separates staffers from patrons. Middle row: A look at some of the items in front of Antique to Chic. • Bottom row: Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul praised DiCamillo Bakery for its safety policies.

lieve strongly that we're doing the right thing, social distancing, to care for each other. And I want to keep doing and offering that to get through this. And we can just all keep going forward so that, next summer, I can see Barenaked Ladies again!

"So, that's the plan. I'll go with the phases and do what we're supposed to do. I'm not challenging any of that; and I'll just keep making it safe and doing my part."

Restaurants will be permitted to have on-site dining in phase three, but local owners are un-



sure how to seat patrons in a time of social distancing.

Village of Lewiston Mayor Anne Welch is already thinking about accommodating these guests, offering suggestions to eateries that have been limited to takeout and delivery service since mid-March.

"I have talked to several of the business owners, restaurant own-



ers, trying to give them ideas of what they can do to help their business. We talked about opening our parks, putting up picnic tables in it for the restaurants. Academy Park, Hennepin Park and Lewiston Landing, our DPW is going to put more picnic tables out for the restaurants to use them as takeouts, or picnic in the park," Welch said.

Cuomo's Metrics

Cuomo is using seven reopening metrics, which he compiled from research conducted at the Centers for Disease Control and through the World Health Organization. These stats chronicle an area's hospitalization rate, COVID-19-related deaths, and virus contact tracing. Once a region enters a phase, a two-week period of maintaining the numbers is required before a location can enter into the next phase.

"We are starting a new chapter in the fight against this virus - we've worked together as a state to flatten the curve, and the decline has finally reached a point where it is just about where we started this journey, so now we can turn to reopening," Cuomo said on May 11. "We have put regional 'control rooms' in place, which are made up of the top government officials and academic and health care professionals in that region, to watch the situation in each region develop and increase or decrease the activity and speed of reopening based on the metrics and guidelines. These 'control rooms' are critical, because we just made it over the mountain and nobody wants to go back to the other side now."

Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul is in charge of Western New York's "control room." Members include Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysz and Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz.

Speaking Wednesday on LCTV, Wydysz said, "We get a lot of questions about what comes next. ... We've been fielding a lot of calls from very specific businesses - hair salons, restaurants - everyone's anxious to know when we'll reopen, and I certainly understand that. The fact is, the governor is not going to let a region move on to the next phase until we see what's happening with our numbers, where we stand now. We hope that everyone whose business is open is following those safe business plans and safety protocols; that's very important to make sure we keep continuing the social distancing, wearing masks, all of those other safety features that need to be in place as you start to have employees and clientele back in your businesses.

"Now, to some degree, we control our own destiny here. We know that to reach those metrics and to reach those numbers we all have to continue to do our part to help stop the spread of COVID-19. That's very important now that we're bringing more individuals back together into society, as we reopen during the different phases. But I want to be very clear here, again, that the reopening process rests with the governor and the state of New York."

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