

Customers have abided by safety protocols

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me something to do. And I was really nervous that people weren't going to comply – and I don't like confrontation on a good day, and I didn't want that in my shop. I can tell you, honestly, I opened my doors (last spring) ... I had a sign outside the door. Honestly, I don't think I've had to ask three people, since when we reopened to let people in the store, to do that. Sometimes there's been the odd person – I've noticed people kind of almost like their glasses on their head and they forget till they walk in. They go, 'Oh my goodness.' I'll just sort of, like, fix my mask a little bit or something like that, and then they go, 'Oh, oh.' But there's really been like nobody."

She added, "I just treat it as it's here, it's everywhere; but we're gonna keep it safe and do everything we can. And I just really believe that, if we do all the safety precautions, I feel like we can live – and that's just sort of how I'm trying to get through this, and continue my business going. It's been pretty positive. I can't say I've had any conflicts or any confrontations. People have been really awesome."

Lewiston clothing stores remain a popular destination for female shoppers. The Rose Hanger, in particular, is thriving online and in-person. Owner Sara Morreale said the size of her Center Street store makes it easier to maintain.

"I think part of it, in the bigger stores, is that they have just too much traffic to try and keep it clean enough; where me being a smaller store, I'm able to maintain the cleanliness, and I don't have 100 people in the fitting rooms a day. I might only have three or four. So, it's just much easier for me to keep it clean and maintained," she said.

Like Pignatora, Morreale has had only positive experiences with patrons in recent months.

"My customers seem to have adapted totally fine," Morreale said. "I have hand sanitizer available in the store, if they need it for any reason. I also am regularly cleaning my countertops, my door handles – everything that would be touched. I'm wearing a mask; I ask my employees to wear them, as well. My customers all are wearing them – I don't even have to ask people. Everyone is just kind of in their routine at this point – that it's common knowledge that this is how it is. I haven't really had any issues at all with following the regulations of New York state and what we're expected to do; and especially being such a small business, I feel like it's very easy for me to maintain the levels of cleanliness that we should."

Morreale is already planning for the holiday shopping season and increased foot traffic.

"I think, for those busier weekends, I'm definitely going to have to regulate how many people are in the store at a time," she said. "I know I already have staff sched-



Christmas Walk will go on, but with changes

In addition to Black Friday and Small Business Saturday, Lewiston merchants depend on the annual Christmas Walk to bolster yearend sales. With statewide COVID-19 restrictions in place, many are wondering if the last remaining festival will be canceled – like all the others in 2020.

On Wednesday, the Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce, which organizes the holiday happening, emailed, "This year the weeks leading up to Christmas will look different in many ways. Our annual Lewiston Christmas Walk (Dec. 4-6) weekend will not have Santa landing by helicopter, petting zoo, characters or carriage rides. No vendor shows, open house cookies / treats, Tour of Homes, or things that normally contribute to the hustle and bustle of the weekend. Instead we are asking all of our businesses in the entire region to spend some extra time with their window and outdoor displays! Santa will be visiting with kids 'Virtually' this year. Details to come."

Village of Lewiston Mayor Anne Welch said, "We are open for business."

"I think it's safe enough for people to walk outside, still use the shops – there's protocol that you can only have so many in the shop at once. And the shop owners are good about it," she said. "And restaurants, they depend on things like the Christmas Walk, because then the people go to lunch, or dinner."

uled to be working with me those days, where if you regularly shop with me, I am normally by myself. So, I will have someone that's going to be helping, whether it be cleaning, keeping the fitting rooms clean, cleaning the door handles; and then if there's too many people, asking them to wait outside and kind of do like a two in, two out, bouncer-type situation (laughs) to make sure that there's not too many people here in a time where it becomes unsafe."

Though she's diligently worked to keep The Rose Hanger clean and safe, Morreale welcomes customers to shop online, if they prefer.

"I have a lot more of shop online and collect in-store pickup, and you can see (above the register) these are all in-store pickups,"

she said. "They can still come to the store, grab their items, maybe glance around quickly, but they already have secured the items they definitely want. Any sales or promo codes that I have happening in store are also valid online. Also my shipping is free, and I have a lot more shipping happening, too. So that also makes it easier if you don't even have time to make it out here, I'll ship it right to your doorstep free of charge."

Village of Lewiston Mayor Anne Welch said, "I have talked to everybody and actually they're doing very well. Regardless of the no festivals and the COVID and everything else, their businesses are doing well. And they're keeping up with things – and the locals are really supporting them; I think that's one of the reasons."

Viva Nostalgia collectibles store owner Roger Passero said, "People were penned up for a couple two, three months. They wanted to get out. So, once you get out, if you come to a place like Lewiston where there's some really good stores and some cool stuff, people will spend their money. Christmas is coming. You know, there may be a little intimidation by people thinking, 'Oh, we could get closed down again – who knows what's going to happen; so let me buy it now while I'm here.'"

"A lot of people have said to us, 'We want to support small business,' which is another good thing. You know, people are saying, 'Oh yeah, I'd rather buy it from you; I'm not gonna buy from Amazon; I'm not gonna buy from

Walmart. I'd rather spend my money at a small store.' That's been a positive thing that I've seen, too."

"So, it's all been positive really; I can't tell you anything negative that's occurred, really, over the past few months."

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