



News Release  
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## **Williston Small Businesses create Sales Opportunities**

Small businesses will eventually re-open, but they may never be the same. The COVID-19 pandemic has completely shut down some shops while others are using their ingenuity to keep their doors open.

One local startup was only open two weeks before the state government shut down restaurants, bars and lounges. The owner of Hops & Berry is trying to remain optimistic during the crisis.

"This has been especially frustrating for us as we spent the previous six months getting the taproom built out and ready to open and were then shut down only two weeks after finally opening our doors," said TJ Corcoran, owner of Hops & Berry located in Renaissance on Main in Downtown Williston. "A couple of weeks ago, we started selling curbside growlers and it's been very well-received. We greatly appreciate the community support. The food and beverage industry has been especially impacted by the shutdown with a near complete loss of revenue."

In the meantime, Corcoran's neighbor, Style Uncorked, is also offering curbside pickup at her store.

"We have been trying to be creative with sales. You can schedule an appointment, shop online and we have weekly Facebook sales," said Kim Wenko, co-owner of Style Uncorked located in Renaissance on Main in Downtown Williston. "The response to the Facebook sales has been awesome! It's a way for customers to see what's in the store, from the comforts of their couches. We offer curbside pickup, free delivery in town and we mail."

Another apparel store located in northwest Williston is also relying on social media to attract customers.

"We are using social media to stay as connected as we can with our customers," said Lenny Johnson, owner of Genesis located in the Sand Creek Retail Town Centre. "We are taking orders over the phone, we are offering private shopping appointments outside of our current operating hours and we have some items listed on our Facebook shop page."

All three businesses are aiming to provide safe shopping experiences for their customers and clients.

"We are cleaning after every customer and limiting the total people in store to 10 (including employees)," said Johnson. "I also had a local lady make masks for employees and I am requiring they be worn while at work."

Small business owners are optimistically eyeing the re-opening of their stores in the future.

"Thankfully we had two great weeks in business which gives us the confidence to get through this tough period. It would be much more difficult if we had not yet opened when this all happened, said Corcoran. "We also know that we're all in this together and every day is a day closer to things getting back to normal."

"While there are a lot of things going on right now that are frightening, I have family and employees and employee's families that need me to stay optimistic and get us through this. I do a lot of praying right now," added Johnson.

Johnson and Wenko said the shutdown may change the way people shop in the future; dedicating more time and dollars to small businesses in their local communities.

"I am hoping that this will help the consumer understand how important shopping local is," said Johnson. "I know it is discussed often and at this point very cliché, but all small businesses, at this point, are counting on the local the consumer to think about us before clicking buy now on Amazon."

"The fact that people are still buying clothes when the world we live in is changing so rapidly is encouraging to me," said Wenko. "The Williston community amazes me with the amount of shopping local and support they have shown all the small businesses."

Williston Economic Development and the Small Business Development Center have resources available for small businesses as they navigate through the pandemic. To learn more, visit their websites at <https://www.willistondevelopment.com/> or <https://ndsbdc.org/>. The Center for Development will tentatively re-open its doors at a date yet to be determined in May.