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The Original Mels Diner owners Tony (left) and Sam (right) Metteer showcasing a recent shipment of hand sanitizer. The restaurant is providing hand sanitizer at every dine-in table.



Auburn businesses reopen with a new normal



Stacey Adams May 19, 2020 3:30 PM

As Placer County moves further into Stage 2 of reopening, Auburn businesses are implementing safety measures to open their doors.

The county provided guidelines and readiness checklist material specific to each industry approved to be open. According to the Reopen Placer website, businesses planning to reopen during Stage 2 must:

Complete a detailed risk assessment and carry out a protection plan specific to that business.

Train employees on how to minimize the spread of the coronavirus, including how to screen themselves for symptoms and remain home if they have symptoms.

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For retail businesses, county guidelines include cleaning touchable surfaces between users, equipping entrances and checkout stations with proper sanitation products, carrying out physical distancing between workers and customers and utilizing Plexiglas barriers or face coverings at checkout stations.

Too Much Stuff, a quality vintage resale store located at 1151 Grass Valley Highway, is ensuring to meet these standards to protect vendors and customers. After being closed for seven weeks, owner Jeanne Cunningham said she missed the normal routine and "it feels good to be back in the swing."

Cunningham said she and the vendors utilize face coverings, and she offers hand sanitizer or wipes, gloves and face coverings to customers upon entering the store.

Additionally, Cunningham said one door will be closed off, and four customers at a time will be allowed in the store for social distancing.

 We're being cautious and doing all the right things," Cunningham said. 

Cunningham said the landlord, the Eisley family, provided a break on the rent during the closure. Reopening now will help with other expenses.

Winston Smith Books, located at 933 Lincoln Way, has also reopened. Owner Glen Sewell said he's doing his "best to keep the store safe, alive and well, so you can have that magical experience and find the book you need."

Sewell said hand sanitizer is available throughout the store, gloves are available upon request, and the store is being cleaned with supplies approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The store is allowing 10 to 12 customers at a time and asking them to wear face coverings.

"We've been mostly closed for nearly two months," Sewell said. "During that time, it felt like we were 'mostly dead,' as Miracle Max would say in William Goldman's The Princess Bride; but now, it feels like we can be restored to life."

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Flour Garden Bakery, located at 340 Elm Avenue, is implementing safety measures to allow dine-in services and initially operating with shorter hours. According to Assistant Manager Mackenzie Holl, the bakery wants to "make customers comfortable to come back into the bakery again."

According to Holl, the bakery has posted a sign asking patrons to wear a face covering and reduced the number of dine-in tables to allow for more spacing. The bakery is also sanitizing tables with bleach after each customer use, serving dine-in orders in to-go containers and has a partition in front of the register and hazard tape on the ground to allow distancing between customers and employees. Holl said the bakery has done away with self-service, requiring customers to ask for assistance to grab high-traffic items.

"We're super excited to be back open and to see all of our regulars and customers," Holl said.

The Original Mels Diner, located at 1730 Grass Valley Highway, also has safety measures in place. Owners Tony and Sam Metteer said they are going above and beyond what the health department requires to ensure every surface that has been touched is cleaned.

The restaurant is operating at half capacity, with every other booth marked off with signage and tables removed to allow more spacing. The restaurant provides a sanitation station at the entrance and hand sanitizer on every table. The bathrooms are also cleaned after each customer's use and community items have been removed from tables.

"We've taken anything that would be community, even napkins and things like that," Sam said. "People have to ask for them. That way, we know they haven't been touched by someone else."

According to the Metteers, employees working with customers are required to wear a face mask. Customers are also being asked if they have had the coronavirus, been in contact with someone with COVID-19 or if they are experiencing any symptoms of the novel virus upon entering the restaurant. If a customer answers yes to at least one of the three questions, they are asked to utilize the carhop service instead of dining in.

"Our goal is to serve the community, but we want to do it in a safe manner that protects our customers and our employees," Tony Metteer said.

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