

LAWRENCE BUSINESSBEAT

News and information from The Chamber • Tuesday, November 24, 2020

Opening during pandemic “isn’t in our business plan,” as local MECF loan recipients get creative

By Lindsey Slater

Director of Communications, The Chamber

When two local businesses were set to open in spring of 2020, dealing with a pandemic was not part of the business plan. Uplift Coffee Shop and Up & Away Indoor Play were both recipients of Metropolitan E-Community funding, a revolving loan program administered by The Chamber of Lawrence, targeted toward entrepreneurs who are starting or growing a business.

“Our first thought was, ‘This isn’t in our business plan,’” said Kelli Huslig, owner of Uplift Coffee Shop. “That first thought was actually a piece of what helped us survive. It forced us to get creative and really think about our customers and what they are going through.”

Uplift, located at 624 N. 2nd St., in north Lawrence, is focused on providing high quality food and drinks with excellent service in a comfortable atmosphere. But when health orders forced local businesses to shut their doors to customers, Uplift decided to go where their customers are. “Using our Uplift Jeep, we load up our drip coffees, pastries, tea, lemonade and

bring a little piece of Uplift Coffee Shop straight to our customers,” Huslig said. “This was a great option that we plan on continuing because we love it.”

At 2525 Iowa Street, Mona Jacobs was excited to bring her dream to reality, creating a new children’s play place to focus on getting the wiggles out of local kids, from babies and toddlers to older kids. Up & Away Indoor Play relies on families walking through the door, an option that didn’t fly at the start of the pandemic.

“While other businesses can offer takeout or outdoor seating, we are limited in what we can offer our customer base as we’re an indoor play center,” Jacobs said. So they’ve adapted with guest limits, two-hour play sessions with sanitization in between each group and changes in how they facilitate birthday parties. With cases on the rise recently, Up & Away has pivoted yet again, focusing on private events and ending open play for the time being.

The 12,000 square foot facility has a variety of equipment for kids and amenities geared toward

adults and their adjustments are meant to better fit the needs of their customers during the pandemic.

Both entrepreneurs made their business ideas work, even while opening in very difficult circumstances. “The Metropolitan E-Community is a vital program that allows The Chamber to support entrepreneurs like Kelli and Mona make their business ideas become a reality,” said Steve Kelly, vice president of economic development for The Chamber. “The revolving loan fund is an excellent resource for Lawrence businesses to fill the gap in traditional funding to ensure these great business concepts get off the ground.”

Neither business imagined opening their doors during a pandemic, but quick thinking and pivoting have provided these entrepreneurial endeavors to keep their businesses operating.

“Opening during a pandemic makes you reassess every aspect of what you envisioned your business to look like,” said Jacobs. “To say it has been tough is a complete understatement, but we are thankful to the community for coming out to support us.”

The Chamber announces 2021 Board of Directors, Officers

By Lindsey Slater

Director of Communications, The Chamber

The Chamber of Lawrence is pleased to announce its slate of newly elected Board of Directors and Officers for 2021. Comprised of professional and inspirational volunteer leaders from across the Lawrence community, the Board of Directors represents a wide range of industries and expertise that will be a great asset to help guide The Chamber and its staff as it moves forward while focusing on leadership, advocacy, and growth.

The Chamber would like to thank Joe Caldwell, Jana Dawson, Ron Gaches, Matt Llewellyn, Julie Nagel, Bill Schulteis, G.R. Underwood and Dr. Dan Wildcat for their previous service on our board.

The following members

will serve on the Board for the coming year and will begin their service on January 1, 2021.

Executive Officers
Chair: Kirsten Flory, Colliers International
Incoming Chair: Derek Kwan, Lied Center of Kansas
Treasurer: Kristin Eldridge, SNAP Promotions
Past Chair: Mike Orozco, U.S. Bank

Officers
Advocacy: *Paul Davis, Paul Davis Law Firm, LLC
Communications: Matt Gough, Barber Emerson, L.C.
Operations: *Ken Hite, Kindred CPA
Leadership Lawrence: Kevin Loos, ICL Performance

Products
Economic Development and Workforce: Taylor Yoest, The JM Smucker Co.
Membership: Tamara Cash, Educational Consultant and *Kate Blocker, Express Employment Professionals
Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Heath Peterson, KU Alumni Association
Housing: Mark Buhler, CEK Insurance

Board Members
Philip Bradley, Kansas Licensed Beverage Association
*David Cook, University of Kansas
*Jerome Davies, KU Endowment Association
Sandy Dixon, Plastikon
*Mario Gradillas, Black Hills Energy
Brandon Graham,

Jefferson’s Franchise Systems
Russ Johnson, LMH Health
Kevin Markley, MarLan Construction
Crystal Swearingen, Crystal Clear Realty

Ex-Officio Members
*Adam Courtney, Bioscience & Technology Business Center
Dr. Douglas Girod, University of Kansas
*Dr. Ronald Graham, Haskell Indian Nations University
Dr. Kevin Kelley, Peaslee Tech
Dr. Anthony Lewis, Lawrence Public Schools

*denotes a new board member

Contact Us!

The Chamber
718 New Hampshire St.
Lawrence, KS 66044
(785) 865-4411
info@lawrencechamber.com
www.lawrencechamber.com
www.edclawrence.com
www.lawrencebusinessbeat.com

MEMBER TESTIMONIAL
During times of need and times of uncertainty, it’s just a huge resource pool for small to big business owners. It’s a high value, relatively low cost investment that’s a no-brainer for us.
Brandon Graham, Jefferson’s



KEEP THE CHEER

Here!

While we think it's important to shop local year round, it's especially important this holiday season. Keeping your dollars in Lawrence can keep the shop doors open, save jobs and help those in need. Keep the cheer in Lawrence this year and every year.

See holiday specials, jobs and non-profit needs during this holiday season at lawrencechamber.com/cheer

The Chamber
LAWRENCE • KANSAS

