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Paying it forward when small businesses are struggling

By Kimberly Houghton Union Leader Correspondent
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Olivia Opal, left, and Kristen Burd take orders by phone for prepared meals at LaBelle Winery in Amherst earlier this month.
 DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER

An Amherst company has created a program aimed to connect small businesses with other small businesses who may need a helping hand.

The goal is to help businesses that may be struggling during these uncertain economic times, according to Jim Kaveney, president of Alkemy Partners.

“It is through small, little acts of kindness that we will help stimulate the small business economy,” said Kaveney, who created the One-to-One initiative.

Small businesses throughout the state may have something they can offer another small business that may need assistance, he said, explaining the help does not necessarily have to come in the form of cash.

Perhaps there is a restaurant that needs a large tent for outdoor dining that another store may have in storage, or perhaps there is a business that needs to borrow a truck that another company may have sitting unused on a lot.

Maybe someone needs a volunteer for an afternoon or a few meals to keep their employees motivated. Whatever the need, Kaveney said it is likely that someone out there can assist.

As the COVID-19 pandemic shifts the way businesses operate, he said it is more important than ever for people to ask for help, and it is also critical for individuals to offer help when they can.

“It is really just trying to help pick people up from their bootstraps,” Kaveney said.

LaBelle Winery in Amherst was the first recipient of the One-to-One program.

Learning that it would cost the winery about \$4,000 to rent a large sailcloth tent to allow The Bistro at LaBelle Winery to resume serving customers outdoors, Alkemy Partners stepped up to sponsor the tent for the next month.

“His generous offer allowed us to open up in a time when we don’t have any cash flow,” said Amy LaBelle of LaBelle Winery. “It is nothing short of the feeling that love gives you.”

LaBelle said her winery has repeatedly given back to the community through various initiatives, and now, during a time when it is in need, the community returned the favor.

The donation provided a bright light during a rather gloomy time, she said, describing it as a wonderful example of paying it forward.

In return, LaBelle intends on compiling a list of local businesses in need to share with employees, friends and business partners in the hope that those that are able to do so will help businesses that are struggling become stable again.

That could mean ordering lunch for employees from a local restaurant or donating supplies or services to other businesses.

Kaveney is challenging all businesses to take part and share their stories of giving back.

“My hope is that the innate kindness and generosity of the American people and our small business community will compel others to participate in One-to-One. We hope it will become a movement to help America come out of this stronger and more united,” he said in a statement.

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