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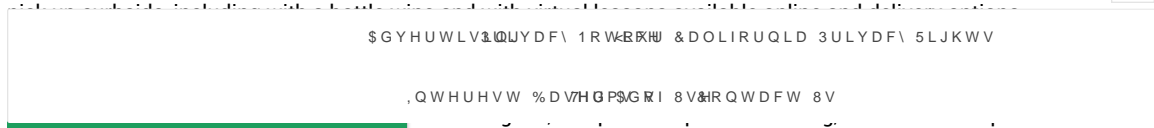
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Sitting in the empty gallery on Saturday, the two pointed out a display of options that customers can now purchase



finished painting and some general tips for painting," Anderson said. "We've also been offering our wood projects, our interchangeable and some of the wooden cut outs to paint as to-go kits also."

There's been a positive response with about 120 kits a week from the community to the options, including with some graduation and holiday options, like for Mother's Day, or delivering to various members of the family for a project to do together along with chunky yarn blankets over 100 designs from a sea turtle to a farm truck. But they remain concerned about the future of the business as it shifts to its new retail-to-go business model until the all clear is given.

"We are trying to stay optimistic, but we are also kind of preparing ourselves where this may not go where we want it to go," Jahn said.

Anderson shared the pandemic has not only impacted Wine and Design and its independent artists, but also her travel agency which she also opened two years ago after working as an agent for seven years. It was on pace to be ahead of 2019 to have 150-200 trips on the books, which dropped 80 percent for the remainder of the year. Now with travel at a complete stop, she's currently handling cancellations and rebooking trips.

"People are standing still to see what happens with this virus," Anderson said.

Standing beside her, her husband, Andy Anderson, said that after 16 years in the oil and gas industry he was laid off eight months ago by a Texas-based company that was already struggling. Jahn shared her husband has also been laid off due to the pandemic as an independent contractor in the Houston area for the oil and gas industry. The family shared the retail-to-go model also makes business more competitive while facing challenges of customers who have lost their jobs or remain concerned about the virus.

"My concern is when we do open back up, what are people going to be willing to spend their money on?" Anderson said. "Because money is going to be tight for a lot of people so this type of entertainment choice might not be what people are choosing to use their money on. I think the to-go kits might help but they won't sustain us."

Outside the business, multiple closed signs greet a nearly empty parking lot, including on some antique stores and coffee shops. A statue of the old town goat wears a face mask near the community center where nearly 75 vendors and 4,500 event goers each year for 20 years to the annual antiques festival on May 1. The festival has been canceled.

It's a "big deal" for the businesses in the district, which Huss learned in recent years made up about 25 percent of some the businesses year as it attracts customers.

While some businesses have closed in the area, including Cork This! Winery on Texas 105 near the district, Huss noted that some of those businesses closed before the pandemic. At this time, she said none of the businesses in the historic district have permanently closed due to the pandemic and that some of the businesses that are closed heavily rely on traffic.

She confirmed the Montgomery Economic Development Corporation provided a small grant that will help businesses

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"We have a lot of experience and really tough as nails businesspeople working here," Huss said noting Montgomery was once a huge town before becoming smaller due to various pressures. "I have faith that they will hold on, I have faith in their relationship with their customers, and I have faith our community that they will shop local."

At its new location at 210 Pond Street, PETZ WHZE, remains open as an essential business with a variety of all-natural pet products, including pet food made in Texas. The owner, Brenda Reiland, wants people to know they are open, to turn from ordering only to picking up to go, and to call, if they have concerns, as they take safety precautions and deliver products.

"We are in desperate need of people helping us help them," she said. "Business is down probably 30 percent. We are one of the fortunate ones. A lot of them are closed, and who knows who is coming back."

City Administrator Richard Tramm said this has been a very difficult period for most businesses in Montgomery.

"Some businesses have been able to adapt and reinvent themselves with carry out and delivery service in an effort to make ends meet, a few have even been able to prosper but many businesses have been shut down by the economic conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," Tramm said. "We hope the ability of many businesses to begin to reopen is the first step in business returning to normal in Montgomery."

While some businesses are closed, a few also remain open with to-go options, including restaurants and wineries.

Whitley Vineyards Wine Bar has reduced to three days a week and is offering bottles of wine to go. It is open for curbside pickup from 4-7 p.m. Thursday and Friday; Sunday 3-6 p.m.

"Business is way down because we had a lot of events and we are not able to have our events anymore," said Event Manager Jennifer Hunter noting an art festival and dancing classes among them. "But we are very thankful for the people who come and support us. A lot of our regulars and a lot of new people try to support us even through what they are going through."

The Owner Gina Whitley opened the winery, which began with a vision in her backyard, three years ago. While it has been difficult, she shared gratitude and optimism.

"I think life is a journey, it may be a small roadblock in our journey, but we are all here together, working together, for the good of others and our community," Whitley said. "We just take that moment and take what we have been given and make the best of it."

"You never know what a day will bring so just make the most of it and keep the journey going," she added. "We are all in this together. This shall past. We just hang on and work together for the good of all."

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