Moving forward one step at a time

By Lauren Jennings
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Last summer, I found myself bored. A lot. With no real local sports happening (constantly at least), I frequently left town to visit family and friends during the weekends and even had time to travel to Northern California for a wedding. I knew that at the end of summer, I would be back to a fully-loaded sports schedule. And that was perfectly fine for me.

I had a similar feeling when the shutdown began, except this time I had no idea when I would be able to cover sports again. I still don’t exactly know when that is, which is frustrating to say the least.

Never again will I complain about a baseball game running long, or a basketball game heading into overtime. For now, sports aren’t returning, and that’s okay. I still find hope knowing that businesses are reopening. One step at a time, and we will get to sports.

Today, as part of the USA TODAY Network's nation-wide effort, we are launching a series of stories that examine the ways the community is already beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 shutdown or at least trying to. The project, Rebuilding America, attempts to capture this historic moment and shine a light toward the path forward.

See REBUILD, B5
As local businesses welcome back customers, let’s remember that we are all in this together.

SHOP LOCAL. SHOP SMALL. SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY.

Kevin McCarthy

Come in WE’RE OPEN

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Local businesses are finally getting what they want: a chance to reopen. It was a month ago that business owners voiced their desire to reopen Ridgecrest during a town hall, the majority expressing concerns over lost profits, while major chain stores, such as Walmart and Home Depot, were allowed to remain open.

Mayor Peggy Breeden said while she does not know how such business will impact financially nor how hard certain businesses will be hit, small businesses will suffer most.

Smaller, independently owned retail stores that have been closed without the ability to offer any services have been impacted the most, followed by restaurants that were forced to only offer takeout or delivery.

Businesses that have been hit disproportionately to others can apply for Kern County’s small businesses forgivable loan program, announced Tuesday. Requirements can be found online through the application process at kern-county.com/government/kern-recovery.

Stores that have been allowed to reopen are still implementing social distancing standards, posting “6 ft. apart” on the walls or floors as well as one-way aisles to try to prevent unnecessary close contact.

It’s been a winding path just to get to this point.

Kern County businesses tentatively began opening their doors in May as Gov. Gavin Newsom took the state through Stage 2 of his four-stage plan to restart the economy.

California entered Stage 2 of the governor’s plan May 8. This initially allowed the reopening of certain lower risk business sectors, including bookstores, clothing stores, florists and sporting goods stores, which reopened with modifications.

The state moved into Stage 2 after showing it was on track with the key metrics of stability, including hospitalizations; personal protective equipment inventory; health care surge capacity; testing capacity; contact tracing capability and public health guidance in place.

Counties were given the ability to move more quickly through Stage 2 by meeting certain qualifications. Newsom announced a new, looser set of guidelines that allowed 53 of California’s 58 counties -- including Kern County's -- to apply to move into the later part of Stage 2 and open more businesses.

Memorial Day weekend got an upbeat start with the announcement on Wednesday, May 20 that Kern County restaurants could reopen for indoor dining effective immediately. Some restaurants opened the next day, others the Friday. Health and safety restrictions had to be followed, and local but lets remained closed.

The Kern County Board of Supervisors quickly moved to certify that the county was ready to move through the reopening stages in mid-May when Newsom announced looser restrictions. Once submitted to the state, the application was processed in a timely manner.

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To make an appointment visit hcbb.com

Rebuilding America

Ridgecrest’s shop owners ready to get back to business

By Jessica Weston and Lauren Jennings
The Daily Independent

Red Rock Books displays its open sign on a recent day after it was allowed to reopen.

JESSICA WESTON/DAILY INDEPENDENT

See BUSINESS, B10
Ridgecrest Is Resilient – Together, We Can Overcome The Challenges Ahead

Supporting Our Community As We Reopen And Rebuild And Thanking Our First Responders, Medical Professionals, And Essential Workers

Your Economic Partner for the Kern & Inyo Counties
Our advertising sales departments have been working with local business owners to identify ways they can reconnect with customers and grow or reignite their business. And on the news side, we’ve been working on a website feature by vector stock that has the shape “rebuilding” may take.

That includes: City Editor Jessica Weston and I talk into the world of small business in Ridgecrest. What business interests in Ridgecrest were hit the hardest because of COVID and the city’s timeline of how are we going to keep any of these residents? Yes, we’re keeping an eye on the Wests and other concerns. Watch over the coming weeks when it comes to financial challenges caused by not only the pandemic, but also last year’s earthquakes. Are residents going to have to pay a temporary sales tax to keep up for lost revenue?

I wrote a story on education in the Indian Wells Unified School District and school will look like at the high school and college levels even as this school year continues. I think that the most exciting part of these stories is that we talk all the way down the road, not just what we are going to get right now. It’s not all doom and gloom — in fact, it’s remarkable to read how resourceful our local teachers, students and parents can be under pressure. I think you’ll find the same.

This crisis came on fast, and the recovery will be slow, but together we will get through it. Stay safe, this is an opportunity to reassess. It is time to start reimagining and reinvigorating. Thank you for reading and for supporting local journalism. And the advertisers who make it possible.
Crisis have a way of revealing what’s important. And Californians adjusting to life in the age of COVID-19 are learning the importance of the Central Valley.

The Central Valley is home to many parts of the economy that continue to operate during the crisis producing products and providing services that we all need, from food to warehouses and the multitude of trucks to deliver essential goods, and the energy to power the state we are made. Without these things, Californians would not be able to persevere through this pandemic.

Ridgecrest Newsmom and the rest of the state’s leaders must ask themselves whether California has a future without essential assets like the Central Valley? This crisis is proving once and for all that our state’s recovery can’t be held up unless we support essential regions.

Right now, we recognize the everyday heroism of this crisis in the Central Valley and throughout California. However, over the years, the State of California has imposed challenges on these same professions from expensive mandates and complex rules that hinder the growing of our food and delivery of products. That can't continue. Post-COVID-19, our laws must change to reflect our new reality.

Governor Newsom convened a task force charged with strategizing for economic recovery, both short-term and long-term. It’s vitally important that this task force and all those who represent large urban areas, provide adequate attention to the importance and needs of essential Central Valley industries. In a headscatching decision, during the pandemic, Governor Newsom imposed an order for school districts throughout California to remain closed.

Central Valley Campus will take a more flexible approach toward online classes that will be approved prior to the start of fall. It is important that this task force, which is dominated by individuals who represent coastal communities, focus on identifying and planning strategic pathways for economic recovery, both short-term and long-term. It’s vitally important that this task force and all those who represent large urban areas, provide adequate attention to the importance and needs of essential Central Valley industries. In a headscatching decision, during the pandemic, Governor Newsom imposed an order for school districts throughout California to remain closed.

My hope is the task force can make the right choices. To that end, I urge you to think about the economy of the Central Valley, and the Kern County office of the Office of County Supervisor.

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Like the rest of California, the Central Valley is hurting from unprecedented job losses. Many workers in the energy industry are out of jobs due to the pandemic, and countless entrepreneurs are unsure if they will ever open their doors again.

By Laurens Jennings
Dr. Lisa Yerian, chief improvement officer of the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health. “But before the pandemic, telehealth and telemedicine looked like the U.S. is adapting to the promise of telemedicine and its opportunities for revenue streams. That’s a crushing blow,” he said.

Rural hospitals closing

For medicine, challenges to adapt ahead

The coronavirus pandemic has forced hospitals to change the way they deliver care to patients in rural areas. Hospitals can face limited visitors and scrambled to provide protection for workers. Tests and screening for COVID-19 have been limited. Dr. George Meade, professor and chief of the Division of Oncology at Stanford University’s Stanford Cancer Center, said the coronavirus pandemic has broadened Medicare coverage and can be used for virtual visits and telemedicine. The Trump administration has broadened Medicare telemedicine, Holmes said. The Trump administration revealed 453 rural hospitals – nearly 25% of them are stabilized at these smaller facilities, most of them are not staying for long. Most of these hospitals are rural hospitals, a source of revenue for rural hospitals, has plunged. While Topchik said rural hospitals are seeing COVID-19 patients not staying for long. Most of them are stabilized at these smaller hospitals and then transported to bigger ones with more resources. They then go to the emergency rooms, which are the majority of the need to rebuild China Lake but also of its on-going critical contributions to our national security.

The IWVEDC continues to push and advocate for the integration of access and defense. We are actively working to start and attract new businesses to the Valley in these areas. The IWVEDC is not only concerned about building our economic engine. The future is in aerospace, renewable energy, space commerce and defense. We are actively working to start and attract new businesses to the Valley in these areas.

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The IWVEDC is not only concerned about building our economic base but we are also working to help improve our quality of life. We have partnered with the City to do more rigorous analysis of the re-

Economic Development Corporation

Your Indian Wells Valley Economic Development Corporation has been busy!

Following the major earthquakes that hit Ridgecrest/China Lake last July, the IWVEDC has been busy supporting the rebuilding efforts of the reconstruction of the Base. Our first action, and largest, was hiring a team of consultants to help build a comprehensive rebuilding plan. The Base reconstruction present huge opportunities for the seniors and we want to help prepare them to take advantage of these opportunities. So far, we have had two streamed video sessions with them and the wish list is evolving into the summer months.


Check our website at iwvedc.com and join us in building our future!

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iwvedc@gmail.com

For medicine, challenges to adapt ahead

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This year, Congress has passed an unprecedented nearly $3 trillion in legislation, the largest relief package in history called the CARES Act. This bill includes funding for our small businesses, additional assistance for the health care system, and provides health care and some financial relief to families and workers hurt by coronavirus.

While legislators explore best options to continue serving our constituents, it is the way our communities have banded together that has truly been the most impressive. In moments like this, I am reminded of what Fred Rogers famously said: “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”

These helpers are heroes, and can be seen throughout our own neighborhoods here in Ridgecrest. Take for instance the drive-by parade held for a young boy who spent his 9th birthday in the hospital. Take for instance the drive-by parade held for a young boy who spent his 9th birthday in the hospital. These helpers are heroes, and can be seen throughout our own neighborhoods here in Ridgecrest. Take for instance the drive-by parade held for a young boy who spent his 9th birthday in the hospital. Take for instance the drive-by parade held for a young boy who spent his 9th birthday in the hospital. Take for instance the drive-by parade held for a young boy who spent his 9th birthday in the hospital.

I know that times have been difficult, but we are seeing progress. And though recovery will not be immediate, I want to assure you that I will continue to fight in Congress to help treat those afflicted by coronavirus.

The Universal Orlando and Legoland resorts are preparing to reopen in Florida after closing for more than two months in the wake of the global coronavirus pandemic. But the question remains: When will Disney and other major theme parks follow suit? Universal and Legoland have asked state and local officials in Florida to reopen June 1. That leaves a number of other theme parks in Florida and across the country that will need to prepare—and potentially follow their lead on reopening plans full of restrictions and safety precautions.

Disney World in Orlando, Florida is looking at reopening in June, said Pam Hymel, chief medical officer, though Disney has offered no specifics about its reopening plans, its employee training, or the phased reopening plan that appears to put theme parks in a higher-risk category of business that would open later.

Though Disney has offered no specifics about its reopening plans, its chief medical officer, Pam Hymel, said this month that the company is looking at reopening in phases. Hymel said physical distancing and capacity limits will be considered, as well as cleanliness efforts such as theme parks will prompt the re-emergence of nonessential travel, which has plummeted since much of the U.S. economy went into sleep mode in March. Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly told CNBC last month that theme parks could open sooner. And other major theme parks in a higher-risk category of business that would open later.

Travelers “need to have something to be able to do,” Hymel said. "They’ll probably get a temperature check. They’ll be encouraged, if not required, to wear a face mask.

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Restaurants need to open back up. Kelly said. “So Disney World could see similar changes when the park

will remain closed, Sprouls said. The park would eliminate water and mist elements.

Central water fountains will be removed and the park would eliminate water fountains. The park would also install automatic water and mist elements. Visitors to Walt Disney World will receive a hand sanitizer dispencer and throughout the park

to let visitors know what’s expected of them. Visitors will also receive a hand sanitizer, which will be available in English and other languages.

Universal’s plan could be a model for other theme parks.

Neither Disney World nor SeaWorld have said when they will present their reopening plans to state and local officials.

The Disney Springs retail and dining complex in central Florida partially reopened with many of the elements of the Universal plan. Visitors to Walt Disney World could see similar changes when the park

Trump.

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rapidly received the required approvals. That meant restaurants were allowed to reopen immediately provided they followed new health and safety guidelines. A drive around Ridgecrest on May 21 showed the change had happened so quickly many restaurants had no time to prepare. A local steakhouse was open, but empty by mid-afternoon. Servers wearing masks said a few people had turned out for lunch. A new notice on the steakhouse front door welcomed people but asked that diners wear face masks, practice social distancing and not wait in the lobby or dining room for a table. The sign also notes that the establishment has the right to refuse service to anyone they feel is putting other patrons or employees in danger.

A local pizza restaurant’s door was open, but no patrons were inside. A woman wearing a mask in front of a cash register said the restaurant needed a little time to prepare before again allowing diners into the space. A local bookstore, Red Rock Books, had an open sign prominently displayed. My Enchanted Cottage also had an open sign, although the popular local tea spot has also been offering curbside delivery of teas and treats throughout the shutdown.

This latest development is part of a long, unprecedented chain of historic events in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Newsom on March 19 issued a stay-at-home directive for the entire state, making California one of the first states to do so. Newsom has said that his four stages are not fixed or permanent and he reserves the right to move the state into and out of more restrictive regulations as needed, comparing the process to a toggle switch. Stage 4 will include reopening “highest risk workplaces” including concert venues, convention centers and live audience sports. Of course, this could all change if there is a significant uptick in COVID-19 positive tests. Newsom has said that his four stages are not fixed or permanent and he reserves the right to move the state into and out of more restrictive regulations as needed, comparing the process to a toggle switch.

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REBUILDING CALIFORNIA TAKES FOCUS

SUPPORT EMPLOYERS
56% of California small businesses experienced large negative effects from the crisis.

GET CALIFORNIANS BACK TO WORK
Since Mid-March, 4.7 Million Californians have filed for unemployment assistance.

EMPOWER LOCAL COMMUNITIES
California's 482 cities say they will collectively lose $6.7 billion over the next two years because of the crisis.

SUPPORT NON-PROFITS
Non-profits have stepped up to serve their communities in unprecedented ways with the help of their incredible volunteers.

"I remain relentless in the fight to ensure our community needs are met and we receive the support we deserve, not more red tape or bureaucracy."
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