

All Together Now:

Chico Chamber of Commerce Serves As The Community’s Go-To Resource During COVID-19

By Alice Patterson

It takes ingenuity, foresight and the ability to stay relevant for an organization to thrive over the course of time. The Chico Chamber has done just that. For more than 100 years, the Chico Chamber of Commerce has been supporting the community with business and visitor services. As the community grapples with the impacts of COVID-19, the Chamber has taken a lead in providing information designed to help the community stay safe and thrive.

“When COVID-19 hit, we knew in order to be relevant, we needed to pivot. We wanted to be the go-to resource for our members, and the community,” said Katy Thoma, President and CEO of the Chamber. Thoma said that initially, most small businesses were overwhelmed—paralyzed in some cases.

The Chamber’s “pivot” included getting help with crisis communication in order to best serve members and the community at large. “We became researchers, and began sifting through all of the information we could,” she said. The Chamber developed “truth sources,” such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Employment Development Department (EDD) among others. “We learned to find what was relevant, and what people needed,” she said.

One key way the Chamber is providing information is through their website at Chicochamber.com. Through the site, businesses and community members will find comprehensive resources designed to help navigate the complexities of operating during COVID-19. Information is divided into five key topic areas on the site: Financial Resources, Employers and Workers (HR), Legal Landscape,



Katy Thoma
President & CEO, Chico Chamber of Commerce

Customers and Other. A Contact Form is also available in case users don’t find the information they’re looking for. Simply complete the form, and a Chamber staffer will research your question and get back to you.

The Chamber has also created a series of Zoom Interview videos with Chamber members which focus on key topic areas. Located online within the “Videos and News” section of the site, visitors will find a wide array of recordings designed to help them navigate through the issues or discover best practices. Examples include interviews with Rick Smith, President & CEO of Tri Counties Bank, Amy Velasquez, Director of Business Services for the Alliance for Workforce Development, Taj Atkins with ServiceMaster by Cronic and Judy Cline, Director of Emergency Services at Enloe Medical Center.

In June, the Chico Chamber, along with Oroville, Paradise and Gridley Chambers of Commerce hosted a massive mask giveaway to local businesses

to help Butte County employees and shoppers stay safe. Countywide, a total of 53,500 masks were given out to local businesses. With the help of volunteers from the Chico Chamber Young Professionals Organization and Business Outreach Committee, the Chico Chamber distributed 24,000+ masks to the Chico community. The masks were purchased by North Valley Community Foundation and Feather River Health Foundation. The masks were purchased from new local business Salus Supply. Masks are still available at the Chamber. Call 530-891-5556 for more information or to place your order.

Thoma also cites a great, collaborative working relationship with both the City of Chico and Butte County. She said after the pandemic hit, she was contacted by the County to engage in safely re-opening business. Thoma quickly got to work, and within 24 hours had a Business Sector Group formed of some of the community’s most respected leaders. As a result of the collaborative effort, she said Butte County was the first county to open. She said their working relationship with City of Chico staff, including Assistant City Manager Chris Constantin, among others, has been invaluable.

What does the future hold? Thoma said she sees great opportunity ahead. “Businesses have had to look at what they do well. The ingenuity they’ve shown is amazing.” Businesses who have quickly moved services online, and restaurants that have been able to create outdoor dining spaces are just two examples she notes. However there is still great anxiety and uncertainty, she said. Each business is unique, and they must have a willingness to pivot as things change moving forward. “We won’t be going back to where we were.”

For more information, visit chicochamber.com or call the Chamber at 530-891-5556.

The Chamber encourages the community to support the local economy in the following ways:

BE BRAVE. The Chamber will point you towards the best scientific studies available so you have solid information for yourself and your teams to re-engage and help your teams not live in fear.

BE SMART. The Chamber encourages business owners and teams to always wear a mask when they leave home to protect themselves and the businesses in our community. Businesses are encouraged to adhere to city and county regulations and the CDC’s recommendations on keeping everyone safe.

SHOP LOCAL. The Chamber encourages everyone to do their part to work together as a community to support and reinvigorate the local economy and encourage all businesses.

Chico Chamber of Commerce

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Safely shop for groceries while social distancing



As recently as a few months ago, grocery shopping was an uneventful chore that few people were likely to remember after returning home. But in the wake of efforts to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, grocery shopping changed in ways that few people will ever forget.

Social distancing guidelines and recommendations urged consumers to stay in their homes as much as possible, but grocery shopping requires people to spend time outside their homes. A few simple strategies can help shoppers stay safe as they shop for groceries.

- Wear a mask. Safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are evolving as scientists learn more about COVID-19. One of the more significant changes the CDC made to its initial guidelines was to recommend people wear cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. As communities begin to reopen, certain restrictions may be relaxed, but the CDC continues to advise people to wear masks while out in public, including when shopping for groceries. The CDC notes that wearing masks may slow the spread of the virus by preventing people who have it but are asymptomatic from transmitting it to others.
- Shop during off-peak hours. Traditionally “off-peak” hours may no longer apply at many grocery stores, the majority of which have changed their store hours so staff can thoroughly clean and disinfect stores each night. But even if stores are not open as late as they used to be, there’s still times of day when fewer customers will likely be in the store. Early mornings may be designated for shoppers in vulnerable

populations, such as the elderly. However, many stores remain less crowded in the mornings than they are during the rest of the day. Avoid shopping on weekends if you want to steer clear of crowds, as these are the only times when people who are still working can find time to shop. Weekday mornings or late afternoons may be ideal times to shop for shoppers who want to avoid crowds.

- Wash hands before and after going to the store. The CDC continues to tout the importance of washing hands as a means to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Scientists are still unsure about how easily the virus can spread from contact with potentially contaminated surfaces, but washing hands before and after shopping is a simple safety measure that prevents the spread of germs and potentially harmful viruses like COVID-19.
- Avoid touching your face. The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology note that respiratory infections can be caused by an assortment of bacteria, viruses and other disease-causing germs. Scientists believe COVID-19 is spread through the respiratory droplets of infected persons. These droplets are essentially invisible, but when people come into contact with them and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth, viruses can spread. So people should avoid touching their face with potentially dirty hands.

Grocery shopping has changed as the world reacts to the COVID-19 virus. As communities begin to reopen, it’s important that people remain diligent when shopping for groceries, taking every step necessary to protect themselves and others from contracting this potentially deadly virus.



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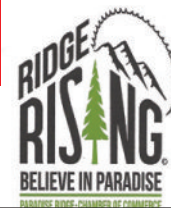
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Holiday shoppers may want to start early

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 in late 2019 and early 2020 had a ripple effect on the world economy. One consequence felt by consumers across the globe was longer than usual delivery times on products purchased online. Retailers like Amazon and delivery services like the United States Postal Service informed consumers that products and packages may require more delivery time due to limited transportation ability resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. That's an important consideration for holiday shoppers who want the gifts they purchase for loved ones to arrive on time this holiday season. In anticipation of longer delivery times, which may be even

longer during the notoriously busy holiday season than they were at the outset of the pandemic, shoppers may want to begin their shopping early. Doing so not only accounts for longer shipping times, but also increases the chances shoppers will find what they're looking for during a time when many retailers' supply chains have been interrupted. Shoppers concerned by online shopping this holiday season due to the likelihood of catching COVID-19 by contacting cardboard boxes likely have little to fear. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that the chances are low that the virus spreads from packaging that's shipped over a period of several days at ambient temperatures.



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