

BizFed Bounce Back



BizFed members share stories of resilience.

Issue 12 - June 18, 2020

In the face of COVID19, BizFed members bounce back with perseverance, creativity and resourcefulness.

DOWNTOWN VISALIANS COUNT ON COVID DEMAND SURGE

Over the past few years, downtown Visalia has undergone a modernization process that threw out the old retail-heavy business model and transformed it into an entertainment destination for the south Central Valley.

In fact, businesses and stakeholders were predicting a good year in 2020—and then COVID-19 hit, wiping out much of the in-person activities stakeholders had worked so hard to cultivate.

But as the state pushes ahead toward full reopening, businesses are optimistic about a surge in pent-up consumer demand.

"If there's a silver lining, it's that people are tired of being quarantined," said Steve Nelsen, CEO of Downtown Visalians. "I think they are ready and excited to shop local."

Downtown Visalians is an association of about 1,100 members located in the downtown area. The group focuses heavily on live events that attract people throughout the Central Valley to the downtown area, including the massive Candy Cane Parade, though many events are postponed or in danger of being postponed.

Regulations Hurt Businesses

Like so many businesses and business advocates, Nelsen is worried about regulations coming out of Sacramento

that affect his members, like the annual increase in the minimum wage passed a few years ago.

"I understand the reason for the minimum wage increase, but understand the impact as well," Nelsen said. "I've seen many businesses forced to go from three employees to two to absorb the costs."

Corporate Favoritism

One of Nelsen's biggest concerns during the COVID-19 shutdown was the preferential treatment of major corporations over smaller, local-owned stores, like the kind that populated downtown Visalia.

"I personally think it's been an uneven playing field," Nelsen said. "Has anybody else wondered why large corporate entities were allowed to stay open, while a mom-and-pop store had to close? Are you safer going to the large corporate entities or are you safer to the smaller biz that has one or two employees? There's a lot of inequity in that."

Seeking New Normal

Nelsen is trying to determine what the future will hold. When will things get back to normal? What will normal look like going forward?

But with everything changing so rapidly in terms of government responses to the COVID-19 outbreak, Nelsen is



Steve Nelsen - CEO of Downtown Visalians

pushing forward and remaining optimistic and letting people know downtown is open for business.

"I want to do a street fair to let everyone know we are open," Nelsen said. "We're constantly trying to figure out how to drive traffic downtown."



@bizfedcv
#BusinessMakes Central ValleyWork

For more information, please contact:
Clint Olivier, Executive Director
(559) 313-6065 | clint.olivier@bizfed.org