How the spread of COVID-19 is affecting U.S. economy and St. Louis local businesses

When news of a deadly new coronavirus in China first broke a couple of months ago, the thought that it would affect the United States, let alone St. Louis, seemed implausible. Thus, as the window for early social distancing closed, citizens alike looked on, unconcerned.

Today, COVID-19 has left entire states on lockdown as doctors struggle to treat this new virus. Medical supplies, hospital beds and healthcare professionals are in short supply, and the spread of the disease is on an upward trajectory, with thousands of new cases being confirmed daily.

While COVID-19 is straining our medical systems, another concerning effect of the pandemic has been economic decline. According to The Washington Post, 6.6 million Americans filed for unemployment as of April 2, 2020, causing the unemployment rate to jump to an estimated 13 percent.

Additionally, before a $2.2 trillion stimulus package dubbed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on March 28, stock markets were in a free fall, with business website Quartz reporting that stock index returns fell by over 30 percent in March alone.

Across the country, local businesses have been struggling, and St. Louis is no exception. As cases have skyrocketed into the thousands, hundreds of St. Louis businesses have been forced to change their services or close. Two local businesses that were forced to adapt due to COVID-19 include Deer Creek Coffee in Ladue and China King in University City.

This month’s in-depth covers how these two businesses have dealt with a virus that has caused inscrutable damage to the restaurant industry. Since COVID-19 began its spread in St. Louis, every business has faced unique challenges, but their stories intersect at the end— with less customers and lost revenue.

Because local businesses bring innovation to our communities, many St. Louisans believe it is imperative to support our small businesses during this difficult time.

Tips to help local businesses

1. Picking it up
   Use delivery or curb side pick-up services provided by all local businesses—not just restaurants. For example, businesses like China King had delivery services before closing.

2. Check in
   Check to see if local businesses have altered their services. For example, many businesses in the Delmar Loop post updates on social media or their websites.

3. Gifting galore
   Purchase gift cards from local businesses that offer them. For example, Deer Creek has gift cards that can be redeemed later, but support the business now.

4. Try to donate
   If you bought a service that cannot be carried out, donate the fee. For example, if you paid for a fitness class in the Central West End, don’t ask for a refund and donate the lesson fee.

Information from Forbes
The “Chinese” virus
China King has been a bustling center for Chinese cuisine since it opened 12 years ago.
Freshman Nicole Dong and Ladue alum Connie Dong have worked at their parent’s restaurant since they were both 10 years old. The sisters have jobs like taking orders, working the cash register and occasional cooking duties. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, China King was forced to close March 17.

“Prior to closing, we saw a pretty big decrease in customers so business wasn’t as good,” Nicole said.

In weeks before closing, China King saw virtually zero dine-ins.

The decision to close was made for the benefit of the Dong family. “Our grandparents live with us and we didn’t want to put them at risk of getting the virus by spreading it to them,” Connie said. “We thought it was best to temporarily close for our benefit, as well as the customers that were still coming.”

Dishwashers and business owners have seen a decrease in customers during the COVID-19 crisis due to social distancing measures, signs have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian businesses. The misconceptions of the virus have led to colossal losses for Asian business.

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In an effort to reduce cleanliness fears, businesses have adapted to regularly using face masks and gloves. Prior to China King's closing, employees purchased masks and gloves and began using them around the time that China started experiencing COVID-19 cases.

Furthermore, China King would also take Lysol and spray the entire restaurant. China King also valued the importance of maintaining distance and limiting contact.

“Before closing, we would have customers call in orders and have them pay over the phone if possible. We would have them wait outside the restaurant in their cars and we would bring them their orders,” Nicole said.

Small business owners all around the country are expressing concerns over the future of their businesses. Not only do their livelihoods depend on it, but so do their family members and employees.

Simply ordering or getting take-out from businesses that are still open can boost morale of business owners and employees.

Although fear of the Coronavirus is causing people to abandon Asian businesses, the majority of business owners continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses. They continue to support Asian businesses.