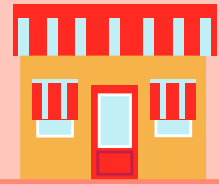
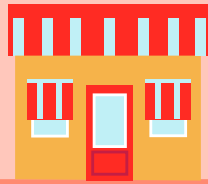


sorry, we're



GRACE HU
in-depth editor
art by GRACE HU
& JOANNE SUNG

CLOSED

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 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 insurmountable 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. ■

staying SUPPORTIVE

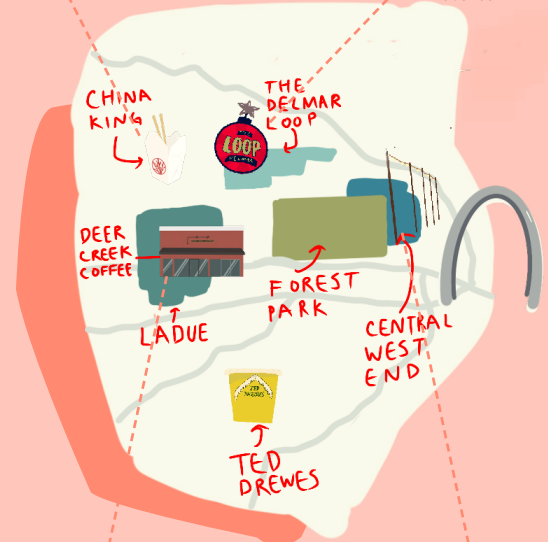
Tips to help local businesses

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.

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.



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.

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

deer creek COFFEE



DANIEL CHAYET
staff writer

Saturdays are among the busiest for Deer Creek Coffee on Clayton Road, and March 7 was no exception. The gleaming sun provided the perfect conditions for customers to enjoy one of the coffee shop's beverages, and all of the tables were filled. One day later, it was empty.

The coronavirus was spreading around the world, but apart from a sole case in the St. Louis area, it remained a distant threat. Sunday, March 8, the phone rang at Deer Creek Coffee, which senior and employee Nina Sachs answered. A family member of the resident with COVID-19 had visited the coffee shop the prior day. Immediately, the shop's staff got to work.

"I went to go tell my boss, she called the owner, and within 15 minutes we told everybody in the restaurant what happened," Sachs said. "We asked them to leave and we did a very very deep clean everything was washed in the dishwasher with bleach and then washed again with just detergent."

Soon, the news spread with retellings taking an embellished form. "I heard that it was the person who had the virus at the time who was there," senior and Deer Creek Coffee regular Emerson Barnett said. "People just did not know what they were talking about."

Even after Deer Creek Coffee was cleaned thoroughly and reopened, the shop saw little business.

"One time, it was just me and one other lady," Barnett recalled. "Then the lady left, and it was just me."

Sachs and her coworkers witnessed rumors continuing to spread and feared for the business.

"I texted the owner, so he posted about how we had cleaned on [Deer Creek Coffee's] Instagram," Sachs said. "Once the owner posted, everything settled down."

The return to normalcy would be short-lived. A little over a week after the controversy, the number of COVID-19 cases increased in St. Louis, leading the shop to shift to curbside pick-up and delivery only.

With businesses altering their operations, Sachs is appreciative of the response from Deer Creek Coffee's customers. "At the Ladue location, most customers are regulars, so everybody knows who all of the workers are," Sachs said. "They've been really nice and supportive everybody's still coming in, and tips have been pretty good."

With the government advising everyone to stay at home until at least the end of April, businesses are asking customers for their support. "Go out and buy stuff," Sachs said. "Stop shopping at big chains, because they have money saved up. They're prepared for stuff like this, whereas local businesses can't be."

For those who are willing to order from restaurants, Sachs wants them to know that Deer Creek Coffee is taking all precautions. "We follow [Center for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines," Sachs said. "We're washing our hands after touching every single bill. Nobody who is working is going to put anybody in danger." ■



china king FAST FACTS

contact information
University City
(314) 725-6888



website

locations
University City
7848 Olive Blvd
#2034, St. Louis, MO 63130

Note:
China King is currently closed.

The Dong family (pictured) runs China King, an eatery known for serving classic Chinese dishes. China King was closed on March 17 due to health concerns and customer benefit. "We mostly get take out orders so we don't have a lot of dine-in, but after the COVID-19 spread, we barely had any." (Photo courtesy of Connie Dong)



deer creek FAST FACTS

contact information
The Blvd
(314) 726-3100
Ladue
(314) 262-8494



website

locations
The Blvd
12 The Boulevard,
Richmond Heights, MO 63117
Ladue
9820 Clayton Rd,
St Louis, MO 63124

Deer Creek's Ladue location has signs adorning the windows that explain the changes in their operations. Deer Creek employee and senior Nina Sachs now takes orders over the phone and brings customers' food out to cars. "Trust the people who are working and that everything will be okay." (Photo courtesy of Nina Sachs)

PANDEMIC play-by-play

art by JOANNE SUNG

How the Coronavirus uniquely effected each business

Perfect day, nightmare call

On March 7, Ladue senior and Deer Creek employee Nina Sachs receives a call that an immediate family member of the COVID-19 case in St. Louis visited Deer Creek.



A very deep clean

Everything in Deer Creek was washed extra carefully— first with bleach, then with detergent.



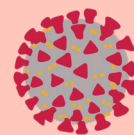
Customers in cars

Coronavirus began spreading rapidly in Missouri, prompting Deer Creek to switch to delivery and curbside pick-up services.



The "Chinese" virus

Coronavirus' Chinese origins breeds xenophobia that causes China King to see no dine-in customers weeks before closing.



Empty tables, masked faces

Before and while business was slowing down, workers began to use face masks and gloves regularly as a precaution.



Dark windows, locked doors

On March 17, 2020, China King ceased operation in order to protect customers and family.



SOPHIA LIU
in-depth staff

china king EATERY

Located on Olive Boulevard, 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."

While many small businesses have seen a decrease in customers during the COVID-19 crisis due to social distancing measures, stigmas have led to colossal losses for asian businesses. The misconceptions even prompted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to explain that "being Chinese or Asian-American does not increase the chance of getting or spreading COVID-19."

"I kind of understand why there's a stigma about how asian people, or specifically Chinese people, are spreading the virus, but

I think it's very immature and ignorant," Connie said.

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 the morale of business owners and employees.

Although fear of the Coronavirus is causing people to abandon asian businesses, those who choose to continue to support asian businesses can contribute to local businesses while maintaining distance.

"Yes, the Coronavirus did come from China, but in this country, we're all in this together," Nicole said. "We should be working together instead of criticizing others." ■