

Autumn in MORRISTOWN

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Morristown meets the challenges of COVID-19

Despite pandemic, new businesses are opening

By Karen Roettger | Special to The Star-Ledger

Do they teach business owners how to survive a pandemic in business school? Or did Morristown business owners and managers take a crash course in the spring of 2020 and knock it out of the park?

Since the shutdown in March of all non-essential workers, mandated by The State of New Jersey, many local businesses have had to hustle to stay open with very significant limitations. Of utmost importance to all was keeping employees and customers safe and, of course, paying the bills. No small feat.

Others had no choice but to close and wait out the turmoil. Thankfully, the phased reopening of downtown retailers, professional offices, salons, fitness studios, indoor dining and entertainment venues has provided a much-needed boost to the community.

As Morristown businesses reopen and face the challenge of ever-changing circumstances, they continue to adapt their services, collaborate with each other and persevere. The downtown is also very fortunate to have welcomed some determined new businesses that have, against all odds, opened their doors in the middle of the pandemic.

CLEAN JUICE

68 South St. | (973) 606-5842 | www.cleanjuice.com

A locally owned, 100% USDA certified organic juice and smoothie bar that provides quick access to organic healthy food fits right in with Morristown's health and wellness conscious community. Clean Juice boasts fresh juices, smoothies, protein smoothies, acai bowls, avocado toast, wraps and organic cold-pressed juices and cleanses.

Owners Leilah and David Tyree place the emphasis on making a truly healthy product, with the organic seal, in a timely manner and a friendly environment. The Tyrees chose Morristown in part due to David's fond childhood memories of his time in Morristown with his grandparents.

"We have enjoyed many date nights in Morristown" said Leilah, "which also influenced our decision to choose this location."

"It was difficult but necessary to delay our opening during the shutdown but the anticipation and excitement leading up to the May opening turned out to be for the best. In hindsight we realize it created a rally of love and support when we finally did open and the community turned out and has been integral to our success during these unprecedented times," Leilah said.

MILLBURN DELI - MORRISTOWN

139 Morris St. | (973) 313-8000 | www.millburndeli.com

This gem of a deli originated in, you guessed it, Millburn. Now Morristown shares bragging rights due to the new outpost of the popular deli on Morris Street that offers a wide variety of the freshest and tastiest sandwiches!

Andrew Morgan, owner/operator of the Morristown location said, "we wanted to bring our food to Morristown to reach a new audience and spread the sandwich love!"

"COVID-19 caused significant delays, most notably a three-month construction freeze. But because the Morristown location was always intended to be an order ahead and pop in and grab your order operation, the opening of the outpost fortunately coincided with the take out culture that resulted from COVID and continues to flourish in the downtown."

SAVOUR CAFÉ & EATERY

40 Morris St. | (973) 343-5560 | www.savourcafe.com

Savour is a unique, European-style café featuring organic, local and natural foods and is committed to being environmentally friendly. The establishment source many of its ingredients

from local farmers, and when the New Jersey weather gets in the way of that goal, they work with organic suppliers who minimize their impact. Cakes, muffins and pastries are baked on site each day, ensuring the freshest of desserts. With a focus on homemade, all-natural recipes, Savour is sure to capture your taste buds and leave you wanting more.

"We saw a real need for a coffee shop like ours in Morristown. Even though we had to close the café due to COVID-19 earlier in the year, we are now back up and running and offering many of our products online, as well as offering outdoor dining and curbside pickup", said owner Brandy Cojocarú.

THE DECORATING STORE AT TERMINAL MILL ENDS

9 Mt. Kemble Ave. | (908) 688-9416 | www.thedecoratingstore-tme.com

Homeowners in Morristown and the surrounding communities already know The Decorating Store at Terminal Mill Ends. Over 70 years old, the business chose a move to Morristown in 2020 not only for its energy, but its proximity to an already established customer base, and the design resources available.

"We create, fabricate and install custom window treatments — draperies, fabric shades and top treatments — and offer a full selection of shutters, blinds and shades," said store owner Ernie Spinelli.

"We also provide reupholstery and workroom services — anything from sectionals and sofas to chair seats, cushions and throw pillows. What sets us apart is our design consultants - we guide our customers, both residential and commercial, every step of the way," Spinelli added.

Despite moving the business to Morristown just two weeks before the COVID-19 shutdown, Spinelli still considers it one of the best decisions he made. The first few months forced the store into a holding pattern, however, it provided beneficial additional time to prepare for the opening and a big increase in demand for decorating and design services that resulted from the largely homebound community.

"People have had the time and inclination to spruce up their homes and businesses. We're very excited to jump out of the gate from our new setting in Morristown," Spinelli concluded.

THE ROCK BOX

4 Elm St. | (973) 714-0683 | www.therockboxlife.com

Morristown is known for being home to unique businesses. Think Just Jersey, offering New Jersey-crafted and themed goods; Morristown Game Vault, a video arcade with vintage games, and Glassworks, a walk-in glass fusing studio store; all are specific to downtown Morristown. Now add The Rock Box to a 'must do' stop for visitors and residents alike.

Offering responsibly sourced crystals and mineral specimens, from small individual tumbled stones to large statement pieces for home or corporate spaces, The Rock Box has a wide array from which to choose.

"Gifts, candles, jewelry and art objects are all hand selected from artisans around the world," said owner Kelly Christmas. "All of our offerings reflect the idea of bringing good, healing energy into your life," she added.

Having lived in Morristown since 1979 and raising her children there, Christmas has seen Morristown through its rebirth as a vibrant downtown bustling with shops and enthusiastic community support. It didn't take much convincing to choose Morristown as the location of her new business.

"Social media was something we hadn't yet focused on, however, the closure afforded us the time to create a robust Instagram and Facebook presence, not to mention create a website. Online options, particularly social media, truly were a lifeline for our business to allow customers access to products via delivery and curbside pick-up," Christmas said.



Photo courtesy of Savour Café & Eatery



Photo courtesy of Clean Juice



Photo courtesy of Millburn Deli



Photo courtesy of The Decorating Store



Photo courtesy of The Rock Box

Morristown Partnership Commercial Rent Relief Grant Program

Developed to sustain small businesses

By Karen Roettger | Special to the Star Ledger

In keeping with its mission to support the Morristown downtown business community, the Morristown Partnership is pleased to announce plans to provide commercial rent relief to area small businesses. A minimum of \$250,000, in aggregate, will be awarded to businesses that apply, meet eligibility requirements and are selected via lottery; award amounts will vary, with no one business receiving more than \$20,000.

"Thanks to a generous anonymous benefactor, who values Morristown and the businesses that make the community so special, we are honored to have had the opportunity to develop, structure and now administer the Morristown Partnership Commercial Rent Relief Grant Program," said Jennifer Wehring, executive director of the Partnership.

Applications for the three-month rent relief will be accepted beginning Wednesday, Sept. 23 at noon up until and including Wednesday, Oct. 7 at 5 p.m. Detailed eligibility requirements are now available on the Morristown Partnership website (www.morristown-nj.org/grants). Beginning Sept. 23, applications

will be made available online; printed applications and grant program information can also be obtained at the Partnership office located at 14 Maple Ave., Suite 201 in Morristown during business hours of Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

At the conclusion of the two-week application window, applicants will be entered into a random lottery system to ensure fair and transparent selection of grant award recipients. Once verified, businesses selected via lottery will be contacted on or about Oct. 15. Grant awards will be used exclusively for three months of rent, not to exceed \$20,000 total, commencing November and concluding January 2021.

A mandatory requirement of all applications is the participation of the businesses' property owner who must comply with a 20% rent reduction for the duration of the three months. Grant awards will be paid in one lump sum directly to the property owner.

"The turmoil of 2020 and its impact on our small business community is a challenge no one, including the Partnership,

could have anticipated," Wehring said. "We are hopeful that this Grant Program will provide much needed relief to our downtown small businesses, as well as benefit the property owners, and bring all closer to a full recovery," Wehring added.

While one benefactor was the catalyst that launched the Morristown Partnership Commercial Rent Relief Grant Program, additional donors have already pledged their support of additional funds. Those interested in contributing to the program are urged to contact the Morristown Partnership via email to grants@morristown-nj.org or call (973) 455-1133.

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