

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 3, 2020



LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCIES COLLABORATE FOR RECOVERY **SAW MSA Recovery Task Force Formed**

The Economic Development and Tourism departments from Staunton, Augusta County, and Waynesboro (SAW) are collaborating with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge, Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center, Staunton Creative Community Fund, Staunton Downtown Development Association, and the United Way of Staunton, Augusta County & Waynesboro to share resources and information relating to the COVID-19 crisis. Known as the **SAW MSA Recovery Task Force**, the group is focused on providing resources to small businesses to ensure a safe and speedy recovery.

Small business is essential to our community and to the success of our economy. They represent decades of commitment by owners to provide goods and services to citizens and visitors while offering vast employment opportunities. There are over 5,000 business establishments in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), almost all of them considered a “small business” using the SBA definition of having less than 500 employees. In SAW, 86% of our businesses have 19 or fewer employees. The effect of COVID-19 closures on all businesses combined with our two largest employment sectors being hospitality/accommodation and retail could be devastating, but the SAW region is in a great position to support our small businesses as they work to remain open, offer employment, and strengthen the future of our local economy.

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The SAW task force is combining collective expertise and resources to assist small businesses in this immediate recovery phase and for future recovery planning. Initial resources from partners include a completed “Shenandoah Valley Guide to Re-Opening,” PPE kits (see below), and rebuilding tools.

As its first group initiative, the SAW task force will be offering 200 free PPE kits (includes masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant, printed signs, and how to open guide) split equally between businesses and nonprofits on a first-come, first-served basis. Businesses will need to contact their economic development offices for eligibility and details.

- Staunton: economicdevelopment@ci.staunton.va.us, 540-332-3869
- Augusta County: staff@augustaVAbusiness.com, 540-245-5619
- Waynesboro: staff@WaynesboroBusiness.com, 540-942-6570
- Nonprofit agencies (all areas): info@cfcbr.org, 540-213-2150

Future initiatives will include promotional campaigns aimed at encouraging residents to support local businesses, peer-to-peer networking, and advanced business planning programs.

Each of the organizations represented brings a specialty service that can be beneficial to business now and in the future, plus has a special section of their website dedicated to COVID-19 recovery resources. Visit any of the partner websites for access to the complete list of assistance resources including, but not limited to, links to federal, state, and regional programs; start up guides for industry sectors; business assessment tools; finance options; planning courses; and more.

For additional information contact:

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