

COVID-19 threatens existence of arts groups



Phillip L. Parker
CAE, CCE President & CEO

Here we are in late June, and the COVID-19 virus is still keeping our lives turned upside down.

You've read where many of us have shared our concerns on numerous occasions about the impact this pandemic has had on families and businesses. A while back, I wrote about my concerns for industries like retail, our restaurants and in general, our small busi-

nesses. The orders to close, or in some cases limit, their openings have severely affected them all.

Lately I've been thinking a lot about our arts and entertainment venues and the negative impacts these organizations are facing both in reduction of jobs and the lost revenue they will never regain.

Think about just downtown Dayton, our traditional hub for performing arts and entertainment. And what do you think about all the visual arts organizations who are suffering. Can we help keep them strong enough to survive this crisis?

Victoria Theatre, the Schuster Center and the groups making up what we now call Dayton Live

have really suffered these last few months. The performing arts groups have had to reduce or furlough most of their staff. The loss of revenue will probably be in excess of \$25 million if they are unable to open during calendar year 2020.

Baseball? Don't forget Dragons baseball. Twenty years of sold-out seasons, a national record I might add, is now in peril. The Dragons' impact is also in excess of \$25 million during its season, which also includes food, parking, workers and such - not just what's inside the ballpark. What about all those restaurants and bars who have been hurt because of no games or no concerts or Broadway

shows?

I think about downtown because I love downtown, but then my mind races to the other venues that I'm sorely missing, like the Huber Heights' Rose or Kettering's Frazee or other live music, plays and theaters. They all matter, and they are all getting hammered by this virus and its regulations.

For some, they say the best cure will be that magical vaccine. Probably so. But waiting that long will surely crush and destroy too many of our favorite go-to spots that bring us joy and respite. We must get past this because the loss of a season's business and having to wait another whole year (baseball? Rose? Frazee?) is just

unbearable for many of us and a never-to-be-re-gained financial catastrophe for those businesses. Some will close their doors forever because no matter what happens in 2021, it will be too much, too late in 2020.

Your charitable contributions can help many like our not-for-profit arts community. But even our "Day of Giving" this past Thursday, June 25, may not be nearly enough. Their answer is simply ticket sales - butts in seats - elbow to elbow, if possible. And until we can get back to buying tickets and going through the turnstiles, our friends who provide us with great music and laughter and pleasure and pride will all

be in a critical, life-support condition.

I hope you will find a way to start coming back to many of our events as they open. For some, they have lost their entire seasons and contracts. But for others, they are trying to reopen their doors as soon as they can and provide us with great entertainment while maybe hoping to survive.

I hope you will help. Wear a mask if you have to; I'll try to recognize you with it on. Social distance if you must; I'll try to say hello loud enough so you can hear me. Just help. Just do something! I'm tired of this virus trying to run my life. I'm taking some action - I'll be going to a concert.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Sales Tax Collections

County	Current Rate	Mar 2020	Mar 2019	12 Mos Change	YTD 2020	YTD 2019	YTD Change
Butler	0.75	\$3,406,154	\$3,206,202	6.24%	\$10,982,846	\$10,830,564	1.41%
Clark	1.5	\$1,937,925	\$1,988,653	-2.55%	\$6,617,364	\$6,149,350	7.61%
Darke	1.5	\$705,169	\$671,170	5.07%	\$2,359,604	\$2,115,051	11.56%
Greene	1	\$2,114,275	\$2,010,692	5.15%	\$7,452,213	\$6,791,999	9.72%
Miami	1.25	\$1,425,364	\$1,403,014	1.59%	\$4,861,531	\$4,472,682	8.69%
Montgomery	1.25	\$7,687,062	\$7,256,525	5.93%	\$25,409,143	\$23,569,736	7.80%
Preble	1.5	\$481,468	\$451,192	6.71%	\$1,497,730	\$1,408,028	6.37%
Warren	1.25	\$3,956,842	\$4,087,366	-3.19%	\$13,794,770	\$13,225,228	4.31%
Region Total		\$21,714,258	\$21,074,814	3.03%	\$72,975,200	\$68,562,638	6.44%

Source: http://www.tax.ohio.gov/tax_analysis/tax_data_series/sales_and_use/publications_tds_sales/51M0320.aspx

Residential Home Sales

	Mar '20	Mar '19	%Change	YTD '20	YTD '19	%Change
Number of Homes Sold	2296	2101	9.28%	3298	3016	9.35%
Total Home Sales	\$408,264,462	\$325,822,294	25.30%	\$583,699,212	\$472,504,413	23.53%
Average Sale Price (\$)	\$177,816	\$155,080	14.66%	\$176,986	\$156,666	12.97%

Source: Dayton Area Board of Realtors, Dayton Area Home Sales for Mar 2020

MONTGOMERY COUNTY VENDORS LICENSE

■ 8Sixty1, dba 8Sixty1, 9692 Springwater Lane, Miamisburg 45342

■ Holmes, Tamekia, dba Tamekia Holmes, 4286 Catalpa Dr, Dayton 45405

■ James, Kiarra, dba Culture Boutique, 2155 N Gettysburg

Ave, Dayton 45406

■ Jamieson And Associates LLC, dba Positive Reflections, 3507 N Dixie Dr, Dayton 45414

■ Le Quyen, dba KKQ, 6670 Pegwood Ct, Huber Heights 45424

■ Rose Family Vending, dba Rose Family Vending, 310 W Main St, Dayton 45426

■ Sugoom Petroleum Inc, dba Spring Valley Shell, 899 S Main St, Centerville 45458

■ Taylor Jayde Photography, dba Taylor Jayde

Photography, 5704 Oak Valley Rd, Dayton 45440

■ Youth Alternative, dba Youth Alternative, 3866 Saint James Ave, Dayton 45406

Peanuts

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Farmers, who had harvested peanuts for the 2020 baseball season in October, had already shipped them to the roasters and been paid.

"We are basically left holding the peanuts," said Tom Nolan, vice president of sales and marketing for Hampton Farms, the North Carolina-based peanut and peanut butter company that roasts and packages most of the peanuts sold at baseball stadiums.

The race is on to figure out what to do with all those special peanuts, which are expensive to grow and delicate to harvest.

Only a certain peanut bred for the proper size and the look of its shell makes the cut for the ballpark trade. It's called the Virginia, grown in that state but also in the Carolinas, Texas and, to a lesser degree, New Mexico. (Only 14% of all the nation's peanut crop are Virginias. Most are runner peanuts, which are ground into peanut butter.)

Of those big Virginias, about one-fifth end up at the ballpark. The rest are sold at grocery stores, gas stations and, at least before the pandemic, restaurants like the Five Guys hamburger chain, which handed them out free.

Fans might not think too much about how peanuts look or the quality of their oil, but Dan Ward does. A farmer in Clarkton, North Carolina, he grows jumbo Virginias in the southeast corner of the state.



Dan Ward (left) and his crew load a tractor for planting as they prepare to sow next year's crop on the Ward farm in Clarkton, North Carolina. PETER HOFFMAN / NEW YORK TIMES

They're not the easiest peanut to grow. The delicate shells crack more easily than the runners destined for peanut butter, so pulling them from the ground takes more time and patience. Growing them takes a special touch, too.

"You have to plant them in a loamy soil with enough sand so the hull is bright," he said. "I like for them to shine in the bag."

About 400 of the 1,650 acres he plants every year are given over to ballpark peanuts. Last year's crop - the one sitting in storage at Hampton Farms right now - was a particularly good one.

"Those peanuts should taste awesome," he said. "When you do get a crop like that, you want people to enjoy them."

He had already sold that crop when the country began shutting down in March. But he didn't escape the effects of the shutdown. By late April, with the coronavirus turning agriculture on its head, he had to calculate how many

ballpark peanuts to plant in May for the 2021 baseball season.

Meanwhile, the companies that bought those in-shell peanuts for what had been a robust baseball and restaurant market are trying to figure out what to do with them all.

"That's going to be a problem," said Bob Parker, chief executive officer of the National Peanut Board. "You can put them in cold storage for a while and hope things will resume, but it doesn't look so promising."

The peanut board is scrambling, plotting a round of promotions featuring free bags of in-shell peanuts that will remind armchair baseball fans that they don't need to wait to return to the stadium to crack some shells. Some grocery stores are moving more bags of team-branded peanuts.

There are other rays of hope. During the first months of the pandemic, raw in-shell peanuts started selling out

at Walmart and other retailers. Nolan thinks some of the demand might have come from people who wanted to try roasting their own at home, and from others who have been creating backyard "squirrel restaurants" - tiny picnic tables and bowls of raw shelled peanuts for squirrels.

An even bigger boost came from homebound snackers. Retail sales for shelled Virginias were up nearly 15% in May over a year earlier, largely because people bought cans of them in March for what Parker called "the initial pantry filling." ("We don't like to say 'hoarding,'" he said.)

For those who make a living growing and processing peanuts, the real hero of the pandemic is peanut butter. March sales jumped by 75% over those from the same month a year earlier. They slowed in April, but were still up.

Peanut butter was an easy solution for a nation that found itself suddenly eating every meal at home. It's also cheap protein at a time when the nation is facing deep unemployment and increased poverty. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and organizations like Feeding America buy a lot of it.

"We can't make enough peanut butter for FEMA and the food banks," Nolan said. "That's a very sad and sobering comment about our economy."

In a way, it makes his work more meaningful. "Everyone here feels patriotic in a way about work right now," he said. "We're part of what keeps things going."

BUSINESS OPENINGS

Restaurant Depot opens after rebuild

Restaurant Depot in Harrison Twp. finally opened its doors for business on June 24.

The wholesale supplier to the foodservice industry was weeks away from opening last year when a Memorial Day tornado ripped apart the \$7 million project forcing the company to rebuild.

Doors opened at 7 a.m. Wednesday at 3700 Keats Drive with some employees who were hired even before the storm, said John Blandford, the company's regional sales director.

"We were about five weeks from opening the store and the tornadoes came through," Blandford said. "You'll hear the most excitement out of our store employees. They can't wait."

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Wednesday's grand opening wasn't as grand as hoped, Blandford said. A formal ribbon-cutting and food event will wait until later.

Restaurant Depot sells equipment, supplies and food to businesses, government agencies and charitable groups. The Harrison Twp. location is the 137th store opened by the company based in College Point, N.Y. It has four other Ohio locations in Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus.

The store will start with 25-35 employees, nearly all full-time, and add workers as sales grow, Blandford said.

With the promise of new jobs coming to the township, officials are happy the company made the decision to rebuild following the tornadoes and about two years after the company first broke ground.

The store will be open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. with the exceptions of Thursdays when hours are 7 a.m. to 7

p.m.; Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

USA Mortgage expands

The Dayton regional office of USA Mortgage is expanding to West Virginia and southeast Ohio with a new branch at 222nd Street, Suite 332, Wheeling, West Virginia. Heading the new operation is Larry Hanasky, a licensed loan officer since 2000.

Introduced to metro Dayton by industry veterans Christopher Rines and Ryan Schremp in April 2017, employee-owned USA has blossomed, growing headcount from 23 people at its founding to 64 people today. It also added a branch office in Columbus, Ohio last fall on route to posting record loan volume of \$149 million in 2019.

Rines projects that the West Virginia office can generate roughly \$20 million in new business over the next 12 months. "That's the goal as we aggressively recruit elite producers to build market share in West Virginia and expand it in Dayton, Cincinnati, Columbus and Chillicothe," he stated. "Our products, support infrastructure and employee-owned status have proven instrumental in helping us attract the caliber of loan officer we seek."

A competitive differentiator for USA is its ability to perform all home loan processing steps in-house. "Our structure streamlines the mortgage acquisition process," said Schremp, also an area regional manager. The lender offers a full range of conventional, Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Veterans Affairs (VA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) home loans for purchase or refinance.

For more information, visit usa-mortgage.com.

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