

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

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Clarence's closing in pandemic protections

Clarence's is taken off the area's dining menu after 49 years, at least for now.

By Amie Knowles
Special to the Bulletin

Clarence's Steak & Seafood House has served the community since 1971, but as of Tuesday the restaurant will be closing its doors until further notice because of the COVID-19 crisis.

That venerable restaurant near the Martinsville Speedway in Ridgeway is one of more than 90 restaurants in the area faced with either offering curbside or delivery services or shutting down until the virus subsides.

On Monday, Gov. Ralph Northam announced that all restaurants had to switch to curbside, takeout or delivery services for at least 30 days, that following previous limits on how many people could gather in one place.

"When this thing first came out, we tried it for a few days. We went probably Wednesday through Friday as just carry out, and then on the weekend, we followed the mandate of 10 people in at a time," said Allen Pickurel, owner of Clarence's. "The mandate, the 10 people and then the to-go, you know, we kind of knocked along, and at least we could maybe break even."

"With the new mandate, we lost the 10 people inside, and with strictly to-go, I just can't make it."

These issues have forced several other eateries to close until further notice, such as The Sirloin House and Hugo's Restaurant and Sports Bar in Martinsville and, in Patrick County, the bowling alley and sports bar Tin Pen Alley. Others' plans are clouded in rumors that haven't been confirmed.

Pickurel said the average traffic at his restaurant dropped 80% in one week. Even though Clarence's offers takeout, he said most customers come for the combination of the savory food and the family friendly atmosphere.

"People are used to coming to me, you know, sitting down, getting a meal," Pickurel said. "You know, they're not in that routine of coming here to go. It's not like you're going to a drive-through where that's their normal thing and that's what they do. They're not really expecting that here."

Over its 49-year history, Pickurel said, the restaurant never has experienced anything like the events that took place during the past week.

SEE **CLOSED** | A6

Former nurse producing masks

Sharon Sleeper's Martinsville shop tries to address shortage of medical-grade masks for hospitals and nursing homes.

By Bill Wyatt
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Three weeks ago the Department of Health and Human Services admitted the United States had about 1% of medical-grade masks that would be required if the outbreak of COVID-19 escalated into a pandemic.

Later that week, World Health Organization Director-General

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus made it official.

"This is the first pandemic caused by a coronavirus," Ghebreyesus said at a briefing in Geneva.

And now with a worldwide shortage of respirators and surgical masks, one woman with five employees in Martinsville is using her experience and knowledge to try to

SEE **MASKS** | A6



Sharon Sleeper shows a mask made in her shop that meets the requirements for use in the hospital and nursing homes.

BILL WYATT/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

The pandemic killed TheatreWorks' production 'Of Mice and Men' just before opening curtain. The actors wanted to reach their audience.



The cast of "Of Mice and Men" is (front, from left) Corey Thompson, Zach McPeak, (back) Jim Woods, Wes George, Brittany Palmer, Rick Ward, Tyler Shively, Ethan Goins and Brian Witcher. The TheatreWorks show should have opened to live audience on Thursday, but the coronavirus restrictions prevented that.

HOLLY KOZELSKY/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

This show didn't go on

By Holly Kozelsky
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TheatreWorks has a powerful story to tell in "Of Mice and Men," but the question is: How can the actors tell it?

The play, written by John Steinbeck, was supposed to have opened Thursday. However, like nearly everything else in the community,

those live performances in Martinsville have been canceled because of the precautions against the spread of COVID-19.

"Of Mice and Men" is the story of buddies George (Jim Woods) and Lennie (Corey Thompson) who ramble the land in search for work during the Great Depression. There's a catch – Lennie is unusually strong as well as tender-hearted, but he has

the mind of a child. He doesn't know his own strength, which often gets him into trouble. George looks out for him.

"If it ain't got nothing to do with figurin', Lennie's your guy," George says to Slim (Zach McPeak).

Slim asks why "a smart fellow like yourself and a cuckoo like him" stick

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WEATHER

Pleasant with some clouds, becoming clearer tonight.
For detailed weather information, see Page A2

57 HIGH | 40 LOW

Martinsville woman arrested, charged with attempted robbery.
Page A3



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