

AS SEEN IN THE

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People's Press



Ryan Glassmaker owner of E-Z Own Plus located at 303 Mineral Springs Road, Owatonna.

EZ Own Plus

For Ryan Glassmaker, owner of EZ Own Plus in Owatonna, the last half year has been a rollercoaster. Glassmaker was one of only a few local businessowners who didn't need to close down his store when COVID-19 spread through the state in March. He did operate by appointment only for the first two weeks, but he was at least able to continue selling his merchandise. However, he lost countless sales anyway as people stopped buying furniture during an unsteady economy.

"When COVID-19 hit, people stopped spending money and stopped going out," he said. "We got fairly slow for a while, but then after the stimuluses started to come out, things picked up a little bit."

Once Glassmaker reopened the store to walk-in customers, he worked to provide a safe and socially distanced environment for his employees and clients. He said the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism was very helpful as it provided masks, sneeze guards and sanitizer.

"JumpStart Owaton-

na helped me out with sneeze guards for interacting with customers at the counter," he said. "It was all very helpful."

Now EZ Plus is open with reduced hours, but Glassmaker said he's facing a different challenge: successfully ordering in furniture so that customers can actually buy it. He explained that his usual manufacturers' production is down, leading to order delays for months.

"It's just a mess all around," he said. "Without stuff here, or even being able to order for people, I can't sell anything. There's definitely some anxiety there with all that."

He encouraged people to still come out and support local businesses like his, adding that he hopes people can be patient as businessowners work to replenish their inventory.

"Please just be patient with the business you're trying to work with," he said. "I'm sure I'm not the only business sector that's having these problems."

by Grace Brandt, special project for the People's Press

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