



Kleckers Kreations located at 302 N Cedar Avenue, Owatonna.

Kleckers Kreations

When Jodi Klecker had to shut down her flower shop and tuxedo rental business, Kleckers Kreations, in March because of COVID-19, she was still able to offer her products via delivery or curbside pickup. But much of Klecker's business comes from events such as weddings and tuxedos, and those slowed down drastically in the wake of the pandemic.

"The high schools didn't have any proms in May, [and] there were no weddings," Klecker said. "Without having any of that, that totally affected my payroll and everything."

One particularly challenging issue simply came from Klecker's perishable products. Flowers don't keep forever. While she started ordering less to try to compensate, she still needed to order enough to provide customers options, meaning that some would be left over at the end of the week.

"We have to carry flowers, not knowing how much we're going to sell," she said. "At the end of the week, we can't really keep them. We have to throw them."

As Klecker tried to make ends meet with less business than usual, she looked for loans or grants to help her

through the lean times. There was only one grant that she qualified for: the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism's JumpStart Owatonna program.

"The Chamber helped a lot," Klecker said, adding that she used her grant funds to help pay her bills and buy some signage for the front of her shop. She said the Chamber also provided her with masks for her employees and customers.

While Klecker was able to reopen in June, she said times are still challenging because events are still limited. Weddings aren't as large as usual, so bridal parties don't need as many flowers.

"I'm still worried," she admitted. "With everything being a new normal, people don't know what to expect. Going forward, as long as more places are starting to open up, hopefully people will start feeling more comfortable to go out. I just don't know what to expect. I'm hoping that, next year, my proms and weddings will start picking up and increasing again."

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

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