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SUBMITTED PHOTO BY BRENNA AKKERMAN

Joe Nowak, General Manager at the Jordan Supper Club, preparing to reopen the restaurant for indoor dining.

'Rinse and repeat'

Area restaurants reopen for indoor dining — again

BY JAIMEE HOOD
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As of Jan. 11, statewide restrictions on indoor dining at restaurants and bars were loosened due to a decline in COVID-19 case numbers across Minnesota. Some area restaurant owners said it's just the latest step in what's been a "rollercoaster" of a year.

Though outdoor dining was allowed in December, the late-fall spike in virus cases caused Gov. Tim Walz to hold off opening up businesses like restaurants, bars, museums and bowling alleys. Now, these venues are able to open under a set of revised rules — for indoor dining, restaurants are limited to 50% capacity, with up to six-person tables and two-person groups at the bar and a 10 p.m. curfew, according to an executive order from the governor.

RINSE AND REPEAT

For Ryan Lindquist, who owns the Brew Hall tap room in Shakopee, navigating changing restrictions on how his restaurant can do business has gotten easier with time.

"In some respects I guess it's kind of

a rinse and repeat situation," Lindquist said. "We were kind of able to leverage our past experiences on social distancing and healthy cleaning practices, making sure masks are around and sanitizing everything, so it's really just kind of refreshing our practices from summer and making sure we're ready to roll."

Lindquist said when the shutdowns of November and December rolled around, he wasn't "seething" about it — for him and other area restaurant owners, the second round was bound to happen at one point or another.

"Frustration was probably there back in the first wave in March and April," Lindquist said. "We weren't ready to be shut down and we didn't know what was going to happen. But in light of strong local support and just continuing to work as a team, and just working through the processes we have in place, it's been less painful because we've seen it before."

Like Lindquist, Joe Nowak, general manager of the Jordan Supper Club in Jordan, said the financial challenges of the first round of shutdowns last spring were certainly daunting, between applying for loans and adjusting employee schedules. But for Nowak, the second round of shutdowns were more straightforward.

"We all kind of knew for a few weeks prior that (the shutdown) was going to come soon," Nowak said. "We had to start adjusting a whole lot sooner — it was a speech on Friday, had until Monday to close up shop kind of thing."

NEW FOCUS

For Nowak, one of the biggest shifts amid the new restrictions on capacity in the last year has been configuring the physical layout of the restaurant.

The question used to be "how can I get as many people in here as possible?" Nowak said. Amid the pandemic, restaurant owners have had to take on a completely different perspective on seating diners.

"Now it's like, well, I have to have the tables six feet apart, I can't have booths that are back-to-back," said Nowak. "There are some things you can do like installing plexiglass dividers between tables, but that gets expensive, especially if you have a bigger restaurant."

SLOW RETURN

D. Fong's owner David Fong had a small dining room at his Chinese restaurant

Dining to 7 >



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY MIKE THEIS

Since his retirement, Jordan resident Mike Theis has spent some of his free time clearing snow off neighbors' sidewalks with his beloved John Deere.

Good Samaritan and his snowblower

Retiree helps out with trusty John Deere

BY JAIMEE HOOD
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When resident Mike Theis moved to Jordan from Shakopee five years ago, he told his wife he planned on getting rid of their John Deere.

Though they loved their new home on the corner of Wood Street and Second Street, it didn't have as much land as their previous home, and he deemed the machine too big to be useful.

"She said, 'You're not selling the John. You can just use it to blow snow,'" Theis said.

Snowblower to 7 >

INDEX

LOOKING BACK	5
OPINION	6
OBITUARIES	8
SPORTS	9
CLASSIFIEDS	11

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