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SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2021

# SHAKOPEE VALLEY NEWS

BREAKING NEWS ONLINE AT [WWW.SHAKOPEENEWS.COM](http://WWW.SHAKOPEENEWS.COM)



*'This is our*  
**LIVELIHOOD'**

PHOTO BY TRINITY CAREY

Server at Ze's Diner Andres Hernandez is seen masked behind the counter when the restaurant was only open for takeout. If owner of Ze's Moody Arafa receives any aid, he will first use the money for payroll to help his employees who have also been impacted by the closing of restaurants.

## What the most recent state relief package offers restaurant owners

BY TRINITY CAREY  
tcarey@swpub.com

Photos of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley, vinyl records, paintings of vintage cars and other relics of the 60s decorate the interior of Ze's Diner in Prior Lake giving it that old-time feel, but everything is nearly brand new.

The diner opened its doors in November of 2019 and just a few months later, Owner Moody Arafa had to close his newest location due to the ongoing pandemic.

Arafa's among restaurant owners throughout the state who are struggling

due to the coronavirus and the waves of shutdowns.

With the extension of the most recent shutdown came a \$216.5 million Small Business and Worker Relief Package signed into law in December — \$14 million for movie theaters and convention centers, \$114 million for counties to grant to businesses and nonprofits and \$88 million for businesses that sell on-site food and beverages.

Area restaurant owners were hopeful when they heard of the \$88 million in funding specified for them, but a closer look at the criteria to be eligible for the aid revealed to some of the owners in Scott and Carver counties that a portion of the aid wouldn't be reaching their bank accounts.

### HITTING THE MARK

In order to be eligible for the \$88 million, businesses must have seen at least a 30% decline in sales when comparing quarters two and three of 2020 with quarters two and three of 2019.

Quarter two and quarter three is the period between April and September. With no sales during that time in 2019, Arafa's Prior Lake location will not receive any aid and being a new business during a pandemic is not an easy task.

"I can't tell you how difficult that is," Arafa said. "This is our livelihood, this is what we do for a living. We come here and our restaurant is empty. It seems like we got hit more than any other business for whatever reason."

The last year has been challenging financially not only for Arafa and his family, but for his employees.

"The other part of my family is my employees. I kept the restaurant open because these employees also have houses, families and kids to support. Even though I pay them salary and still have my restaurant open, still, they got cut too because they don't make as much tips. They're struggling just as much as I am," he said.

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## 'Proud to be part of this community'

### Angie Whitcomb leaves Shakopee Chamber after a decade

BY MADDIE DEBILZAN AND RACHEL MINSKE  
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The last year has been challenging for many local businesses, but Shakopee Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Angie Whitcomb has been there to ride it out with them, as she has been since April 2010 when she first stepped into the role, and arguably throughout her entire career thus far.

The year 2020 was an economic kick in the gut, said Whitcomb, and while it was a hard year for many, there was so much good in the midst of it all, including downtown restaurants who were raising money for those who had it worse.

"It made me so proud to be part of this community," she said, adding throughout all the stress and chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chamber's job has been to ensure businesses had everything they needed.

"All businesses are essential," she said.

Whitcomb's tenure with the Shakopee Chamber of Commerce has come to an end; she has accepted a position with Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce

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