Dear Members,

We’ve arrived in May. Read on for updates...

Stay Safe Ohio Order
I’m sure by now you have heard that the Governor extended the stay at home order – now called the "Stay Safe Ohio" Order through the end of May. The dates for opening and checklists for businesses are in line with what was announced earlier this week.

However, I have watched every single press conference that the Governor has held since the start of this pandemic (I don’t even want to count the hours I’ve spent). Today there was a different tone as he addressed concerns that have been shared. Additionally, he shared some more news that may be helpful to your business:

- We talked about retail opening on May 12th. Well, in section 12 of the new order, they also added this language – “Currently closed retail establishments and facilities, that will restrict their operations to curbside pickup, delivery or appointment-only (limited to 10 customers at any one time) may reopen effective May 1 at 11:59pm.” So you now have this available as you prepare for the wider opening on May 12th.
- They have now created working groups to look at the following areas: Travel, Outdoor Activities, Sports (youth & adult), Gyms, Theater/Arts, Professional Sports, Child Care, Adult Day Care, Restaurants, Barbers/Salons. The working groups consist of people who work in those areas and they are charged with coming up with the proper protocols to help get those areas reopened.
- He mentioned that they hope to announce reopening dates for barbers/salons and restaurants sometime next week.
- Campgrounds – please look at Section 13 in the new Order (the wording is at the very end). There is now ability for you to reopen for your regular pre-existing seasonal campers.
- While the date of the new order goes through May 29th, they clearly said that they expect further changes to be announced in May of other things opening. I’ll keep you informed.

Be Prepared to Document Your Plan
One of the best practices that is emerging from places as they reopen is the need to document your plan and clearly communicate that to employees and customers. You can find your sector specific protocols here. More sectors will be added as they are defined. How often are you cleaning high-touch surfaces, who is charged with ensuring that happens, who do employees report their daily symptom-assessment to, what should they do if they feel ill, what happens when someone tests positive, etc. Those are the types of answers that should be documented in your plan. Also, don’t forget about the expanded leave programs – this US Chamber guide to that is very helpful.

This is a good article to read about what you should consider about taking employee temperatures (note that it was written back in March, so understand the quotes are dated, but the info is good). You can also opt to have employees take the temperatures themselves. Note that now the daily symptom assessment also notes to check for cough or shortness of breath. *Disclaimer: I’m not an attorney, and if you would like a referral to an employment attorney for further questions, just ask, we have many qualified Chamber Members who can help.

Additional Assistance Programs
While we have spent much time talking about PPP & EIDL programs, there are a couple other programs that may be able to be tapped if you haven’t been successful with PPP –
- **Employee Retention Tax Credit** – This one is handled by the IRS. They have a [good information page](https://www.irs.gov) that can walk you through if might qualify and what is involved. Don’t forget the [US Chamber guide](https://www.uschamber.com) on this program too. If you haven’t received a PPP, this might be good to look at.

- **The Main Street Lending Program** – This is being brought on by the Federal Reserve and is aimed at small to mid-sized businesses. It is a loan program, not forgivable, and you cannot have accessed PPP if you want to use this. Here is a [lengthy FAQ provided by the Federal Reserve](https://www.federalreserve.gov). The minimum loan amount is $500,000 and it is handled by banks. I’m not going to pretend to be an expert about it, but your banker would know much more.

Incidentally, the US Chamber Town Hall call today talked about these two programs – as well as PPP – I find these always worth a watch – catch it here.

**Business Resources**

Our team is spending a lot of time connecting with colleagues across the country and scouring different information sources to bring some best practices and ideas to you. Here are some that you might find helpful:

- **“A Toolkit to Jumpstart the Main Street Comeback”** – This collective document was shared and brings some great ideas on how to pivot your business model in the COVID-19 world, along with examples of businesses who have done just that.

- **Kroger Blueprint** – Kroger is spending a lot of time sharing what they have learned. Even if you aren’t in a retail operation, you should take a few minutes to click through this page as there is a ton of really great info being shared here.

- **Commercial Real Estate example** – We found this through our partners at Team NEO and it shows some great examples of things you can do in an office setting.

- **The US Chamber Path Forward** conversation yesterday centered around consumer trends and things that you’ll want to think about. Here is a [link to survey results by McKinsey](https://www.mckinsey.com/) on consumer sentiment. It’s worth the watch, but here are a few key takeaways:
  - Consumers want physical, visual assurances that places of business are safe. These might include placing hand sanitizer in a prominent place, having employees cleaning, showing a visible plan of action to protect customers and employees, and a certification from local health officials that the business is abiding by recommendations.
  - Consumers maintain considerable optimism and pent-up demand for goods or services that have become limited or unavailable in the pandemic. When we reopen, businesses must seize that opportunity.
  - Some customer expectations may significantly, and permanently, change (e.g. greater demand for online and contact-free services). We must not limit our thinking to “returning to normal” but instead look ahead to a “new normal” and be ready to meet new demands and expectations in the post-COVID environment.

- If you’re looking for some good information on COVID-19 to answer questions you may have, check out this [very thorough website](https://www.ohiohealth.com) from OhioHealth. It’s packed with good resources to help.

**Upcoming Chamber Events**

This coming week we have 2 offerings for you:

- **Small Business Conversation Series** – On Tuesday, May 5th at 1:00pm (note that this is Tuesday, not Monday) we’ll be talking about reopening your business and the new safety protocols you should be preparing to follow. Richland Public Health Commissioner Sarah Humphrey will be on hand to answer questions and share best practices to get you ready. [Register here](https://www.uschamber.com).

Chamber Digital Academy – On Thursday, May 7th at 1:00pm we’ll be talking about how to protect your business from fraud in the COVID-19 world. We have Dennis Fox (ES Consulting), Jason Painley (Mechanics Bank), and Ryan Anschutz (law enforcement) participating in our panel discussion. Unfortunately, fraud and scams are on the rise. Register here.

Updated PPE Supplier Chart
Here is another updated list of local places that you can call to get much needed supplies for your business as you get ready to reopen.

#InThisTogetherOhio

This week the United Way of Richland County announced their response to the COVID-19 crisis, how they are helping their partner agencies, and that they have established a COVID-19 Relief Fund. The money that you all help to raise for the United Way each year is making a difference right now in our community...and we thank you for that. If you’re able, consider a gift to the Relief Fund on the Richland Gives site to help the hardest hit.

Thanks to Dan Varn & the United Way board and staff for your tremendous community support in this time. Have a nomination for a future email? Drop me a line or photo!

Final Thoughts

I know that you’re all feeling stir crazy. I know there are many deeply felt emotions and responses to what is happening right now. We all want to fast-forward to the end of this crazy time. I feel that, too. I can’t make that happen, though I wish for all of our sakes that I could.

The other day I talked about one tool I have been using to help me keep perspective: gratitude. (Incidentally – today I’m grateful for: sunshine, warming temperatures, snuggles from my dog, talking with my dad).

Today, I want to share another idea that helps me refocus – helping others! We’re all in a different boat during this crisis. For some the boat is in wavy waters, others it’s in stormy waters, others are in a hurricane – and sometimes those weather conditions change. But we can all be generous in some way, and it doesn’t have to cost anything. Here are some ideas:

- Share a compliment with a stranger
- Write a letter to a far-away friend
- Drop off dinner at a neighbor’s house
- Donate to a worthy cause
- Make someone’s day
- Pay for a stranger’s coffee
- Call someone who lives alone
- Send some cards to local nursing home residents

Doing something kind and generous will help you feel some control over life again, it will give you a positive feeling, it will raise those endorphins. Let’s face it, we all need a little extra kindness these days. We all need a little encouragement.
I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again. I’m honored to be walking on this journey with you. I hope you all find some way to enjoy the sunshine this weekend. Brighter days are ahead.

We remain #RichlandCountySTRONG!

Onward!
Jodie

Jodie A. Perry, CCE, IOM, CCEO-AP
President & CEO
Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development

PS – We have been widening our email list. If this is the first email you’ve received – Welcome! Here is a link to our past emails and other great resources to help your business!