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HAVERFORD—Like small businesses throughout the county, Haverford Township small businesses have been seriously challenged during the COVID pandemic. But in this township, they have one new program to come to their aid. [The Haverford Partnership for Economic Development](#) has launched a new initiative - a community-based digital gift card to help the small businesses in its community.

Starting Nov. 1, residents can purchase the "Discover Haverford Keep it Local" gift card, which allows shoppers to write a personal message and send it to family, friends and colleagues via email, text, or physical copy.

The card is good at 20 participating merchants in Haverford Township and allows shoppers to spend at multiple locations

“At HPED, we are always looking for innovative ways to grow our members’ businesses and to enhance our community. In Haverford Township, there is a sincere desire to support our small businesses, especially during this COVID-19 crisis,” said Jeanne Angell, executive director of HPED. “Residents want our businesses to survive this difficult time. My hope is that every Township resident purchases one or more ‘Keep it Local’ gift cards during this holiday season, which could quickly infuse over a million dollars into the community!”

Here is a look at three of the shops that accept the new card.

“I’m looking forward to the gift card program. Any time you can get in front of local clientele, it’s going to be helpful,” said Gina Pawlik, owner of [Positivity Yogis](#) at 31 S. Eagle Road. “People want to help local business.”

Pawlik has been in Havertown for three years after upgrading from a home studio. Her center offers a variety of yoga and wellness programs.

She said maintaining her business has been challenging during the pandemic. “We went online immediately, and reopened the studio to customers at end of June,” Pawlik said during a break between classes. “We have clients who work on Zoom all day and were real excited to get back in the studio.”



Pawlik stressed she practices safe distancing and routine masking. Before entering the studio, she takes clients’ temperatures. She has improved the air circulation in the facility, installed air purifiers and cleans extensively between classes.

When her business closed, she purchased the equipment that allowed her to go online with Zoom classes and, as the weather changed, Pawlik also offered a number of classes outside.

Pawlik credited the County program Delco Strong, as well as a flexible landlord, for helping to keep her doors open.

“It’s a challenge to me but being a positive person, you look for the attitude of gratitude and find something you can be grateful for and bring that into your focus,” she said. “We offer a little bit of everything - yoga, HIT (high intensity interval training), barre (ballet bar work), active aging classes - we have a lot of fun.”

Next door, George Latella, co-owner of [Bria & Latella's Italian Deli](#), has much the same view.

“I think the gift card program is going to be great for us. I’m hoping this thing fuels the ‘buy local’ movement and supports that. Anything they do at HPED, we’re in,” he said Friday as his morning crowd began to trickle in.

Latella, who has lived in Havertown for 30 years, began the business with his high school friend and now brother-in-law Greg Bria. The two both worked in the food service industry - Latella for TastyKake and Bria with Wawa – and used their knowledge and experience to start the shop three years ago.

Their primary business comes from hot and cold sandwiches, prepared foods, catering and, in the fashion of a traditional deli, they will slice up some lunch meat to go if asked, unlike some of their larger competitors.

“I think we make a killer breakfast sandwich. We sell way more on Saturday and Sunday than we do during the week,” Latella said.

To survive the pandemic, the partners applied and received Federal Payroll Protection Program funds, which got them through April and May, then they applied for the Delco Strong program.

“That was awesome. That got us through June and July,” said Latella. They also applied for state Main Street funding and received that as well.

“We were blessed. We got money through three sources. Otherwise we would have been out of business,” said Latella, who has also applied for a private small business loan. “I’m hoping to get that. It will give us some working capital to move forward. We’re in much better shape than others.”

After the initial shutdown, the partners slowly began returning to normal operating conditions. They began opening one day a week, then expanded to weekends, before returning to their normal seven day a week schedule. Even now, their breakfast business has all but disappeared.

“Everywhere, even McDonald’s, has lost breakfast,” Latella said.

Their catering business has not come back and the fall, what would normally be a popular time to order food for sports tailgating season, has been slow.

Latella is looking forward to what he hopes will be a good holiday season.

The holidays are popular for them. They cater Thanksgiving meals for families as well as Christmas Eve.

Across the town, Eric Hartline, owner of the [Brew Your Own Beer](#) shop on Darby road, is excited about the gift card program. His is one of the few small businesses that have not been adversely affected by the pandemic.

“People have lots of time on their hands to pursue hobbies. People like to drink and people like to make stuff they can drink,” said Hartline. “The business has always been pretty steady. I saw a bit of an uptick in April and May. Summer time slows down but was up this year.”



The shop has been there for 26 years. Hartline took over from the original owner six years ago. He is not sure what to expect from the coming months.

“Holiday time has always busy. I really don’t know what to expect this year,” he said. “Are people going to go out and shop? Will it all be online because people are afraid to go out?”

His shop has a website, but he doesn’t do online sales because he doesn’t see the advantage when added costs of staffing and inventory are factored in, and there are plenty of other larger internet competitors.

He helps customers with the challenges of fermenting, purchasing the proper ingredients, and learning brewing technology such as mash temperature and sanitizing.

“I offer what they [online competitors] can’t. You can come in here and talk to a person who has been brewing for 20 some years , as opposed to just ordering something online and Googling it,” said Hartline. “I’m here to support people and help people as well.”

HPED cites studies that have shown local independent retailers recirculate 47% of their revenue back into the community, while only 14% of national chains’ revenue stays in the community. More dramatically, restaurants recirculate 73% of their revenue back into the community, versus only 30% for national chains.

Other business participating in the gift card program include: Brick & Brew, House Cup Coffee Roasters and House Cup Cafe, Joel Perlish Photography, DMI Home Supply & Rental Center, Sir Speedy, Ivy Inn, New Avenue Café, Secret Sauce BBQ, Town Tap, BLVD, Brew Your Own Beer, Havertown Bicycle Shop, Slice It Up Pizza, St. Jude Shop, Wild Birds Unlimited and Preservation Pix. To purchase "Discover Haverford Keep it Local" cards, go to <https://discoverhaverford.org/gift-cards-1>.