

# Community Matters Now



A monthly publication of COVID-19 resources for Iowans from Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development

## TEN CREATIVE WAYS TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY RIGHT NOW *By Diane Van Wyngarden | Community Tourism Specialist*

Travel experts predict a pent-up demand to hit the road as soon as people are able to get out. Diane Van Wyngarden, tourism specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, offers 10 inexpensive ideas businesses and communities can use now to help capture that eager market, avoid a tourism industry wipeout, and build long-term success.

**1. Quick and easy videos** create sales now and more customers later. Create YouTube videos with your phone and post them on Facebook. Keep them fun, entertaining, and educational, so viewers will share with their friends. These are simple and inexpensive to create. Monetize your video by incorporating your products into it, and provide information how to purchase. For an example, see how Honey Creek Creamery incorporated their products into an [educational video](https://youtu.be/qVfATPyeldA) (<https://youtu.be/qVfATPyeldA>).

**2. Create an e-cookbook of favorite dishes** to support local restaurants, caterers, and food trucks and create greater awareness of your community's assets. Create a list of local favorites, and invite each restaurant or food service to become a part of this promotion by providing the recipe and a photo or story about it. Compile the recipes, photos, and stories into a PDF document and make it available for public purchase through a local website, with all proceeds going to the participating restaurants.

**3. Retail curbside bingo** will support your local businesses. Create a bingo card of participating retailers. Shoppers cross off a square when they pick up an order outside each business. When shoppers connect five squares in a row to get BINGO, they submit

photos of those receipts to an email address on the card for a weekly raffle prize (such as a \$50 gift card).

**4. Make coloring book pages** from photos of your business or destination. Families will enjoy coloring the pages now and will want to come to you to see these places later. There are several websites to convert photos to coloring book pages.

**5. Virtual puzzles** promote your business or destination—here is a twist on this same concept. Offer free virtual puzzles from your photos, so families will want to visit the puzzle destination they completed. Several websites and apps will create coloring book pages or a virtual puzzle from photos.

**6. Zoom people to you!** Twenty million people now have Zoom accounts—market that opportunity at zero cost. Get yourself featured prominently during video conferences by creating a Zoom background of your destination; then offer your background as a free link to the public.



**7. Real men use Pinterest** if they want to reach travelers. Let the data be your guide: Women make 80% of all travel decisions. Pinterest has more than 320 million monthly active users, 71% of whom are women.

**8. Be clean** and let people see that you are actively cleaning. One long-term impact of

*continued on P03*

### ONLINE RESOURCES

[SMALL BUSINESS BEST PRACTICES FROM THE IOWA RETAIL INITIATIVE](#)

[BUSINESS MODEL PLANNING GUIDE](#)

[RETAIL READY TO REOPEN RESOURCES FROM THE IOWA RETAIL INITIATIVE](#)

[COVID-19 HEALTH AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS](#)

[RETAIL DESIGN CREATIVE PRACTICES FROM THE IOWA RETAIL INITIATIVE](#)

[TRAVEL-MAGGEDON SURVIVAL TIPS FOR TOURISM DESTINATIONS](#)

## ISU EXTENSION AND OUTREACH HELPS BUSINESSES RECOVER AND ADAPT DURING COVID-19

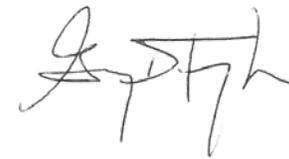
Stay-at-home orders have severely impacted local businesses in every community in Iowa and across the nation. The U.S. Commerce Department has reported that retail sales fell 16.4% in April, which was the largest one-month decline on record, breaking the previous record of an 8.3% drop set in March. Hardest hit were restaurants and bars, home furnishing stores, and clothing stores.

The road to recovery for most businesses will be long and difficult, but CED is working to provide you the resources to help with your recovery. This issue of *Community Matters Now* focuses on a few of the programs and tools we have developed since the beginning of the pandemic. In "Retail during COVID-19?"

We have your back!" Lisa Bates points you to resources that highlight some of the creative methods retailers of all types are implementing, and to the guidelines from the governor's office for reopening. The article from our Community Food Systems program highlights a few of the ways local producers have adjusted their business models to boost sales and meet consumers' demands for locally-grown and raised food products. Communities state specialist Diane Van Wyngarden offers 10 creative ideas to help destination-oriented and other retailers during and after the lifting of closure orders. Finally, CED and ISU's Farm, Food, and Enterprise Development (FFED) are partnering with the Iowa Small Business Development Centers to deliver weekly podcasts and

webinars to help get Iowa's private sector "back to business."

Please reach out to the resource providers highlighted in this issue, and others you find on our [website](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities) ([www.extension.iastate.edu/communities](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities)), who can bring you the assistance you need!



Gary Taylor  
Program Director, Iowa State University  
Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development

## NEW PODCAST AND WEBINAR SERIES HELPS IOWANS GET BACK TO BUSINESS

By Brian Tapp, Program Coordinator | Farm, Food and Enterprise Development

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on businesses from large to small, and there are many questions surrounding what business owners and entrepreneurs should do as the state prepares to reopen.

To help answer some of these questions, and to help Iowans understand the many resources available, the Community and Economic Development program and the Farm, Food and Enterprise Development program with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach are providing a series of podcasts and webinars, in partnership with the Iowa Small Business Development Centers.

The series *Back to Business Iowa* will feature approximately four podcasts each week, and will soon include webinars on popular topics facing Iowa businesses.

Brian Tapp, enterprise development program manager with FFED at ISU Extension and Outreach, said there have been many questions about what business owners should do, and the combination of podcasts and webinars are a great way to reach people.

Recent podcasts have explored topics such as the Small Business Relief Fund for Iowa, evaluating customer segments, revolving loan funds, SBA financial programs, and more.

Most of the current topics relate to the pandemic, but Tapp said the information is valuable no matter what stage of recovery a business may be. Experts in each segment include specialists from ISU Extension and Outreach and from Iowa's business community.

Future podcasts will include a look at human resources, the Iowa Retail Initiative, and restaurant reopenings, tourism strategies, as well as social media best practices.

A link to the *Back to Business Iowa* podcasts is available on the Farm, Food and Enterprise Development [website](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed-podcasts/) (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed-podcasts/>).

For more information, contact Tapp at [btapp@iastate.edu](mailto:btapp@iastate.edu), or 515-294-4417.



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## LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS, BUSINESSES MOVE TO ONLINE SALES AND 'CONTACTLESS' DELIVERY

By Courtney Long, Program Coordinator | Farm, Food and Enterprise Development

Businesses across the state are trying new and innovative strategies to remain open. Farms and food businesses are also stepping up to meet the demand for local food products. Many farmers markets are moving to online sales and virtual options to continue to support customers and vendors (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm, Food, and Enterprise Development (FFED); 2020).

Organic meat and produce sales have increased since the COVID-19 epidemic, possibly because consumers want to know the source of their food, or because of lower availability of meat at grocery stores (Delate, 2020).

### Spotlight

Prudent Produce (#GoodFoodDelivered) is a locally owned and operated business that offers door-to-door delivery as an aggregated organic and local-grocery service or online farmers market.

According to Tony Thompson, owner of Prudent Produce with his mother, Cindy

Kirschbaum, "The business has seen a major uptick in demand over the past two months largely due to COVID-19, as we have more than doubled the number of doorsteps we are delivering to each week."

Because of their business model of aggregating products at their Elkhart location and distributing door to door, they were prepared for "contactless" delivery. Other than minor tweaks to enhance sanitary practices, their way of working hasn't changed much.

Central Iowans can sign up to have hundreds of Iowa products delivered to their doorstep with Prudent Produce's #GoodFoodDelivered service at their [website](http://www.prudentproduce.net) ([www.prudentproduce.net](http://www.prudentproduce.net)).

Additional food businesses that offer distribution models include food hubs and CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture). Food hubs have several different models and can source directly to the consumer's door, or support wholesale distribution to restaurants and retailers. A typical CSA is



*Prudent Produce delivery truck.*

an aggregated box of products from one farm that is picked up weekly; however, there are new models of groups of farms working together for a more diverse box.

ISU Extension and Outreach's FFED program regularly updates an Iowa Food Hub Directory and Iowa CSA Directory and provides the most current COVID-19 resources for small farms, food systems, and business enterprises at its [website](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/ffed-covid-resources/) (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/ffed-covid-resources/>).

## RETAIL DURING COVID-19? ISU EXTENSION'S IRI HAS YOUR BACK!

By Lisa Bates | Community Development Specialist

As the state begins to reopen following the COVID-19 shutdown, the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development (CED) Program's Iowa Retail Initiative (IRI) has been compiling information to help Iowa retailers make the transition to providing customer service in the age of social distancing.

[Small Business Best Practices](#) highlights some of the creative methods retailers of all types are implementing. Many of these examples include the use of virtual media, but also offering such services as delivery, specialty-product packages, and curbside pickup ([https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/small\\_biz\\_best\\_practices.pdf](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/small_biz_best_practices.pdf)).

There are specific guidelines that retailers need to address as they begin to reopen, such as limiting the maximum number of shoppers based on legal occupancy, CDC cleaning and disinfecting practices, and the practicing of social distancing. The [Retail Ready to Reopen Resources](#) provides the direct links to required

guidelines, additional tips for retailers, and sign templates that stores can use to communicate their new COVID-19 safety practices to employees and customers ([https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/retail\\_ready\\_to\\_reopen\\_covid19\\_resources\\_0.pdf](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/retail_ready_to_reopen_covid19_resources_0.pdf)).

[Retail Design Creative Practices](#) provides retailers specific design actions they can take to ensure the safest shopping experiences for customers while protecting their employees. Retail exteriors, layout, merchandising, and connecting with customers are all included in this new resource. While the need for alternative shopping methods is not going to go away anytime soon, retailers can continue to implement measures to enhance their customers' shopping experiences ([https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/retail\\_design\\_creative\\_practices\\_1.pdf](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/retail_design_creative_practices_1.pdf)).

For more information about IRI, contact Lisa Bates at 515-357-8185 or [imbates@iastate.edu](mailto:imbates@iastate.edu).

### *Ten Creative Ways continued from P01*

COVID-19 is an increased expectation of cleanliness at public locations. Clean your business well and let people see that you are doing your part to keep them safe.

**9. Use predictions to incorporate appealing messages** into social media now, so travelers will choose you later. Travel experts predict that consumers will seek off-the-beaten path experiences, private accommodations, and small-group adventure activities, where they are able to be outdoors and surrounded by open air.

**10. Become the staycation destination.** Many travelers will play it safe, by choosing closer-to-home day trips or destinations. Work now to be ready for a new audience and make it easy for them! Collaborate with other area attractions to plan organized days, filled with a variety of fun experiences.

For more details about each of these ideas, download the [Travel-Maggedon Survival Kit](#) ([https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/travel-maggedon\\_0.pdf](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/files/page/files/travel-maggedon_0.pdf)).

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