

Support our Local Restaurants

BY CARRIE LEISHMAN

» As the Delaware restaurant and hospitality industry has been – and continues to be – the most disproportionately affected industry through the COVID-19 pandemic, our dedicated operators and industry workers continue to stay both resilient yet hopeful. Restaurants will stay standing and remain as the cornerstones of our communities through these times to feed our tireless frontline workers, to proudly cook for our vulnerable neighborhood elders, to cater your next holiday meal with family, and to safely welcome you in for dinner with open arms.

As a society now and more than ever, we need restaurants to stay open and thrive. The positive psychological and economic impact created by reopening restaurants in Delaware lifts us all up and creates the stability that our communities need. Restaurants and their employees shouldered the most devastating financial effects of this crisis – sending three out of four workers to unemployment – at a loss of nearly 30,000 jobs.

2020 was headed to be a pivotal year for our restaurants in Delaware, but instead, it was pivotal in other ways. The Delaware restaurant industry was projected to heavily evolve and reach \$2.2 billion in annual sales. Seven months into the pandemic, the restaurant industry faced an estimated more than \$850 million in losses, a number that is sure to

grow due to the winter restrictions.

Thankfully, it is the very nature of people in the hospitality industry to embrace the challenges dealt. As we prepare for an unprecedented future (with a lot of hesitation and just a splash of fear), we are certain that these

We now see restaurants across the nation implementing ‘socially distant’ greenhouses to ensure safety for their outdoor dining experience. Tech savvy restaurateurs are now able to explore eco-friendly options to limit costs, such as using digital QR codes in



obstacles allowed our industry to advance overnight – implementing quick solutions that may have taken years of organic transition under normal circumstances. Trolley Square, Newark, and downtown Wilmington promptly shifted focus and allowed for a safe and vibrant alternative with on-street dining campaigns. Streets were shut down, alfresco dining tables were added, and live music united outdoor diners and community supporters.

place of disposable or reusable menus, and allowing diners to pay on mobile devices, without contact or paper receipts. Prior to COVID-19, one out of 20 orders were done digitally. Now, one out of five orders are digital. Food is now extremely accessible and allows vulnerable or hesitant civilians the option for contactless delivery/curbside pickup. COVID-19 allowed our operators a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to innovate and

emerge in ways they may have never had the occasion or time to consider before.

The Delaware restaurant industry's commitment to continuously give back and do right by their neighbors, communities, and people who come through their doors is what humbles us to keep advocating and shifting in this 'never normal.'

As we enter 2021, there are an abundance of "what if's?," left unanswered. We choose to stay optimistic that there will be beneficial changes to come from 2020's challenges – and that our restaurateurs and operators will continue to fight, to conquer and to rise above these adversities.

What we know for certain is that we'll continue to work tirelessly to help ensure the longevity of your favorite family-owned neighborhood pizzerias, the coffee and bagel shop you're not sure how you'd get by without, the phenomenal woman-owned corner bakery, your favorite go-to bistro perfect for any celebration, and for our entire beloved community of restaurant owners that support a workforce of over 49,000 Delawareans. As we move forward, now is the time for our communities to come together to embrace change, learn, evolve, and unite in helping to support and save our local restaurants.



Carrie Leishman is the president & CEO of the Delaware Restaurant Association.

Join the Conversation, Join a State Chamber Committee

BY TYLER MICIK

»» Advocating for Delaware's business community – YOU! To the State Chamber this is more than just a phrase. It's our mission. But in order to be successful in that mission we need to hear from you. Every member large or small has a voice, and our voice is stronger together. Our committees are your opportunity to be heard, learn about policies and issues that affect you, play an active role in shaping legislation, and to connect with other industry leaders.

In 2021, the State Chamber will be expanding and reengaging our nine committees. Our committees serve as the State Chamber's policy incubator and idea generator. To generate great ideas, we need active volunteers – you. That's why we have and are working to increase diversity and participation across the state on our committees.

The Ready in 6 Initiative is proof that ideas are born and progress emanates when great minds meet to discuss the issues affecting their businesses. That's the task our committees are faced with in 2021. To be proactive and not just reactive. To talk not only about current policies but to also discover and identify the hidden day-to-day problems your businesses are facing on a variety of topics such as hiring/retraining, workforce development, health care, the environment, and taxes to name a few.

Also new in 2021, will be the addition of our technology committee.

It goes without saying but technology has become increasingly important and is vital to the way we live and work. The technology committee will focus on issues such as data privacy/security, IT training/development, and automation.

In addition to greater diversity and participation, our goal is to give our members a more significant voice and greater communication. This begins by having regularly scheduled meetings as well as redesigning the committees' section on our website. Our priority is you and our mission, to lead the conversation, generate new ideas and create change that benefits you, our members and your employees.

Exciting things are happening within our committees as we begin 2021. Join the conversation by participating on a State Chamber committee.

To get involved, contact Tyler Micik at tmicik@dsc.com.

Committees under the Delaware State Chamber:

- Employer Advocacy & Education
- Environmental
- Health Care
- Infrastructure & Transportation
- Joint Military Affairs
- Small Business Alliance
- Tax
- Technology
- Delaware Young Professionals Network