

The Downtown Alpena COVID-19 Collective Diary Project

Submissions in all forms (written, video, photographic, etc.) accepted at downtownalpenami@gmail.com

In these unprecedented times, the Alpena DDA would like to collect and share your stories as members of our downtown community in the Downtown Alpena COVID-19 Collective Diary Project. We are asking you to record and submit your perspectives and experiences as business owners, downtown employees, downtown residents, leaders/members of nonprofit organizations, etc. to the DDA. All submissions will be presented on the DDA's social media pages and will then be compiled and donated to the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library Special Collections Department as a part of their COVID-19 Diary Project. The goal of this collective diary project is to share the stories of our downtown community members with current and future generations. *Please note that by submitting your diary entry in any form to the Alpena DDA you understand that ownership of all submissions will be transferred to the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library Special Collections Department when the collection is donated to them.*

The purpose of this project is to:

- Connect with potential customers and the greater community as a whole so people can see and understand the experiences and reality business owners are facing at this time
- Keep a record of the stories and experiences of downtown community members to provide history and context for future generations
- Support the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library Special Collections Department in their effort to record how COVID-19 has impacted our community

Documenting the perspectives and experiences of our community at this time is critical for future generations and to provide context to current and future community leaders and downtown business owners when decisions are being made. We want to hear your stories as not only members of the downtown community, but also what it's like owning a business and being a parent, or a board member of a nonprofit, or any other identities you may hold. .

You can read a summary of The Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library is starting a COVID-19 Diary Project below.

“In hopes of sharing peoples' stories with current and future generations, the Special Collections Department, of the Alpena County Library, invites you to keep a diary or other forms of self-expression of living during the COVID-19 epidemic in Northeast Michigan. Most forms of expression are encouraged, diarists may type or write by hand, transcribe news, draw, write poems, gather stories from family and so forth. No stress needs to be placed on proper grammar or style. The emphasis is on personal-expression and a willingness to be a commentator.

Events are changing by the day. Start writing now, these experiences are specific to you, your family, and our communities. ”

We will be collecting videos, written testimony, photographs and other documentation from business owners and leaders of downtown organizations to create a collective record of downtown experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can submit your diary in whatever format you choose to Kingsli Kraft at downtownalpenami@gmail.com, or you can drop off

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handwritten diaries, letters, testimonies to the DDA when the shelter-in-place orders are lifted.

In your submission please include:

- Your name (*optional*)
- The name of the business you own or the organization you represent (*optional, although please indicate type of business if submitting anonymously*)
- The date that you took the photographs, wrote your entries, vlogged, etc.
- Your diary in your chosen form
- *Please note if you are submitting anonymously, we will not share your entry on social media.*

Some questions you could answer:

- Is your business opened or closed right now?
- If your business is closed, how did you make that difficult decision? How has being closed impacted you? How has this experience changed your perspective as a small business owner? When you reopen, do you anticipate making any changes?
- If your business is open, how has your business had to adapt or change in these times?

Prompts provided by the Library of Michigan on what you can talk/write about:

- What did you do today (or this week)? How was that different than what you would do on a “normal” day/week?
- What changes have you personally experienced (physically, mentally, and/or emotionally) since this crisis began?
- What changes have you observed in your family, your friends, or your local community?
- Are you a student or a teacher? Where and how do you normally attend school? Has this changed? How’s that going? Or is there a student or teacher in your family? How is the crisis affecting their schooling situation?
- Do you typically work outside the home? What is your job normally like? What is it like right now? Are you still working, whether on-site or remotely? Why or why not? How’s that going?
- Are you practicing social distancing? Why or why not? What are you doing? How is this affecting your relationships? How do you stay in touch with family and friends?
- Has this crisis changed (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) any of your plans for day-to-day errands, travel, visiting, leisure activities, celebrations, religious activities, etc.?
- What do you think about the actions of government leaders in response to this crisis?
- What has been the most difficult thing for you personally about this crisis? Do you think there’s anything positive that may come from what’s happening?

Some examples of other ways you can document your experience are:

- **Keep a vlog** about how you’ve adapted your business or organization during these times, show the “behind-the-scenes” like what your at home set-up might look like, or what your store looks like with no customers, etc. If your business is temporarily closed, you could vlog about how that experience has impacted you, how you’re surviving with your business closed, and how life and business has and may in the future change for you.

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- **Start a journal** either handwritten or typed about your experiences as a small business owner, downtown employee, or member or leader of a downtown organization and how your job has changed or how your organization has adapted to continue to serve the community. You can answer the questions outlined above or answer the questions that the Special Collections Department has put together which you can find at this link.
- **Take Photos** take photos of your current working from home set up, or the behind-the-scenes inside your shop, like how you've switched to shipping or online orders, or anything else you think is important to document. General photos of downtown are appreciated as well. Share your perspective and views of the downtown landscape. (if you choose this route, please make sure to include a document with captions for each of your photos!)
- **Create artwork** paint, sketch, collage, draw or share your perspective in some other artistic way.