

Chaffee's Got Heart Community Spotlight: Café Dawn

The Chaffee's Got Heart Committee is extremely proud of local businesses and individuals that have gone above and beyond by doing extraordinary things during these uncertain times.

From innovating ways to thrive despite trying circumstances to showering struggling members of our community with generosity to prioritizing the health and safety of our most vulnerable, these businesses and individuals, who have been nominated for this honor by fellow community members, have shown what it really means when we say: **Chaffee's Got HEART.**

Today, we sat down with entrepreneur, barista and coffee connoisseur, **Phillip Benningfield, who co-owns and operates Café Dawn with wife Dawn Heigle,** to learn how the pandemic changed things at their community-minded, environmentally conscious coffee shop.



How did COVID cause you to innovate or change the way you do business?

As a restaurant, we already take safety and health quite seriously so COVID just caused us to up our "serious factor." Fortunately, we have one of those businesses that stayed open the whole time, but at the beginning, when people were really afraid and staying at home, we only allowed take out and even did some delivery for a couple months. When things started to re-open and we could again allow seating, we continually monitored it to be sure that our seating remained safe; it was a constant fluctuation between allowing it and keeping the level of exposure as low as possible. More recently, we have added heaters so people can stay comfortable outside.

Why did you decide to go above & beyond to contribute to our community?

Because we care about our community. We give a damn about the people that come into our business. Of course, we want to give them great coffee, but more than that, we want to give them a safe environment. And in turn, we expect them to be respectful of our safety measures so we can stay open.

We're also motivated because of our commitment to our employees. My wife (Dawn) loses sleep over this all the time. If we are safer, we are not sick, we are always open and our team stays employed.

Where do you see examples of the idea that ‘Chaffee’s Got Heart’?

The best example is the way so many of our businesses have approached this. Innovating to provide services and take care of those who are sick or can’t get out. The effort and patience businesses have shown to make changes that protect their customers and employees – that to me shows our county has heart.

What’s your biggest takeaway from 2020?

Love. Family. Empathy for others. These are the important things and what we need more of. It’s important as a business to put these first, to be willing to make a lot of changes, to stick to your guns and be as safe as possible.

Cool Tidbits:

Look Before You Drink! Café Dawn baristas are extensively trained to properly extract espresso, steam milk and create latte art so be sure to check out the work of art in your cup before diving in to your delicious drink.

If you’ve taken the [Chaffee’s Got Heart Pledge](#) and received [a free Discovery Pass](#) as a result, Café Dawn offers \$5 off a Survival Kit, which includes 6 bagels and a bag of delicious coffee.

Tight on time or staying extra safe? Call ahead (719-539-5105) for pick up. For the latest menu and hours: <https://www.facebook.com/cafedawn>

Stories of Chaffee County individuals and businesses rising to the challenge abound.

We will be shining a light on those doing extraordinary things for the community throughout the upcoming months. Visit our websites ([Chaffee’s Got Heart](#) or [CCPH](#)) or follow us on [Facebook \(@COVID19ChaffeeCounty\)](#) to see more.

Know a potential candidate, or are you one yourself? Send nomination ideas to: health@chaffeecounty.org.