

Chaffee's Got Heart Community Spotlight: Howl Mercantile & Coffee

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 Salida's **Kimi Uno, owner of Howl Mercantile & Coffee**, to find out how the pandemic changed operations at this experiential retail environment offering small batch artisanal goods and a home to an intersectional creative community.

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

In the 4 years since we opened, we've been building our Instagram platform so by the time COVID hit, we had a wide, loyal customer base that wasn't only in Salida. When we were closed for 45 days in the beginning, we relied on those customers. This meant working hard on our website, adding photography and content, and implementing a new online ordering system so people could order from afar/the safety of their homes. Once we reopened in May, we kept doing online, but also shifted to systems that allowed us to handle as many customers outside as possible. We set up an outdoor pay, and offered pre-ordering, sidewalk pick-up, and delivery. All these options were extremely helpful for sales, especially in December, when we actually ended up breaking our all-time sales record!

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

On March 16, we were one of the first businesses to close. We had been in Denver that weekend and were amazed how many people were coming up to the mountains despite the pandemic. We knew that by remaining open, there would be a reason for people to be out and about



spreading the virus, and we wanted to help our community flatten the curve to keep pressure off the hospital and health care system. Keeping our staff safe was also at the forefront of mind, as was instilling a sense of respect toward people who work in the service industry.

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

I’ve seen it in so many of our local businesses, like restaurants innovating to get customers outside and implementing online ordering. There are some that do such a good job, like Moonlight, who accommodates customers in such a safe way that you can tell they care. It’s obvious there are some businesses that really care about our community and others that don’t.

What’s your biggest takeaway from 2020?

This is something I’ve always lived by that got reinforced this year: you’re only as strong as the people you surround yourself with. Having staff that value caring for our community and are willing to follow through with the expectations that I’ve set to keep them—and the community—safe has made all the difference. My staff matter and we should treat all members of the service industry with respect and a sense of gratitude.

Cool Tidbits:

Kimi prides herself on carrying products she believes in and cultivating strong relationships with the people that make these products. “We envision our space as a marketplace for artists and makers trying to bypass modern day capitalism and financially support themselves through their passion and small businesses.”

Howl partners with the Ark Valley Equality Network to further the work of anti-racism in our community and to focus our energy into the education, healing, and fundraising that the community will need to ensure Salida is fair, equal, and welcoming to all people.

Learn more at their website: howlmercantile.com or on Instagram [@howlmercantile](https://www.instagram.com/howlmercantile).

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.