

Newrizons FCU worked with a beloved local burger spot to keep employees paid and customers coming.

The months of March and April were blur – a slog of long days and sleepless nights. Stacey Bonell worried about her husband, Brady, with his compromised immune system.

She worried about herself, too, struggling to manage her multiple sclerosis. She needed to stay healthy enough to work.

And she was distressed about her dedicated employees' livelihoods – so many of them had committed a decade, or even longer, to her business, The Grizzly Den, a beloved local burger spot in Hoquiam, Washington. COVID-19 had, like for so many business owners, turned Bonell's life upside down.

She was spending many hours each day, masked, behind a hot grill. Sometimes it got so hard to breathe, she'd go outside for gulps of fresh air. The heat, she said, makes the MS harder to manage.

It felt bleak, even hopeless at times. Then, in late April, she got a call from Ynette Gibbs, CEO of Newrizons Federal Credit Union.

Bonell was driving home from a doctor's appointment. Gibbs told her to pull over. She had some news – her SBA Paycheck Protection Program loan had gone through. A lifeline of just over \$40,000 would be coming soon.

It was truly a miracle, Bonell said. It meant the difference between layoffs and keeping her team of 13 paid and cared for. Those team members had worked so hard to make the business what it is today – a spot known for its homemade sauces and shakes, hand-cut fries, and specialty burgers.

"They prep everything – 200 pounds of potatoes a day, washing, blanching, cutting ... mixing 100 pounds of meat by hand," she said.

It's hard work, and the customers appreciate the high-quality food. They've been ordering for takeout and delivery every day, and Bonell couldn't be more grateful. But covering the payroll was keeping her up at night. Despite the orders, it wasn't enough. The loan will make all the difference, she said.

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Bonell cares about her people and her community. Family comes first – work second, she said. And as a local business owner, it's important to give back. Since buying the business in 2000, she's made it a point to support other organizations.

"It feels really good to be part of your community," she said. "It's an important part of running a local business."

Gibbs passionately shares that sentiment. Getting loans to the small, Main Street businesses that need them most is critical to supporting the local economy, she said. Since the Paycheck Protection Program was launched, Newrizons has helped several local businesses obtain loans – some who are members, some who weren't and are now converts to the Credit Union Difference. So far, the credit union has helped secure over \$500,000 in small-business loans.

Gibbs has made it a point to call the local business owners to deliver the happy news.

"Those calls were met with tears and cheers," Gibbs said. "We are always here for members. Not only during this time, but every time. This is what credit unions do – not because of a pandemic, but because this is who we are."



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