

## ***For the Bellingham Cider Company, owned by first responders, the PPP loan was a lifeline.***

April 21, 2020

Washington's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" executive order, issued in response to COVID-19, forced businesses statewide to close. To offset the financial impacts, many business owners have turned to their credit unions for solutions, including the Bellingham Cider Company, a small-batch cider producer and restaurant.



The owners, Bryce Hamilton and Josh Serface, are paramedics, trained to save lives. During the pandemic, they made it a priority to also save their employees' jobs as well as their customers' food cravings.

Hamilton and Serface called their credit union, WECU, and began the process of obtaining a Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan so they'd be able to pay staff. They worked with the SBA to get a six-month forbearance on the business loan that had helped them start their business, and their landlord offered them substantial temporary rent reduction.

"We did not have the ability to shut down and float," said Hamilton. "We would have had to shut down forever if not for the assistance."

WECU worked diligently to get the PPP loan approved, and it was funded April 17.

Bellingham Cider Company is back in business, and most of the full-time employees are on the payroll. The takeout menu includes local favorites such as chicken and waffles, cider-brined family-style chicken dinners, kale Caesar salads, and more. Hamilton and Serface put a great deal of thought into a safe take-out option and determined that curbside pick-up was the best option. Watch this video to see all of the steps they are taking to protect their employees, suppliers, and customers.

"WECU has been there for us every step of the way, from our opening to this crisis," said Hamilton.

WECU's team helped 19 other small business to obtain PPP loans before the first round of funding ran out in mid-April. The second round of PPP funding opened on Monday.

"Doing whatever we can to help small businesses survive this crisis is in alignment with the credit union philosophy of 'People Helping People,'" said Jennifer Kutcher, President and CEO of WECU. "We hope that this program, along with our other COVID-19 relief efforts, will help our local small businesses get through this very stressful time."

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