

Monday, June 8, 2020



Stories of Triumph

Brought to you by |
Business Development Board of Martin County

"All humans are entrepreneurs not because they should start companies but because the will to create is encoded in human DNA."
--Reid Hoffman

Leagues of their own **Crediting loyalist with getting them through shutdown, Jensen Beach Bowl celebrates recent reopening**

JENSEN BEACH—Few would blame Nicole Sprague if she suddenly rushed the bar area, seized the microphone and belted out that longstanding karaoke mainstay, Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive."

In fact, the applause would likely be thunderous.

That's less commentary on her singing ability and more testament to the business survival skills of her and her parents, Jes and Michelle Sprague. Last Friday, the owners of Jensen Beach Bowl celebrated the state's entry into phase 2, which allowed bowling alleys (and movie theaters) to open at 50-percent capacity.

"Thank God," Nicole says. "Now we're open, open."

In recent weeks, the business—which was set to celebrate its 25th anniversary in March—languished under a reopening status that never clearly addressed capacity at bowling alleys. The bar was closed. Cancellation of summer programs and field trips foreclosed a relied-upon revenue stream. Birthday and corporate parties remained off-limits.

To stay afloat, the family attained the Payment Protection Plan for their nine employees. As uncertainty lingered, Nicole appeared before the Martin County Commission in May seeking answers on how bowling alleys—entertainment venues and in their case fitted with a restaurant and bar—categorized to comply with reopening requirements. The commission sent a letter to the governor seeking clarity.



"We've been committed to following the governor's reopening orders so we can get our economy back up in a safe, smart fashion and bowling alleys seem to fall through the cracks," says Harold Jenkins, chair of the Martin County Commission. "We tried to get them answers earlier, but fortunately they've now gotten clarity from the top. I wish them the best in getting going again."

Jes and Michelle worked for six years at Fort Pierce Bowl before starting Jensen Beach Bowl in 1995. Smart budgeting helped them weather the virus restrictions. Fortunately, the loyalty of die-hard league players carried them through the limited reopening.

"We've been OK because we have the league people," says Jes. "We're enjoying their company and they're happy to be here."

Grateful for the league players, Nicole is mindful of so many other entertainment venues, citing Pinspiration Stuart, RUSH Jensen Beach Trampoline Park, Chuck E. Cheese as examples, that lack such an *official* faithful following.

"They'll need huge community support right now," she says, "especially the mom-and-pop ones."

With the broader reopening, Jensen Beach Bowl is "taking extra steps," says Nicole, to ensure the comfort level of its customers, including ample spacing between bowlers, as 50 percent of its current capacity is 300.

Blazer Blowing and karaoke is back as customer favorites and the owners are offering a 25th anniversary special—\$25 for a family of four to bowl, including shoes, plus a large fry and pitcher of soda—in hopes of steadily attracting their traditional broad crowd of league players, families and weekend regulars.

"I think the big thing for us is, how much is it going to be better after the summer?" says Jes. "Bowling is not something you have to have in your life."

Perhaps, but for many, any more time apart from good pals and a favored past-time is more than they care to ... spare.

Small (Business) but Mighty



The Business Development Board of Martin County is showcasing these inspiring efforts of local business leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs in a reoccurring feature called "Stories of Triumph."

If you or someone you know is using their business to do something innovative and inspiring to help our community through this crisis, please [email](#) me so we can share their Story of Triumph.

Joan

Joan K. Goodrich
Executive Director
Business Development Board of Martin County



Martin County | Distinctive. By Design.

The Business Development Board of Martin County, a public-private partnership for economic development, is dedicated to championing and strengthening Martin County's economy. The team provides complimentary site selection assistance, business assistance, entrepreneur support, business intelligence and market research, community connections and workforce development programs. To learn more, visit www.bdbmc.org or call 772.221.1380.