

April 2020

### **The First Half of March**

We started March full of hope and promise! We opened the new Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center with thirty-three artisans in our Artisan Gift Shop, great attendance, and strong sales. We opened The Marketplace on March 14 with rainy weather, yet again strong sales and every available vendor space rented and full. Eleven businesses were either relocating on Main Street or opening on Main Street. Good times, exciting times were ahead.

### **The Second Half of March**

Then, a microscopic virus traveled aboard travelers from China across the oceans and entered our nation like a wrecking ball! The second half of March saw the beginning of a global pandemic that is carrying with it global economic devastation.

Governor Hutchinson has ordered all public venues, including our museum, closed until at least mid to late April. All the models are predicting the pandemic will not peak in Arkansas until May or June, which means we may remain closed until July or August. We are certainly praying for a miracle and hoping for the optimism we saw at the beginning of March, but we are preparing for the reality of a far different scenario.

In order to preserve our long-term success, we were forced to lay off all of our employees. We have rehired our executive director on a partial, emergency contract. Gloria is following the guidance of the CDC while also maintaining our operations.

While we are closed, we have partnered with Yelcot to offer free WiFi to local families helping their children with their school work, businesses and community members by making Main Street a hotspot. We have been helping local small businesses complete necessary paperwork, comply with regulations, and applying for small business loans and grants. We have also suspended rental fees and loan payments from three small businesses (including two restaurants) that have business relationships with us. Our goal is to have them open when this crisis is over. And, we are working to provide instructional videos to local students who were attending our weekly Adventures in Art & Science Program.

We will reopen, rehire our employees, grow our Main Street, and be better than ever! We appreciate your support in this very difficult time. May God bless our community, county, state and nation!

Respectfully submitted,

