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“Smyth Strong Fund” Become Grant Fund & Gives First Three Awards



The COVID-19 Crisis has had devastating effects on local and regional businesses. Last week, the Board of Supervisors took steps to ease that burden for local small businesses by setting aside CARES Act funds to assist them. These funds will be part of the Smyth Strong Program which will now provide grants to Smyth County small businesses. The Town of Chilhowie has also set aside CARES Act funds to join this program.

The Board of Supervisors and the Town of Chilhowie join the Smyth County Economic Development Authority, The Saltville Industrial Development Authority, and the Chamber of Commerce of Smyth County in implementing and funding this former loan program turned grant program.

“In a continuing effort to find relief for small businesses negatively impacted by the economic effects from COVID-19, the Smyth County Economic Development Authority appreciates the support of the Board of Supervisors in appropriating a portion of funds from the CARES Act for the creation of the Smyth Strong Grant Fund. This fund will replace the earlier loan fund. The Saltville IDA and Smyth County Chamber have been essential partners in creating the program. The EDA is hopeful that these grants will help small businesses remain viable through these difficult times,” said John McLean, EDA Chair.

Last week, the first three relief funds were awarded as loans to local businesses Eller Taxi, Saltville Golf Course and Critters, these will now become part of the grant program.

Eller Taxi is located in Chilhowie, Virginia and provides non-emergency medical transport. They have seen a 75% reduction in businesses and plan to use the funds to maintain their taxi fleet.

The Saltville Golf Course is located in Saltville, Virginia and has seen around an \$8,000 loss in revenue due to Covid closure. They will use the allocated funds to purchase a new mower the facility needs.

Critters is a pet supply store located in Marion, Virginia. She will use the loan to pay rent and bills, but will also be focusing on carrying gourmet products for her four-legged clients' owners a well.

“I am honored to be part of this group working to support Smyth County Small businesses,” said Sarah Gillespie, the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce of Smyth County. “To have so many local governments and people coming together to ensure our businesses can make it through this challenging time is inspiring. It’s a chance to say we see and appreciate you to our business owners.”

The new grant pool that has been established will provide grants in the amount of \$1,000-\$10,000 for small businesses in Smyth County.

The grant is open to businesses located throughout Smyth County, those who have received PPP or other funding and those who have not are eligible to apply. All applications must be received by September 25th to be considered for the initial round of funding. For more information or to apply for the fund please visit smythchamber.org or email Sarah Gillespie at sgillespie@smythchamber.org