

## Aaron Rodgers Small-Business COVID-19 Fund



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Eighty locally owned small businesses in Butte County will receive substantial financial help from the Aaron Rodgers Small-Business COVID-19 Fund at North Valley Community Foundation.

Those 80 restaurants and retail businesses will receive grants to help cover rent for, on average, three months or longer and/or other operation costs. The grants will total more than \$1 million.

Nine of the business owners were notified personally by Rodgers and NVCF President and CEO Alexa Benson-Valavanis in video calls. They include Kona's, Pueblito 2, AcaTaco, Great Harvest Bread Co., Naked Lounge, Cal Java Esplanade, The Bookstore and Smokin' Mo's -- all in Chico -- as well as Nic's Restaurant in Paradise.

"Small, locally owned businesses are the heart and soul of a community," said Rodgers. "In the applications and the videos, it was heart-wrenching to hear about all the obstacles facing restaurants and retail establishments. So many of them are struggling just to stay in business but remain hopeful that there's an end to this."

The fund was started with a \$500,000 donation from Aaron Rodgers, the Chico native who is a three-time NFL Most Valuable Player. After seeing the need, Rodgers decided to increase his donation to \$1 million. It was augmented by \$100,000 from NVCF, an anonymous donation of \$100,000 and a generous donation from Sherry and Gary Holbrook of Holbrook's Clearance Center.

"Aaron is such an incredible person. He looked at everything, decided he wanted to do more, and doubled down on his original \$500,000 commitment," said Benson-Valavanis. "He is such a champion for his hometown."

He has been a valuable contributor to his hometown for years but especially stepped up after the Camp Fire ravaged Butte County in November 2018. He donated \$1 million to Camp Fire recovery through a fund at NVCF that eventually raised more than \$3 million as his fans and business partners like State Farm got on board. Rodgers was a founding member of the Butte Strong Fund along with NVCF and Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. The Butte Strong Fund and other Camp Fire funds have granted \$37 million for fire relief and recovery. Rodgers also has been involved in coronavirus and North Complex Fire relief efforts.

“Whether it’s wildfire recovery or trying to help in a pandemic, the role of philanthropy and a community foundation in any disaster is doing our part to stabilize the community. This does exactly that,” said Benson-Valavanis. “Butte County needs healthy businesses to preserve the fabric of our community, and fortunately Aaron and our other donors recognize that.”

NVCF has mobilized more than \$2.2 million in grants for coronavirus relief through various funds.

Restaurants and retail businesses with 20 or fewer full-time equivalent employees could apply for help through the Aaron Rodgers Small-Business COVID-19 Fund. Businesses from throughout the county are represented in the grants.

Here are the 80 businesses that applied for and received a grant:

Nic’s Restaurant  
Great Harvest Bread Co.  
Sin of Cortez  
Crush  
Papacito's Cantina  
Broadway Heights  
Farmers Skillet  
Pueblito 2  
Happy Day Restaurant  
Daycamp Coffee  
Cafe Coda  
Kalico Kitchen Inc  
Grande Burger  
Gridley Grill & Crab Shack  
Campus Bicycles  
Nor Cal Brewing Company  
Smokin Mo's BBQ  
Momona  
Pita Pit  
Big Chico Burger  
Sicilian Cafe  
Kinders Meat Deli BBQ  
Om Foods  
La Cocina Economica  
Acataco #1  
Park Avenue Pub  
Bacio Chico  
Bidwell Perk  
Kona's  
Aonami Sustainable Sushi  
British Bulldog Brewery aka The Allies Pub  
Toni's Cafe  
PB&J Boutique  
Brock Enterprises  
Sounds by Dave  
Thai Basil  
A&J Party Center  
Apollo Music and Arts

3 Seas  
Sipho's Jamaica restaurant  
Noodle House  
Sweet Chico Confections  
Wheeler Ranch and Feed  
The Bookstore  
The Watchman  
Kirk's Jewelry  
Naked Lounge  
Tender Loving Coffee  
ATK Lighting and Electric  
Town and Country Liquor and Video  
Garibaldi's Catering  
Cal Java Coffee Esplanade  
Chico Creek Coffee  
My Oven's Meals  
Gold Flake Saloon & Cafe  
Awards Company  
Zot's Hot Dogs and Deli  
Everyday Vietnamese Cuisine  
Carla May's New & Used  
Apple Blossom Baby  
Helping Hands United Incorporated  
Gridley Auto Wholesale  
Artist of River Town Studio at the Brushstrokes Gallery  
Bakers Birkenstock  
Chico Chamangos  
The Black Kettle  
Bryan's Bricks  
Three BlackBirds Boutique  
Gnarly Deli  
Finders Keepers Home Consignment  
A Beautiful Life Furnishings  
Chatterbox Cafe  
Green Paradise Deli Cafe on Wheels  
Lovely Layers Cakery  
Fiesta Taco  
Bird Street Vendors  
Bea's Back Porch  
Thistle & Stitch  
Mama Sattva  
Deb's Scones & Cones