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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