

JEREMY SPENGE MAN
BASIL'S RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA

In 1998 Jeremy Spengeman moved from the Outer Banks to Greenville to help open Basil's Restaurant & Pizzeria. One of his first days in town was the day Basil's building foundation was laid. And for the last 21 years he has been a fixture in the Greenville restaurant community, working his way up to owning the restaurant outright himself.



Since COVID-19 precautions and regulations upended the day-to-day at Basils, Spengeman has increasingly relied on this community of fellow restaurant owners and local customers to figure out how to make it to tomorrow. "Everybody is feeling it in their pockets. I don't think there is anybody that is not affected," says Spengeman. "As bad as the circumstances are that we're in right now, it could be worse. But it's also bringing people together, at least here in Greenville."



Spengeman is one of many North Carolina small-business owners who have received a loan through the NC COVID-19 Rapid Recovery Loan program. NC Rapid Recovery is a statewide consortium of partners—including the Golden LEAF Foundation, the NC Rural Center, and currently seven nonprofit lenders—working across the state to support small-business owners struggling with the economic impact of COVID-19.

One way that Spengeman has seen the people of Greenville rally to support business like his was the creation of a public Facebook group highlighting the restaurants in Greenville offering delivery and takeout. The group, only created back in March, now includes more than 15,000 members.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



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“There are some local restaurants that probably are doing better now than ever would have done before had COVID-19 not happened just because of this one Facebook page, which made more people aware of these businesses,” says Spengeman. “And truly, the community at-large was interested in helping the restaurants succeed.”

At Basil’s, Spengeman shifted focus to curbside dining along with making his restaurant as COVID-safe as possible. “We followed the governor’s mandates to the letter,” says Spengeman. “I spend more than \$100 a week just on disinfectant to clean our tables after each customer—and that’s not an expense we had before.”

With loss of business and increased costs, Spengeman knew he needed help to keep his 50 employees on staff; and that’s where programs like Rapid Recovery have been a boon. “The most important thing to me was to continue to employ everybody, especially since I had been given the money to do so,” said Spengeman. “The most important commodity I have is my staff, so I needed to be able to keep them around.”

Since March, the only employees Basil’s lost were a few college students whose parents wanted them at home. Everyone else has kept their job.

“My business is not operating in a way that can continue forever. It’s a daily struggle to know if I’m gonna make it to tomorrow,” says Spengeman. “I’m not making any money and I’m down \$300,000 in sales this year. I’m not getting a paycheck. But at least I still have my people employed.”



Spengeman’s loan was administered by BEFCOR, one of the nonprofit Rapid Recovery lenders. To learn more about the NC COVID-19 Rapid Recovery Loan, visit www.ncrapidrecovery.org.