Matthew Tallarico believes that now is the time to "double down on the things that make us feel good," and he has the hemp-derived products to do just that.

The owner of Your CBD Store at 1220 Ulster Ave. in Kingston is putting out all the stops to make sure his customers get what they need, even with the challenges of conducting business amid a global pandemic. "Lack of sleep and stress has been the new normal," Tallarico said. "People are worried about their jobs, their careers, their livelihoods and seeing their family. It's obviously a stressful time."

"At the beginning, people were exactly unsure of what to do, but now, many are finding their way around, and they are looking for a healthy lifestyle." Even with the government-mandated shelter-in-place orders, Tallarico has been able to meet needs by offering phone consultations, educational Facebook videos, curbside pick-up and four, home-delivery orders.

He took it a step further in late April by opening a drive-thru for the expanded convenience of his customers. Now, they could get out of the house, go for a drive and pick up their favorite products, including hemp-oil infusions, water soluble, edibles like candy or peach rings and topical creams for pain.

Tallarico said his business just opened about six weeks ago and having the Chamber by his side has been a tremendous comfort. "Especially in the beginning, the information was moving so fast that nobody knew what was going on with things like loans or who was considering an essential business. It was hard to get a straight answer," Tallarico said.

"I make our T-shirts to support the community and help our ecosystem whole, and it is working out well," Tallarico said. "When we were looking at what we could do to help, we thought we could do a charity T-shirt to help support the community and keep our ecosystem whole, and it is working out well."

Addotta said he was "insurmountable" to be able to check in with Chamber President Ward Tallard and Joel Davis, the chamber's director of membership.

"It was almost like a counsel for how should it be handled. And then they told me how to set up the Chamber and told me things they were supporting all the other businesses. These are the things that made the Chamber more than ever. As I started the business, I met with the Chamber, and it's one of the best decisions we've ever made. They're all terrific people." Alex Cabrera, owner of Mohonk Landscaping and Turf Management, also echoed that.

"The Chamber is definitely a great resource to turn to. It's not about advice on financial matters, but it's about being there for small business owners to socialize and to get things done, and it is a great morale booster. I've made. They're all exceptional people."

"I owe her a big thank you for doing everything from being in the Chamber to use her reputation to refer me to different business prospects. She has also been a fantastic person. She was quick to get to know and interact with," he said.

Cabrera added that when he recently attended a Networking Mixer or Chamber Business Card Exchange, he did view the new�eetings to get to know and interact with," he said.

The "New York Strong" T-shirt has been in demand in cities as far away as Atlanta and Los Angeles, Addotta said. Proceeds go to Project Resilience, a funding program run by Ulster County government and administered by the United Way of Ulster County.

"I think they've done an amazing job gathering information and funneling it to the members who need to know what resources are available to us. We're glad we got involved," he said. Melissa Brown and Brittany Morton, the new owners of Monkey Joe Roasting Co., agreed. They are counting the days until they can welcome friends back to savor their java "at a super-similar structure at 47th Broadway in Kingston."

Until then, they've been adapting to the new normal by posting specials to the Chamber's recently launched Facebook pages, Uber Eats and Eateries United and Ulster Small Businesses Unite.

"There are days now, and when you aren't active in the business, you don't feel like you're doing anything, and though the governor is making sure there's a business here for everyone to keep the doors open and the lights on, and though there are active policies in place, they have to be sure of what to do, but now, many are feeling cooped up, and they are looking for a healthy lifestyle."}

"I'm so glad I joined and happy to know they are helping businesses make it through and we that there's a new end in sight," he said.

"Especially in the beginning, the information was moving so fast that nobody knew what was going on with things like loans or who was considered an essential business. It was hard to get a straight answer," Tallarico said.

"I turn 200 percent to the Chamber for all the information I've made. They're all exceptional people."
The only things missing at the Chamber’s first “Virtual YouTube Live” was the scrambled eggs and orange juice.

Just the same, the Chamber put an off-screen punch job that included a federal COVID-19 relief options for small businesses and plans to resume to local economy in three stages. Hundreds of viewers watched the event Live from the Ulster Media Creative Board studies and more than 2,500 watched the event by the next day. There is a link on the chamber website for anyone who missed the live stream.

The breakfast was produced by Ellenhorn Creative Media. Due to social distancing rules, the online format was held in lieu of the Chamber’s monthly breakfast, which is typically held at the Best Western Plus in Kingston. It was sponsored by the Ulster County Association and Ellenhorn Creative Media.

In addition to featured speakers Steve Bulger, Senior Regional Director of the Small Business Administration, and Ulster County Executive Patrick Ryan, Ulster County’s health and safety community leaders incorporated live video feeds from different areas and departments that have transitioned to make personal protective equipment for the community.

Director of Membership Pat Ryan spent his time opening the wake with a public-health perspective. As of late April, more than 1,500 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 15 deaths in the county. On a bright note, he said fully 80 percent have recovered and the number of hospitalizations is down.

Ryan said he and Lisa Bulger, Marketing Director of County Economic Development, are leaving plans for an “economic resilience plan” consisting of three phases: Recover, reopen and rebuild.

“Recover is really that first step,” Ryan said. “Many families that have been affected are having a hard time. We have said, ‘How do we get them back on their feet and help address other critical services like food, shelter, mental health and child care recovery services?’

We are working on developing a business recovery support system to figure out how to get access to federally available funds. We’ve now rolled out the SBA loan and financial support programs and the New York State and Ulster County businesses,” he said.

The second phase to support local businesses includes sector-specific working groups,” that will focus on how to “responsibly get manufacturing, retail, hospitality and lodging up and running,” Ryan said.

“Each of these industries is going to have different parameters to get things going again.”

Realize, the third phase, aims to resume and make the local economy local even better than it was pre-COVID-19, Ryan added.

Bulger, who also addressed the breakfast remotely, gave an update on the second round of the Paycheck Protection Program authorizing another $350 billion in loans for small businesses to keep their employees working during the COVID-19 crisis.

Bulger said the average loan size this time around is $318,000, compared to $285,000 in the first round disbursed in early April. Loans will be forgiven if used for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent, utilities and other fixed obligations.

Since the second round rolled out on April 27, the SBA began accepting applications from participating lenders and is processing 12,000 applications per hour, he said. More than 7,400 businesses had already approved as of April 29.

“The majority of the loans we’re seeing here go to very small businesses—certainly smaller than in round one, so we’re pleased to see that,” Bulger said.

Bulger said the program is designed to get money into the hands of employees at small businesses.

“The intent of Congress with this program is to keep the paycheck flowing so that during the shutdown, our small business employees are getting paid and they have jobs to go back to at the end of this. We have over 5,000,000 fabric face masks since late March at a pace of about 300,000 a month. We want to get these to our healthcare workers in the community at the fastest pace possible. In addition, the SBA has provided $34 billion in loan guarantees through the Paycheck Protection Program, which has made it possible for small businesses to keep their employees working during the pandemic. The majority of the loans have gone to businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

To further reduce the burden on small businesses, the SBA is offering, for a six-month period, picking up all the interest and principal payments on any outstanding loans.

There’s that’s really going to help these small businesses,” Bulger said. “It’s one last payment they have to worry about at this time.”

Bulger also highlighted three companies from three area companies that have transitioned to make personal protective equipment for the community. The breakfast wrapped up with virtual tours of three Ulster County companies that are meeting the need for personal-protective equipment: Alesha Sharman and Wayne Schaefer from the Ulster County-based Ulster Eateries United, a manufacturer of custom cookware; Maria Callelions and Tatiana from Community Products Inc. and others who are producing masks, face shields and plastic sheeting for their facilities.

Community Products has made thousands of masks, medical gowns, face shields and privacy screens for agencies like the Kingston Police Department, Essex Fire Department, Hudson River Food Alliance and Little Falls Hospital.

The Virtual Breakfast Meeting concluded with a re-session of the Chamber’s highly successful Ulster Eateries United Facebook Group, which already has close to 10,000 members after being launched just several weeks ago. Director of Membership Engagement Josh Davis, who administers the Group, told viewers that the Group is so popular because it allows consumers to post their daily specials so local businesses can post photos of their families enjoying the meals at home.

For information about the benefits of membership in the Ulster Chamber, go to UlsterChamber.org.