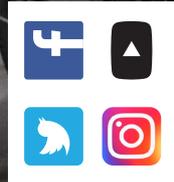


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SUMMER SNAPSHOT

In June, thousands of New Yorkers congregated in Foley Square to rally in support of racial equality and justice following the death of Minneapolis resident George Floyd. "It was peaceful," the Instagram photographer ([@casa_rodrigues_](#)), who captured the above image, explained to the Downtown Alliance, "and you could tell people were moved and wanted to convey a message."

DID YOU KNOW?...

The Downtown Alliance is handing out 100,000 masks to small businesses to help their workers keep safe as the district begins to reopen.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

DEAR NEIGHBOR



Lower Manhattan has been a stage for history for centuries, and these last few months have brought many profound changes to our corner of the world. As always, the people of Downtown have met unprecedented challenges with strength and resilience.

From the moment the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered businesses across our district, we've sought to do our part. The Downtown Alliance jumped into action to help our neighborhood recover. We started a rental assistance grant program to give immediate help to our essential small businesses that were feeling intense financial strain due to the pandemic. I also personally spoke before my former City Council colleagues in favor of a bill to cap the amount our restaurants have to pay to third-party delivery apps. The bill passed and was signed into law. Also, our annual Dine Around Downtown springtime food festival was repurposed to create Dine Around Downtown: Cooking At Home Edition, a web series that helped to highlight and support Lower Manhattan restaurants during the coronavirus shutdown.

While our community was staying at home, our communications team went into overdrive mode to keep people feeling connected. We spread helpful health and safety information to our residents, workers and business owners through our social media channels and newsletters.

We also initiated a new series to share the portraits and stories of Lower Manhattan's essential workers during the New York City pause that allowed us to put a face to the resilience of our neighborhood. Over the next few pages, I'm happy to share with you just a few of these portraits that document Lower Manhattan during the pandemic. (You can view all of them at blog.downtownny.com/tag/portraits.)

Finally, just as our district was preparing for phase one of reopening in June, racial justice marches following the death of Minneapolis resident George Floyd moved across the nation and through our streets. The demonstrations underscored the painful truth that this country has a long way to go when it comes to abolishing racism and establishing genuine equality, dignity and respect for all communities.

After these major events, as we all take part in shaping the future, I have no doubt that our neighborhood will once again come together to collaboratively build a more safe and fair city. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Jessica Lapin



Billy Koulmentas at George's New York (89 Greenwich Street)

PORTRAITS

The Diner That's Seen It All: George's During COVID

Billy Koulmentas grew up in the family business. He still remembers at 12 years old delivering burgers from his dad's diner George's (currently 89 Greenwich Street) to brokers at the New York Stock Exchange. Eventually, his father decided to throw him out. "Get out of the restaurant business!" — and I did," Koulmentas told the Downtown Alliance. "I got educated and went corporate."

But after September 11, Koulmentas came back. George, in his early 60s by then, nearly went bankrupt trying to rebuild. Miraculously the shop pulled through, and Billy's time away from the family business came in handy. He realized the menu needed an update to keep appealing to a changing landscape. "If somebody wanted a steak, going into a diner wasn't the case

anymore," he said. "If you wanted a chicken parm, you'd go into an Italian restaurant. So I streamlined

George's for what you'd go into a diner for." Cheeseburger deluxes, turkey clubs, eggs and brunch dishes filled the diner's menu pages.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, no experience, in the restaurant industry or out, could have prepared anyone for that.

Koulmentas could have stayed open even through the worst of the curve, but a phone call from an employee's mother, who was recovering from cancer, made him realize business had to be put on pause. "She called the store," Koulmentas said, "and was like, I'm scared for him to go to work, because if he gets something in the subway or if a customer gives it to him or something happens, I could die. That's when it hit home. I shut the store down immediately."

Over the past couple months, whenever Koulmentas would check on the shuttered diner, he found notes on the door, like, "Please open up!" and "When are you coming back?" In the first week of May, after being closed since March 20, Koumentas unlocked the doors for takeout and delivery. "There was more of a handle on what was going on," he said. "When the PPP money came in, that was one of the triggers. I went, You know what? Let's go!"

George's still isn't out of the woods ("I'm losing money; we're still not making it"), but Koulmentas can recall a number of major setbacks in recent history (let alone the diner's 70-year history) that nearly put them under. September 11 and Superstorm Sandy aside, he described "a major flood in the building" four years ago that shut down the restaurant for months. Still, that his family bought the building years ago helps a ton.

"If I had to pay \$50,000 a month rent I'd be out of business," he said. "We've been here forever. Without the support of the community, I would have been gone a long time ago."

Delivering Generosity And Tolerance (Even When It's Not Returned)



Kanruthai Makmuang in the kitchen at Aroy Dee (20 John Street)

When the Downtown Alliance chatted with Kanruthai Makmuang on May 18, she'd been working 25 days straight. Makmuang is co-owner of the Thai kitchen Aroy Dee (20 John Street), and she commutes to Lower Manhattan from Queens to make sure her business stays afloat, keeping the drunken noodles coming to neighborhood regulars.

"I ride the subway every day," Makmuang told the Downtown Alliance. "I protect myself a lot — I wear goggles. I have gloves. I have a mask. I have a hat." Makmuang took precautions early in March, before it became the norm to do so, and she witnessed a different side of New Yorkers as things started changing. "Not a lot of people were aware of this virus," she explained. "Not many of them protected themselves, and I got a lot of people looking at me weird and people yelling at me, you know?"

Her response? She sat quietly and just kept going. "It's terrible, but I have to deal with it," she said.

Thankfully, at work, Makmuang sees some friendlier faces. "I have a customer who comes in who couldn't find a mask, so I offered her a mask for every time she comes in," she said. "She's a regular customer, she's nice."

In addition to politely spreading the word about wearing face coverings, Makmuang is also trying to tell people about how much

more helpful it is for small businesses when you order directly from them, instead of a third-party site. "People can support us by calling in or going directly to our website," she said, "and we also offer a 10% discount if they use the code."

While providing for her customers, Makmuang shows her appreciation for those on the front lines: "I see fire trucks, and I run and bring them a Thai iced tea — they're so happy about it."

It's that spirit of generosity and tolerance that keeps her going. Hopefully people will increasingly show her the same.

'We're Here — Night, Day, Rain, Sleet, Snow, Heat, Pandemic'



Leon Davis of Con Ed in Lower Manhattan

During the last few months, more and more stories of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted New Yorkers have been told and retold. They form a shared history of how lives have changed during this unprecedented time (and we've been happy to help document some of them). Perhaps as interesting, though, are the lives that ran seamlessly alongside the pandemic, with their own independent shapes and trajectories.

"For me, luckily, my day hasn't changed," Leon Davis, who has worked at Con Edison for 21 years, told the Downtown Alliance. Not many people can say this about their lives during the pandemic, but Davis takes pride in keeping things running as smoothly as normal.

But while the day-to-day hasn't changed for Davis, his duties have expanded: He was just about to take on a new role at the company when the pandemic hit New York City. "I just joined Substation Operations," he said. "The effective date was supposed to be April 1, but then officially, due to COVID, I came over May 1. So it's only been a month and a half now in this current position."

So Davis has been learning the ins and outs of the new position all while the city was undergoing major changes. "I have two planners and eight supervisors, and each supervisor has a couple of substations that they're assigned to," he explained. "And we basically maintain the equipment within the substations to ensure that it's in great working order. So when an emergency comes, that equipment is working as soon as it needs to be."

Responding to sudden outages and emergencies are just part of the job for a Con Ed worker. Davis is used to being prepared for the unexpected and thinking on his feet to solve sudden problems — all so that things can go back to normal for the customer and lights can come back on.

"We believe that we are first-responders," he said. "We definitely have boots on the ground to ensure that continuity of service isn't an issue. So that's why we exist. I call it, like, the 'Men In Black' effect, right? We do what we can to ensure that the customer doesn't even notice what we're doing. It's seamless. That's why we come to work each day."

Of course, Davis and his team have had to take extra precautions when out in the field these days. "We definitely have to protect ourselves — practice social-distancing, ensure that we're wearing our masks, our gloves — so, as a group, as a company, we've done the utmost level of focus on our safety and ensuring that we ordered the materials that we need to perform our work," he said.

"But there is no pause in what we do," he added. "It's ingrained in us that when there's an emergency, we step up. We're definitely going to be here — night, day, rain, sleet, snow, heat, pandemic."



ALLIANCE UPDATES

From Giving Grants To Giving Free Rides, We're Here To Help

The Downtown Alliance is here to help the district as it continues on its path to recovering from the pandemic.

The Downtown Connection bus service, which is operated by the Alliance, has not missed a day through the pandemic shutdown. We've been providing transportation to some of our most vulnerable residents and allowing them to run essential errands.

The Alliance also launched the Small Business Rental Assistance Grant, funded by the Downtown Alliance with support from Brookfield Properties, Silverstein Properties and The Howard Hughes Corporation, to award a total of \$800,000 in grants to help Lower Manhattan's essential small businesses make rent during the COVID shutdown. To date, the grant has assisted over

60 small local businesses including Da Claudio Ristorante, West Bank Gourmet Deli, Terrace Fish & Chips, Trade Center Locksmith & Hardware, Kuu Ramen, Seaport Deli and Fidi Green Cleaners, among others.

The Alliance has also been keeping in touch with our residents, workers and business owners, updating a living restaurant list of eateries open for business, keeping a list of COVID-related resources and being in frequent contact through our newsletters with Downtowners, both residents and business owners alike. Be in touch with us via email at ContactUs@DowntownNY.com.

As we head into phase two of reopening, we're happy to see the neighborhood progressing, with more shops and restaurants opening their doors. You'll find sanitizing stations and social distancing signage throughout the neighborhood, measures that we hope will allow for safer and more comfortable travel along narrow passages, in public spaces and when entering/exiting the MTA stations in Lower Manhattan. Check our website (downtownny.com) for the latest updates.

Dine Around Downtown: Cooking At Home Edition

In a normal year, Dine Around Downtown would bring together nearly 50 restaurants to feed upwards of 15,000 attendees at Fosun's 28 Liberty Plaza. But this year, the festival had to pivot for a new format, so we came up with Dine Around Downtown: Cooking At Home Edition, a web series that is shining a spotlight on some of our favorite local spots to help restaurants through this tough time.

Hosted by award-winning chef Rocco DiSpirito, the series is featuring chefs from Lower Manhattan restaurants who cook up signature recipes and share tips for crafting everything from complex gastronomic delights to go-to comfort foods, starting with dishes from Delmonico's, Gnoccheria and Taim. Free to Zoom in, any additional donations are going to a good cause: either directly to the restaurant's employee relief funds or to a food security charity of the restaurant's choice.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, LMHQ has been a resource for the community, hosting virtual events and keeping track of jobs and gigs, government relief information and online education links. As the city begins to reopen, so will LMHQ. Visit lmhq.nyc for the latest updates. And tune into LMHQ's virtual programming at lmhq.nyc/attend-event.



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Explorer In Chief To Tell Story Of Downtown's Post-COVID Recovery



After sifting through hundreds of contest entries, the Downtown Alliance named Josh Katz the title of Explorer In Chief. Katz is a savvy street photographer who moved to the city in 2013 from his hometown of Herndon, Virginia, to attend New York University, and since graduating, the 23-year-old has been dedicated to amping up his photography skills and cultivating a sizable YouTube audience. Just after submitting his winning entry to the Explorer In Chief contest, Katz started documenting an emerging rooftop culture as the pandemic put the metropolis on pause. In light of the pandemic, the Alliance has revamped the Explorer In Chief assignment. In the future, Katz will be documenting our neighborhood as it starts down a path of recovery.



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SIX QUESTIONS



CO-OWNER TELLY LIBERATOS
(PICTURED ABOVE LEFT)

Cedar Local (25 Cedar Street) is usually a popular spot to knock back a few drinks after work. The dim lighting and modern ambiance provides an intimate alternative for people seeking non-pub vibes after clocking out for the day. But on March 14, the normally bustling bar closed for the citywide shutdown. A month into the shutdown, the Downtown Alliance spoke to co-owner Telly Liberatos about how he was doing during the New York pause and asked him for advice on how to bring happy hours home. (In June, Cedar Local reopened for takeout and delivery and is ready to serve you!)

As someone who is used to creating and participating in Lower Manhattan's lively spirit, what have been some of the things that have helped you stay positive while stuck at home?

Really reconnecting with family and friends, getting my home cooking on, and making mean cups of coffee! I added meditation to my self-care routine which has helped tremendously for staying positive. I also added daily walks and admiring all the history our neighborhood has. Architecturally it's phenomenal, and my mind

escapes to the great future that will be.

What's something you miss most about being at Cedar Local?

First and foremost, my team which over the past years (going to be six years July 18) and all my friends and locals that I have met which became a huge part of me through Cedar Local. I miss that the most because I saw and felt what a strong community does. Through Cedar Local I have made lifelong friendships, and I have seen people connect for the first time in what became fruitful relationships and endeavors.

What's your go-to drink when you're at home?

It all depends on what is for dinner and what music I am listening to. Right now, I am having a Johnny Walker Black with fresh peach juice served in a collins glass on the rocks.

For the rest of us who might not be quite as skilled in mixology, what are some accessible cocktails the layperson can easily make?

We love the 50:50 martini, which is just equal parts gin — Tanqueray 10 is my favorite — and dry vermouth with a dash of orange bitters. Stir it until it is nice and cold, about 10 seconds, strain into a chilled glass and garnish with a twist of lemon skin, an olive or even both if you are feeling crazy. Serve without ice and enjoy the crisp clean flavors.

What's the best drink to have for a Zoom happy hour and why?

Anything with Tequila! Tequila is an upper and makes for quite the story to tell the day after.

What should a home bar always have in stock?

Standard spirits like tequila, vodka and bourbon or whiskey. Bottles of bitters (especially Angostura). Have a club soda handy or a juice of choice, simple syrup. It's easy to make at home. A cocktail shaker and strainer, bottle opener and plenty of ice. Throw in a couple of red and white wines, and you are all set.



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