

BrooklineCAN Profiles Age-Friendly Businesses

During Covid 19

To serve customers safely during the Covid-19 pandemic, Brookline's Age-Friendly businesses have adopted special measures that protect both customers and employees. These safety measures benefit people regardless of age.

BrooklineCAN (Brookline Community Aging Network) is highlighting a few of these businesses that are helping us get through these trying times.

Currently, the BrooklineCAN Age-Friendly Business project lists 111 businesses throughout the town. If you own a business in Brookline and want to be listed as "Age-Friendly," or if you just want to see the list of Brookline's Age-Friendly businesses, visit the BrooklineCAN website (https://brooklinecan.org/age_friendly_business.html).

Two Brookline Age Friendly businesses, representing a wide range of establishments, are spotlighted below to describe their Covid-19 safety measures.

Eureka Puzzles Through Covid-19: Still In Business

Because of the unexpected onslaught of Covid-19, David Leschinsky was not allowed to have customers in his unique puzzle and game store. After nearly 16 years operating Eureka! Puzzles, David was forced to close his Coolidge Corner-based business to all in-store shopping completely in March.

Being creative and resourceful, David found solutions.

With his office staff working mostly from home, he was able to have a skeleton crew in the store receiving merchandise, shipping, and started a local delivery service to bring puzzles and other items directly to customers at home.

During the early days of the pandemic, many elders began working on jigsaw puzzles at home. Someone would purchase a puzzle, complete it, and then pass it on to others to enjoy, while receiving a different puzzle from a friend.

Because customers could not visit the store, Eureka sold online, and jigsaw puzzles, which could be delivered within 24 hours, were a big item. However, the virus had affected his sources of product and many manufacturers and suppliers were closed.

From his many years of experience, David had developed relationships with suppliers around the world. Although some suppliers had closed during the pandemic, David, because of his experience and connections, was able to augment his supply of unique and original puzzles.

Now, Eureka is open with limited hours. As more people are going out, David has added curbside pick-up and completely redesigned the arrangement of the store to make shopping easier.

He has modified the store set-up, removed large display pieces from retail space, and increased the width of aisles. The store has fewer items so that people can shop more safely and walk-through the store, keeping a safe distance from others. He also added plexi-glass shields to the check-out counter, added a touchless payment capability, and added numerous sanitizing stations.

Eureka has continued to find and bring in new and innovative puzzles and games for everyone!

Maruichi Food and Deli Opens in Coolidge Corner

Connecticut-based Maruichi launched its Harvard Street Food and Deli in early February 2020, just before the deadly Covid-19 virus arrived in Massachusetts. Despite its ominous start date, Maruichi looks to be thriving in Brookline.

According to store manager Josh Nakama, Maruichi had heard that Coolidge Corner might be a solid setting for its brand from Brookline travelers to its Hartford, CT, location. When the previous Harvard Street tenant, Gen Sou En, left with little notice, Maruichi arranged to take over the lease. Although not affiliated with Gen Sou En, Maruichi continues to carry its brand of Japanese tea, the sole location in America.

Josh credits much of Maruichi's success in Brookline to understanding what their demographic would like. "Previous restaurants at this location had business models that people didn't want," he says. "We offer products customers really want to take home."

Although Maruichi is not a restaurant, it does offer food, mostly "grab and go" items, including bubble tea, a popular Asian drink, plus tapioca, packaged noodles, and prepared foods, such as ramen, sushi, and bento boxes. The Maruichi Café, which was shut down for the Corona virus, has partially re-opened.

The Deli's biggest draw is its high quality products, such as meat and fish. "We don't sell anything I'm not proud to carry," said Nakama who adds they plan to expand the sit-down area as times calm down.

Nakama is looking to increase the store's audience, beyond its core Japanese visitors. People from all backgrounds visit, and Josh, while continuing to work with social distancing requirements, is making it easier for guests to use the store. He adds, "Maruichi is not just a grocery store. It's easy for people to relax, here". Maruichi's customer base includes people of all ages, from local kids looking for candy, to customers in their 90s who visit every day, sit down and read their papers in a well-lit resting place.

Although shoppers are mostly from the Coolidge Corner area, callers come from all over. Visitors come from as far as Worcester. Students drop in from Harvard and MIT. Other people, knowing they have certain products, which are easily in reach for people of all ages and abilities, come to check them out.

The store recently added English language cook books, and packets of descriptions, along with recipe cards, listing ingredients, and cooking instructions. Visitors, who drop in from the street, can find what they want.

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