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**REGAL PATEL, franchisee** / Pieology

### TAKING CARE OF YOUR OWN TOWN

**OWNING A PIZZA SHOP** is all about serving your community. So when the Pieology in Stamford, Conn., closed its dining room in the wake of COVID-19, its owners only got busier.

"We're not doctors or nurses, but we needed to do something," says Regal Patel, who owns the location with friends Nishant Patel and Sahil Patel (*pictured, from left*). "We have pizza, and we have food—let's keep our community fed."

The trio and their team (whom they managed to keep employed and busy with delivery and takeout orders) got to work assembling care packages of food and pizzas to distribute throughout the community and to the frontline workers at local hospitals. They started including a roll of toilet paper to deliver a laugh along with the food—and realized that their stock of supplies could be even more impactful than pie.

"It's always safety first at restaurants," Regal says. "So we contacted our glove supplier and were able to order and donate 6,000 pairs of gloves to a local hospital, and they were just like, 'Holy Jesus, that's a lot of gloves for one business to give!'"

With pizza sales down and their charitable efforts up, Patel and his co-owners are stretching their wallets thin. "We're doing this out of our own pocket, and there's no profit at the restaurant right now," he says.

But as they waited to reopen their dining room, they even doubled down with the brand and launched takeout at a new, second location that was originally put on pause as the pandemic spread. "We know that it will operate differently than restaurants of the past," Regal says. "But now is the time to adapt and create a new blueprint to serve."



**PATTY CLISHAM, franchisee** / Ductz

### MAINTAINING TRANSPARENCY—FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

**PATTY CLISHAM** purchased her Ductz franchise—which conducts HVAC restoration and air duct cleaning—in 2007. "And six months later, the economy went to crap," she says.

Looking back, she envies the clarity she had at that difficult time. "We could see where that crisis was coming from and why," Clisham says. "But now, this, this is an unknown adversary."

And for her business—one that requires sending employees into people's homes—COVID-19 is an adversary that has changed everything. Clisham used to be booked out for three weeks; now she's booking week to week. Two months into the pandemic and she'd already lost \$60,000 compared with 2019. And the jobs that are coming through require extra care.

"We're disinfecting tools, taking temperatures before a job, wearing masks, wiping down switch plates and door-knobs or anything that we touched," she says. "We have to make our customers comfortable and share that process with them."

Clisham has been transparent with her team, as well. She counts herself as one of the lucky business owners who received a Paycheck Protection Program loan (she says a good relationship with her bank helped her file for relief as soon as possible, and quickly) and was up front with employees about what the months ahead may look like.

"I sat my guys down and said, 'Look, we're not going to have a lot of work,'" she says. "But you're going to get paid, and I want you to stick with me through this, because when we come out of it, we'll be OK."

She knows a lot of other business owners can't say the same.

"We're going to make it through this *because* of the PPP money, I'll tell you that," she says. "I tend to have about three months' worth of payroll and emergency funds set away, but when you don't have any money coming in from jobs, that will go fast. I'm so thankful we got that relief."