

**Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**  
**Community Development**  
**Economic Development Services**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Jamie Rainbird, Manager, Economic Development Services  
**Date:** April 16, 2021  
**Subject:** Digital Main Street Grant 2.0 Program Update

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This report is for the information of Council.

**Background**

At the October 19, 2020 Council meeting, information was provided on the success of the Digital Main Street Grant 1.0 Program (DMSG) administered by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA). The OBIAA in partnership with the Province of Ontario launched this program to assist main street businesses with the adoption of technologies and provided grant opportunities to enable the digital transformation process.

The objectives of the DMSG are to:

- Provide main street business with resources, training and support for adoption of digital technologies;
- Provide opportunity for a collaborative partnership between existing Business Improvement Area's (BIA's), Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Small Business Centre's through the creation of a Centralized Project Partnership to form a citywide Digital Service Squad (DSS) to assist main street businesses within the community in executing their Digital Transformation Plan (DTP).

In the fall of 2020, Chatham-Kent Economic Development Services' was successful in obtaining a grant of \$95,000 from the OBIAA to bring on the Digital Main Street Service Squad 2.0 team.

**Comments**

Digital Service Squads are fundamental to Digital Main Street's design and success, with trained specialists who meet with small businesses at no cost, to help them

improve their online presence. The squads assist with a number of activities including developing a Google My Business profile, enhancing their social media presence and providing support of basic website and e-commerce set-ups. The \$95,000 in funding that was received from the OBIAA allowed the Municipality to hire three Digital Main Street Squad Members on a six-month contract basis.

Squads also assist qualified small businesses through the application process for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant, which includes an online assessment, online training modules and the development of a Digital Transformation Plan. The grant is available for businesses located within BIA borders and limited identified regions.

This 2.0 DMS program generated grants of \$2,500 each to 89 successful Chatham-Kent grant recipients (Appendix A) totaling \$222,500 in direct support to local businesses.

In addition to the successful applicants, 174 other Chatham-Kent small businesses were contacted, but for various reasons, chose not to apply to the program.

In the 1.0 DMS program completed in the summer of 2020, 51 Chatham-Kent main street businesses were successful in receiving a grant of \$2,500 totaling \$127,500 in funding.

To date, this very successful provincially funded DMS program has generated \$350,000 in financial support to Chatham-Kent businesses to create and enhance their digital presence.

### Testimonials

*“The Digital Main Street Program was presented to us by the Chatham-Kent Economic Development Team. Already having created an online presence, our company targeted the grant funding that was available via the DMS. The process for the Digital Transformation Grant as easy and very user-friendly. After being approved for the grant, we upgraded our e-commerce presence, which allowed us to grow our online sales exponentially. The teams at DMS and CKED were great in assisting us through the process.”*

Doug, Sons of Kent

*“The Digital Main Street program allowed us the opportunity to fast track ideas and thoughts we already had in mind. With the assistance of the Digital Main Street program, our Loaded 2 Go store which opened not to long after the first lockdown was able to move certain aspects of the business into a digital area that not only saved us time but people power. It allowed our team to be better spent in front of our customers as we tried and continue to try to build up the Loaded 2 Go name.”*

Josh Bueckert, Chilled Cork and Loaded 2 Go

*“I would like to thank the Digital Main Street Team. The grant has been very beneficial to my company; the ads that we were able to put on Facebook have definitely made a*

*difference to customers seeing our many items, specials and highlighted products. As well, we are now working on our website so we can take orders and payments right on the site. We were also able to update the company with new up-to-date equipment, which was badly needed. With COVID taking way out walk-in traffic, the grant could not have come at a better time.”*

Mark Authier, Authier Print

*“The Briar Patch Studio in Wheatley, Ontario was so fortunate to receive a grant under the Main Street Digital Program. This enabled us to take our business to a whole new level by increasing our online social presence. We were given guidance by CK Tech Connect; they also got our website up, and running. They have provided us with such valuable tools and marketing assistance also.*

*The Main Street Digital team also was so supportive in answering any questions we had and encouraging us to apply when we were unsure about it.*

*We were fortunate to receive a grant that enabled us to purchase equipment also, so when we were in lockdown, we could still function at the curbside level for our business. With our all in one point of sale, we can do transactions at our door, at our customer's vehicle or home.*

*Personal Protective Equipment was also crucial in reopening our door to our customers. A plexiglass shield to safely transact at our counter, masks, signs and hand sanitizers to ensure health and wellness to not only us, but our customers as well.*

*Without all these supports, we aren't sure where we would be today. Thank you again!”*

Tracey And Chantel Declerck, Briar Patch Studio

*“Cellar Door Wines would like to thank Main Street Media for the opportunity for us to benefit from their grant, to adapt or upgrade business's digital presence.*

*In these times of Covid-19 and our increasingly busy lifestyle, we have recognized our need to update our ways of doing business with a digital presence. We were introduced to the program when Irene, one of their representatives, who approached us in our business. She was charming, warm and professional. We were intimidated to proceed, as we are over 60 years of age and perceived that we were not going to catch on to it. Irene reassured us in such a warm and nonjudgmental way, that we proceeded to jump right in. She walked us through the process and spent as much time as we needed for us to finish our grant proposal and she was readily available for questions and stayed in close contact with us.*

*The program is well equipped with teaching tools that have a wealth of information in them. With technology moving so quickly, it changes the way we do business on a daily basis and with this program, it helps businesses to remain relevant and in turn increase productivity and sales. The grant provides a way financially as well as teaching*

*businesses, an efficient way to bridge a gap between customer's needs and creating more sales.*

*Our choice of digital presence was to create an online store. We found the process challenging but satisfying. We are very happy how it turned out and are looking forward to sharing its launch. [www.ordercellardoorwines.com](http://www.ordercellardoorwines.com). We are excited to use our online store and continue to use our newfound skills of better communication with our customers through posting better content. We are looking forward to new ideas for this coming year.*

*Great grant program...*

- *Relevant for struggling businesses*
- *Helpful staff*
- *Bridges a gap with customer needs and business sales*
- *A great grant for these changing times"*

John and Katherine, Cellar Door Wines

*"We were excited and grateful to be a recipient of a grant through the Digital Main Street Program. During these challenging times for all small businesses, support from outside sources has been a lifeline and Main Street was fantastic to work with."*

Dr. Jamie Richards, Charlie's Café and the Life by Design Centre

*"Working with Digital Main Street was very helpful due to their training videos which helped me focus on areas that I wanted to improve. Irene then assisted me in putting my plan in place and worked with me to verbalize what I wanted to accomplish.*

*We did not have an online presence for our family owned and operated retail store -this was something we planned to do 'in the future', when we had the time and could 'afford it'. COVID forced us to establish our Shopify store so that we could continue to operate our business.*

*Creating an online store and then adding product has taken many man-hours and never stops, as product needs to be added and updated. By having an online presence during the second lockdown (after Christmas), we were able to maintain sales at our store at our historical levels as compared to the lockdown in March 2020-June 2020 where we experienced a major drop in our revenue. Yet, our product was still delivered and our suppliers still wanted to be paid. Unfortunately, our business did not qualify for the various government financial assistance for small businesses and we had to use our personal savings/assets to cover our business expenses.*

*I would recommend businesses look into the available grants and take the time to consider what 'digital changes' can be made to their business to improve their online presence. I personally prefer to shop in a store and see product, touch it, and try things on, however many people do not want to go into stores to shop and prefer the comfort*

*and safety of their home to search online for what they want. I know that being online will continue to increase. Having an online store has brought us many new customers*

*(including repeat shoppers) from provinces all over Canada which eventually should increase our sales to even higher levels as our SEO improves.*

*I encourage small retail businesses to establish an online store as it opens up many more sales opportunities across Canada. Our small communities need our unique businesses and we encourage people to 'shop local' but they are still going to search and shop 'online'. Be the company that comes up in their searches again and again and keep your retail doors open."*

Lisa Lucio, JJ Sports & Collectibles

*"The Digital Main Street Program was amazing. I absolutely loved all the video training and was able to implement many new ideas into my business that I feel helped us grow. The program was easy to navigate and even easier to complete than I expected. I have went on to The Digital Main Street Program 2.0 and found even more useful tips and tricks!"*

Amy Cartier, Kara's Rose Garden

*"Digital Main Street has helped me understand the benefits of social media and attracting customers to our website during the past year. We have increased our online advertising to include google ads and created a social media plan to engage with our customers. We are still working on implementing more videos and stories to help our customers get to know us better. Learning the benefits of how to read analytics and using them to increase traffic online and in the shop.*

*If you are looking to increase business and better understand how online business works, I highly recommend giving Main Street Marketing a try."*

Christal Wills, McKellar's Flowers & Gifts

*"The team at Mindful Market & Eco Hub is very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the Digital Main Street Program over the last four months. The ease of navigating the program and the information gathered about our lack of having an online store allowed us to develop one. COVID restrictions on small businesses in our rural community have been challenging. The Main Street program allowed us to develop a professional online store that is integrated into our POS system and thus increase sales and web traffic to our store at a much-needed time. Thank you from the Mindful team on a great program."*

Mindful Market & Eco Hub

*"We can't say enough good things about Irene and the Team at the Chatham-Kent Digital Service Squad. They kept us aware of the program and assisted us with anything we needed along the way."*

Mike and Pam Davison, Summer's Gold Honey

**Consultation**

No others were consulted in the preparation of this report.

**Financial Implications**

The Digital Main Street Program 2.0 expenses were covered by the \$95,000 funding provided by the Province of Ontario and administered by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association.

Prepared and Reviewed by:

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Economic Development Services

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Reviewed by:

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Community Development

Attachments: Attachment A – List of Successful Digital Improvement Grant 2.0 Recipients

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## **Chatham-Kent Successful Applicants – Digital Main Street Grant Program 2.0**

### **Blenheim**

1. More Than TZ
2. South Kent Dental
3. Postma Fitness
4. McLaughlin Chiropractic Professional Corporation
5. Gala Wellness
6. McKinlay Funeral Home
7. Petley Laundry & Vending
8. Ford & McIntyre Men's Wear
9. Charlies Café
10. Frostbites
11. JJ Sports & Collectibles
12. Mindful Market & Eco Hub
13. Dana's Kitchen & Catering
14. Blenheim Therapy Centre
15. Sixty One

### **Bothwell**

16. Mod Retro
17. Old Autos Publications Inc.

### **Chatham**

18. Express Copies & Printing
19. The Healthy Habit
20. Rojena's Alternations
21. Art and Heirloom Shoppe
22. Body Language
23. Pour Decisions Wine Co.
24. Chilled Cork Restaurant
25. Trends Barber Shop
26. Retro Suites
27. Game Master's Emporium
28. Holland Optical
29. Centro Wood Fired Kitchen
30. Northside Pool Supply

31. J. Quaglia Law Firm
32. Van Zelst's Market
33. Kurry Houzz & Grill Inc.
34. King's Pawn
35. Peach Physiotherapy & Wellness
36. Loaded 2 Go
37. JB Shillington Financial Services
38. Sugar That
39. Gentry Manor
40. Frank's Music Store Ltd.
41. Floating Therapy
42. Evolution Studios
43. Paragon Property Management
44. Chatham-Kent Child and Adolescent Clinic
45. Sons of Kent
46. Herbologi
47. Quo Vadis
48. Willy's 420 Supplies
49. O Wellness
50. Radius Health Clinic
51. Yardie Vibes
52. Perucan Enterprises
53. Rad Studio and Eco Store
54. Instant Print

**Charing Cross**

55. Indoor Environmental Specialists

**Dresden**

56. McKellar's Flowers & Gifts
57. Shelley's Painted Treasures & Quilt
58. Captured Moments Photography by Crystal Marie
59. Kimberley's One-of-a-Kind
60. Sugared Spoon
61. The Crappie Store
62. Babcock's Jewellers Ltd.

**Merlin**

63. Summer's Gold Honey Company



**Ridgetown**

64. Little Britain

**Thamesville**

65. Jonny Quests

**Tilbury**

66. Comfortable Dwelling

67. Kara's Rose Garden

68. Bricks & Blooms

69. Tilbury Rentals & Contracting

70. Katy's Touch

**Wallaceburg**

71. The Gear Box

72. Goldcoast Fashions

73. Homeward Realty

74. James Street Eatery

75. Power Fitness

76. Riversite Realty

77. Splash Pools

78. Vape on the Run

79. Westbrook's Flower Shop

80. Authier Print and Promotional Ltd.

81. 99.1 FM CKXS

82. Glasses and Grapes

83. Geek N Things

84. Duchene Paints

85. Fosters Meats

**Wheatley**

86. iScreams

87. Briar Patch Studio

88. Cellar Door Wines

89. The Pogue Irish Pub