



Rubia's celebrated its 20th anniversary on Friday in Aztec. MATT HOLLINSHEAD/THE DAILY TIMES

Rubia's celebrates 20th anniversary in Aztec

Matt Hollinshead

Farmington Daily Times
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW MEXICO

AZTEC — Even amid these trying times, Rubia's has fought to remain a staple among Aztec's eateries.

The never-ending community support kept operations alive to reach the restaurant's 20-year anniversary on July 10.

"They were very generous with their money," co-owner Randy Hodge said. "They donated money to the business to help our employees that needed help. They supported everything that we've done with take-out sales. Our indoor grocery store, they supported that."

Customers gathered at tables, relaxing, smiling and listening to the Kirk James Blues Band perform live music.

Wearing face coverings, Rubia's staffers continuously took orders, brought food and beer out to the socially-distant tables.

"To go from a small restaurant in one building to building it into what it is today, and more recently sustaining

through certain hurdles, it's quite an accomplishment," general manager Leonard Trujillo said.

As it celebrates its 20th anniversary, Rubia's is bracing for an uncertain future.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham reinstated the state's ban on indoor dining, which will go into effect on Monday, and Hodge is terrified it could mark the beginning of the end for his business.

Hodge said Rubia's has already lost \$60,000 in revenue between April and June, including \$30,000 in April alone.

Hodge also said the longer his business stays open without making a profit, the sooner he will have to make a decision on whether Rubia's will have to close its doors.

At one point, 35 Rubia's employees were furloughed.

Trujillo said Rubia's was without those 35 employees for more than two weeks, but gradually brought back one or two employees at a time.

Hodge said Rubia's managed to bring back 22 of those furloughed workers, something he was glad to accomplish leading up to the 20th anniversary.

To help offset the earlier economic

toll and keep people safe, Rubia's added an indoor grocery store in mid-March, with one or two shoppers entering the store at a time.

"It really helped us sustain the restaurant through the downtime, and it created an intimate shopping experience for our customers," Trujillo said. "It really, really put people at ease where they could come in and get groceries without the crowd."

Friday was a day to celebrate what Rubia's has meant to the community. But attention quickly turned to whether Rubia's will be around to see its 21st anniversary.

Hodge can't help but envision the absolute worst happening.

"It could be zero (employees) by the end of the month," Hodge said. "The more restrictions there are, the harder it's going to be to become profitable... I don't know what the future holds for us."

Matt Hollinshead covers sports for the Daily Times. He can be reached at 505-564-4577 and on Twitter at @MattH_717.

Support local journalism with a digital subscription: <http://bit.ly/216TU0e>