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NEWS

IT'S THE 'COST OF DOING BUSINESS': LOWE

Continued from page 1

Along with funding, "enhancing online presence" and "business planning for a post-COVID-19 world," were at the top of the list.

"That was why we applied," Lowe said. "Our businesses are telling us they need our help."

The Digital Main Street program runs for eight weeks (from Oct. 19 to Dec. 14), and helps local main street businesses expand and improve their online presence.

Eligible businesses will also be able to apply for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant to aid in their online expansion. Last year, the Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area (BIA) applied for the program and served roughly 30 downtown businesses.

Dini Lamers, entrepreneur and owner of home decor shop Dini & Co. (56 Main St.) in Georgetown, took part in the program last year through the BIA.

Lamers said, like many small business owners, she found it was a challenge to make the leap to building her business online.

"It is the way of the future," Lamers said. "Even if you're not shipping prod-

"Given the COVID-19 pandemic, a business' online presence is more important than ever."

- Sarah Schict

ucts, you just need to be out there. Buying online has become the new norm for many."

To facilitate the program, the Town has hired a Digital Service Squad member for the duration of the program to help businesses audit their digital presence and optimize their online presence.

"Given the COVID-19 pandemic, a business' online presence is more important than ever," Sarah Schict, the Town's Digital Service Squad member, said. "I look forward to helping Halton Hills' businesses increase their ability to adopt and leverage online tools."

While local businesses rely on local customers,

building an online presence has become increasingly important.

"When you look at customers' transaction processes, just under 90 per cent start on Google," Lowe said. "It's part of the cost of doing business now."

With Amazon and Google presenting new challenges for small business, those businesses are increasingly reliant on their services.

"They're a necessary component of the modern-day buying process," Lowe said. "It's very tough to build an online presence if Google doesn't like your webpage. If you're not there (at the information search point), then you're not in the mix when they do make that purchase decision."

Learn more about the Digital Main Street program at www.investhaltonhills.com/DigitalMainStreet.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Amidst the ongoing economic challenges being faced during the pandemic, we wanted to explore how new programs like Digital Main Street are giving small businesses a fighting chance in a significantly-changed marketplace.



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