

FREMONT BRIDGE ROTARY CLUB SUPPORTS TECH SAVVY TEENAGER- SAMARTH TEWARI

By- Geeta Kadambi and Paul Andrus

How powerful is it when a fourteen-year-old is concerned about the local economy and local restaurants during these unprecedented times?

Samarth Tewari, a Rising Sophomore at Mission San Jose High School was requesting his mom for more variety of food during COVID19. A typical teenager, having a growth spurt, and a stomach like a furnace! His mom, a working professional at home was wondering how to meet his request. He suggested they start buying food from local restaurants. His Mom said, “No way, it’s not safe due to COVID19”. So, Samarth picked up the phone and started talking to the local restaurant owners when the shelter in place started in March this year. He quickly learned that many restaurants were either closed or struggling to stay open with new rules. He wanted to figure out for him and the restaurants how to solve this problem. He spoke to his techy dad and the response was simply, “Figure it out yourself and help folks in the process”. He began his research online as well. He made an effort to understand the safety concerns of the general public, as well as the revenue losses being experienced by local restaurants. Sifting through health inspection data provided by the Alameda County Health Department, he came up with a method, based on CDC guidelines, which restaurants were considered “safest” to buy food from during COVID19. The result was a website he created with some guidance from his father, www.eatsafefremont.org, to encourage local citizens to eat at restaurants by eliminating some of their food safety concerns.

As he rolled out the website, it was well received with nearly 12,000 visits to the informational pages and over 2,200 unique individual users. However, he realized this was not enough. There is more to do and he and the community could help local restaurants that have lost nearly 90% of their profits. His Mom, a Fremont Bridge Rotarian, wanted her rotary club to support this endeavor. Through Fremont Bridge Rotary, the project could more effectively reach and serve the local community.

Samarth decided to include fundraising for these locally owned restaurants. With the support and backing of Fremont Bridge Rotary and District 5170 of Rotary International, money was raised with the mission to help locally owned restaurants to pay their bills, retain their employees, and show the support from the community during these difficult times.



The response from the restaurant owners who received the check was overwhelming, Gael Stewart - owner of the popular Mission Coffee House in Fremont reacted, “this \$500 check came as a shock. This young man had been in touch, but I wasn't sure if we will actually receive funds. It means a lot, a young kid doing so much to support his community and caring about a local coffee shop with support from the community who want our coffee shop to be open post COVID19”. Eat Safe Fremont in partnership with Fremont Bridge Rotary has raised more than \$2,500 and plans to continue to raise more from local businesses and larger national corporations with locations in our city. Other restaurants like: Cantaritos, a Mexican Restaurant; Lovely Sweets and Snacks Indian Cuisine; and Dina’s Family restaurant which has been serving the Fremont community for many decades reacted the same way and are extremely excited about the community supporting their businesses.





Unfortunately, this problem is not going away any time soon. Even as our county looks to open up again, restaurants will be held to very limited capacity seating and will still struggle to be profitable. Never mind the potential of a second wave of this deadly virus. Local restaurants are an integral part of our city. Our goal is to ensure Fremont continues to have locally owned restaurants and doesn't turn into the urban jungle of large chain restaurants only.

Going forward, Samarth is partnering with local charitable organizations serving homeless and hungry, old age homes and women shelters to provide this vulnerable population with fresh, healthy and nutritious food through these restaurants. This will further expand the mission of his project by: 1. **giving bulk orders to the restaurants** and 2. **feeding the needy or at risk in our community**.

To learn more about the project and help Eat Safe Fremont, please visit the website www.eatsafefremont.org or write at eatsafefremont@gmail.com.