

Roger and Marilyn Stauter: Small gyms ready to lead Wisconsin's reopening as soon as it's safe

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Since the end of March, Wisconsinites have been working hard to stop the spread of the coronavirus by staying indoors, working from home, and following social distancing guidelines put out by state and federal health officials. All of this, of course, has been part of a necessary coordinated effort to keep everyone safe and healthy. However, an unfortunate side effect has been that many small businesses that haven't been deemed essential are struggling due to the sudden loss of business, and many have been forced to lay off employees or even shut down entirely.

That's why in the months ahead, as Wisconsin takes a look at the most effective strategies we can implement for reopening our economy once health officials declare it is safe to do so, we should prioritize helping these small businesses. Already, they've shown some impressive ingenuity in coming up with ways to operate in a safe and healthy way that will allow them to open their doors while also containing the virus.

One type of business that's been especially impressive in taking the lead on implementing ways to reopen their doors are smaller, franchised athletic clubs. For example, Anytime Fitness - which has dozens of locations in communities throughout Wisconsin - has already [rolled out](#) a detailed plan that will allow the independent, small business owners of their facilities to keep members safe once they are allowed to reopen.

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This includes careful monitoring of their facilities to ensure guests and workers are maintaining social distancing guidelines, in addition to placing hand sanitizer throughout their facilities and encouraging all employees to wear gloves and masks when they are on the job. On top of that, their plan gives full detail on how their gyms will be frequently cleaned with medical-grade supplies and outlines a smart and efficient online workout session booking system to make sure that only a safe number of people are in the gym at a given time.

By following plans like this, smaller boutique gyms and other businesses can help to keep operations going while we all adjust to our new normal. By using guidelines like these, owners can ensure that their workers continue to get paid while also positioning themselves to be in a strong place when health officials give the approval for a broader reopening of the state's economy.

In addition, small gyms like Anytime Fitness offer a particularly unique and necessary service during times of hardship like we are facing today. They can offer a place for members to exercise and improve both their physical and mental health during a time when both are paramount concerns for people not just in Wisconsin, but across the entire country as well.

Governor Tony Evers has made it clear that his number one priority is doing everything necessary to keep Wisconsinites safe and healthy. Once health officials tell him it is safe to begin allowing some businesses to reopen, it would be wise of him to keep independently owned and franchised workout facilities like Anytime Fitness in mind.

After all, Anytime Fitness has already shown that they have the same goal of keeping everyone who walks through their doors safe and have demonstrated a great deal of flexibility in coming up with new ways to adjust their day-to-day operations to uphold that goal. As soon as health officials give the green light, they will be ready to be among the first businesses to reopen their doors and do their part in helping Wisconsin's economy recover from this pandemic.

-Roger and Marilyn Stauter are real estate professionals and fitness enthusiasts who reside in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.