



## An open letter to the Hot Springs Village Community

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#### Description

By Greg Jones, January 7, 2022

About 4 years ago, we started an adventure unlike any that I had experienced before in my career, I and a few friends decided to open the [Beehive Neighborhood Hangout](#). We envisioned a great place where people could come visit with each other, have some great food, interesting cocktails, and hear some of the best music in our area. During the last 4 years, I have heard many great comments about the Beehive being one of the best things to open in the Village in several years. Even though we've had our ups and downs, we keep trying our best, with some great long-time staff, to keep innovating and providing a fantastic experience for everyone. Covid has certainly caused us issues and continues to affect staffing and our service levels but we do our best and most of our guests know we are trying hard to ensure positive guests experience.

Yesterday, we launched a new menu at Beehive that brings us back to more of the fresh ingredient shareable plates that were our original concept. While we are still tweaking the menu, guest comments have been very good on the new items we introduced. One of my favorites is the new chicken apple sausage flatbread with arugula and a fig glaze.

In 2019, my wife Trisha and I saw a need for a fun coffee/bakery on the east side of the Village and opened [Artfully Baked and Brewed](#). Featuring local artists, some great coffee from our friends in Hot Springs at Red Light Roastery, and fresh-baked pastries we provide a cool place to come have a brief meeting or even do some work using our free high-speed Internet service. We added lunch service soon after with some cool art-themed sandwiches using Boars Head brand products. I always look forward to seeing our friends and neighbors here and even moved my office close to the bakery.

About the same time, we opened the newly refurbished [Xplore Lakeside](#) restaurant. Transforming the building previously housing The Last Chance Cafe into a more open lake view restaurant. Starting with some great burgers and sandwiches, we moved into dinner service with fresh seafood and innovative menu items. We had some great plans for moving to finer dining upstairs but unfortunately, Covid started about 120 days after we opened and those plans got delayed. We recently restarted those plans to transform the dining areas to a more upscale experience and hope to reopen there within this

month assuming we can get the renovation completed. We have already developed a much-improved menu and are working through the logistic and staffing issues.

As we reopen you'll see an improved dining room aesthetic with table cloths, decorations, some new window treatments, etc. We have heard about the somewhat starkness of the current dining room and are working to soften up the room and make it more appealing. This was our original vision but just delayed a while as we work through the pandemic issues. Our goal is to create a fantastic lakeside dining experience here in Hot Springs Village. As the only lakeside restaurant, we take this seriously and want to be as good as you might find in any upscale area.

Last year, we undertook a lease agreement with the Property Owners Association to operate restaurants at DeSoto, Granada, and Isabella courses. After years of losing millions of dollars in the restaurant business, we felt that we would potentially help bring a better experience to the golf courses, particularly for the golf community. We knew this was a big challenge, but I and our staff were eager to see what we could do with these facilities.

Using DeSoto as our base of operations, we opened the golf course restaurants in May. It was certainly a rough start with lots of community comments but we persevered and did our best to provide great service at all three facilities. We hosted many tournaments and corporate events and got pretty good at ensuring everyone had a good time. DeSoto became our prep kitchen so that we could support any size event at any course, even those with fairly small kitchen facilities.

DeSoto also became our large event center. We hosted events with more than 200 people providing great food and service for those organizations. We hosted club meetings, community events, and even a couple of weddings. It's a beautiful facility and the kitchen there allows us a lot of flexibility in offerings.

With [Danny Goynes](#), we launched a Cajun Seafood restaurant at Granada called Kroc-Coo's. It was an extension of his restaurant at the west gate. Offering dinner service, we tried hard to find enough business to remain open but eventually had to discontinue service in September. In October, with some help from Joseph and Jennifer Stansel, we opened the Blue Elephant Grill as a counter service sandwich-style location. Adding Sunday brunch after a month or so, it is slowly gaining traction but the business remains slow.

At Isabella, we remodeled the restaurant with some new interior decor to freshen up the dining room. As a small kitchen restaurant, we launched quick service sandwiches and snacks which were well received. We added breakfast service soon after opening. Not without challenges, we continued to push forward adding newer menu items all summer.

Unfortunately, this week I informed the POA that we would be discontinuing operations at the golf courses. I've been working tirelessly for almost a year to make them successful but due to health and personal well-being, I am not able to continue at that pace. It was a very painful decision knowing that I have personally put over \$50,000 into those restaurants this year to get them operational and countless hours.

There were many that were hoping for us to fail and made their comments well known on social media. While I generally try to ignore the more hateful comments by people I have never met, the toll on my personal well-being is great. The many messages of encouragement that I receive daily let me know

we are headed in the right direction but overall operating the golf course locations is very time-consuming.

I have suggested a path forward to the POA for these locations and a plan is being developed to assist in keeping these restaurants open. The Blue Elephant at Granada is moving forward and should be able to sustain itself with the great efforts of Jennifer and Joseph Stansel. The Isabella diner is also easily manned and has streamlined operations that can reopen quickly using some existing staff.

DeSoto is more of a challenge since there is almost no daily business from the players on the golf course. I feel the best use of the facility is as an outstanding event center that can offer a great meeting and dining experience. Many have used the Coronado Center for these types of events but the kitchen there is very outdated and it's almost impossible to cook a great meal for a large group in that facility. There are many events already planned at DeSoto and hopefully, we will be able to find ways to accommodate those events. We are more than willing to work with the POA and ensure each event is a success.

In conclusion, I just want to thank all our friends and guests for the support they have given us over the years. I have worked hard to be a good community sponsor giving almost \$9000 in cash and in-kind donations in the last year to a wide variety of Village organizations and volunteering as much as I can. I feel this is an important part of our contributions to the community and will continue to do as much as I can for our Village organizations. In addition, we are always working to promote the Village as a great place to live including our live appearance on Fox News a few months ago promoting an innovative program for our younger high school employees.

While we were not able to achieve all the goals we had set for 2021, I am hopeful that 2022 will be a better year and we can achieve some of the original goals we had set prior to the pandemic hitting and look forward to visiting with you at the Beehive, Artfully Baked and Brewed or Xplore Lakeside.

Sincerely,

Greg

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## Comments with out first and last names are not being published.

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### Category

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