

PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

15 MINUTES

A personal touch

Nicolette Gamache felt helpless on Nov. 8, the day the Camp Fire brought about so much destruction for her friends, family and community members. The next day, she had an idea: why not bring joy and comfort to survivors through jewelry? Gamache, who has been a jewelry designer for more than 30 years and sells her products at Made in Chico and on Etsy (NicolettesJewelry), gathered 100 pieces and went to the evacuation camp at the Walmart parking lot. Since then, she founded Jewelry For Survivors on Facebook, and has collected donations to continue giving free accessories to the displaced. All told, she has hand-crafted and given away more than 2,100 pieces of jewelry, including earrings, necklaces, bracelets, brooches and headbands. She's distributed at the Disaster Recovery Center at the old Sears building, the American Red Cross evacuation shelter at the Silver Dollar Fairgrounds, and has met with survivors privately. To find out more, contact Gamache at facebook.com/jewelryforsurvivors.

How have people reacted?

First, I get a look of disbelief I'm offering them free jewelry. Some smile and cry, and they try on the jewelry and I hug them. And they thank me, and I tell them how people from all



over the country are sending me jewelry and supplies; that we care and that they matter. I've talked to just lots of people who would talk about their mother's jewelry collection or their grandma's jewelry collection, and they would pick out a piece that reminded them of something that their mother or grandmother would have had, so that was really sweet. I have learned that, in a time of necessity, a simple nonessential becomes such an unexpected luxury that's very powerful and emotional.

What have you been able to give to survivors?

I've got a little bit of everything under the sun to offer, so there's more [of an] ability for someone to connect with a piece. When something comes in, I'll see all the stuff they have [donated] and say, "Oh, she's got kind of a boho thing going on, or she's [into] more conservative, office-[appropriate] stuff, or this per-

son only likes silver, or this person was super into beads." One lady dropped off over 100 pieces, and they're all vintage.

What motivated you to do this?

I know that jewelry is a very sentimental thing for people, and it's something that maybe isn't clothes, food [or] shelter, but it actually comes quickly after that, as a way of personal identification, as adornment. Most people lost every piece of jewelry they had, all [of] their mom's collection, their grandmother's collection. Some people that didn't lose everything—maybe they didn't lose their home—they don't feel like they deserve it. And I say, "Hey, if you've been through trauma, you deserve something nice, something that makes you feel good." I can't do anything to change what happened. But I can put a smile on someone's face for a minute, and maybe longer.

—ASHIAH SCHARAGA
ashiahs@newsreview.com

THE GOODS

Reopening, relocating



by
Meredith J. Cooper
meredithc@newsreview.com

It seems just about everything these days revolves around the Camp Fire and recovery efforts. It is exciting to see progress being made, however slowly. This past week, I had a chance to talk with **Lok Keobouahom**, who owns **Sophia's Authentic Thai Cuisine** in Paradise. He was so cheerful, even when talking about the hardships involved with reopening (see "Troubled water," page 18).

Not many other restaurants are ready to take that step. **Jaki Snead**, owner of **Jaki's Hilltop Cafe**, which survived the fire in Magalia, announced recently via Facebook that she is selling the business. She'd reopened the popular restaurant in October after closing due to a kitchen fire over a year earlier. She lost her home, she wrote, and it's time to move on to something else.

She is selling the business to the owner of the **Cozy Diner** in Paradise, which she said experienced damage that will take time to repair. Stay tuned for more on a name change and other updates as they become available. Best of luck to Jaki.

BACK IN BUSINESS Many businesses have reopened since being displaced by the Camp Fire. The **Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commerce** has launched a database to track them—and keep customers up to date—at paradisesechamber.com/updated-business-status.

Some have returned to their original locations (**Theatre on the Ridge** and **Lisa Family Pharmacy** in Paradise, and **Beary Sudsy Soap Co.** and **Ampla Health** in Magalia, to name a few). But others have relocated—several to Chico (**Paradise Drug**, **Paradise Medical Group**), and Oroville (**Gloss Nail Salon**, **Rose Chapel Mortuary and Crematory**). I assume some of those who've stayed close will return to the Ridge, though many may not.

Still others have moved farther away (**Moll's Legal Doc Prep** has moved to Vista, **Gary Bess Associates** to Rocklin). And a Facebook post this week revealed **Ikkyu Japanese Restaurant** has been spied in Red Bluff applying for a beer and wine license.

CLOSING TIME Not all businesses affected by the Camp Fire were on the Ridge. Of course, we've all been affected some way or another. **Rouse & Revolt** is no different. The downtown Chico store announced earlier this week that the popular consignment shop would be closing Jan. 31. I reached out and was told by an employee that all of the management had lost their homes in the fire. In addition, slow sales in November and December, typically the most important for retailers, affected the store significantly. Sadly, I don't think they'll be the last.

TAQUITO TIME I found myself in Oroville earlier this week around lunch time and, as I made my way from county center to Oro Dam Boulevard in search of a quick meal, I came upon **Bulldog Express Drive-Thru** at the Washington Avenue and Montgomery Street roundabout. The new spot, which opened a few months ago, is a vast improvement over the run-down, abandoned gas station that occupied the space before. I've missed Bulldog's taquitos, so I had to get one. Delicious as always!

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