

Left: Amy Velazquez, director of business services for the Alliance for Workforce Development, works from her home office during the pandemic.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY VELAZQUEZ

Right: Bryce Koch, general manager of Build with Ferguson, says his team found many benefits in working remotely.

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Build isn't the only employer making changes. The pandemic has altered how people are conducting business in Butte County, and it hasn't all been negative. Companies and public agencies have implemented schedule flexibility and remote work opportunities. Some have offered higher wages. Leaders in the business community see this shift as beneficial for employers in the long run, too, and say many of the changes are likely here to stay, even as the last of the pandemic's restrictions are lifted.

For Build, the pandemic brought with it a significant increase in demand for its products and services. At first, people sought protective equipment and freezers, then home goods and décor.

"Early on it was more preparing for an unknown world," Koch said, "then it shifted to upgrading and improving [the] living space."

Even with this increase in work load, the company experienced an increase in productivity from its employees in their

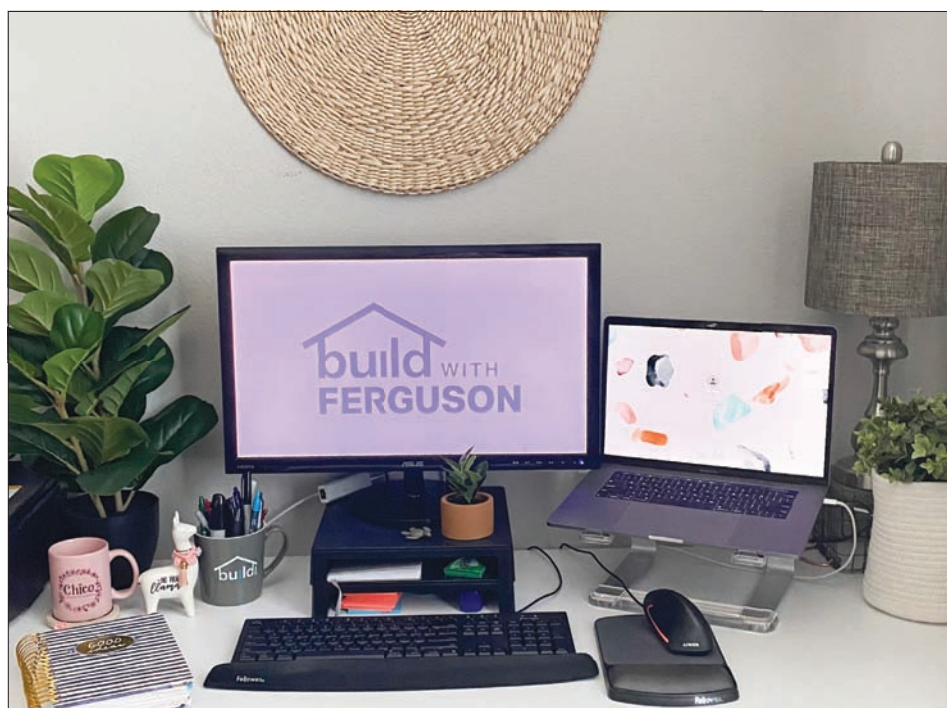
new work-from-home environments. An overwhelming majority have expressed a desire to continue working from home in some capacity, Koch said. They have enjoyed having more freedom to structure their day and space.

"All companies are looking at how their workforce can work, and they're moving to that more adaptive, flexible environ-

Build with Ferguson set up employees with home work stations. While the Chico office will reopen next month, employees have the option to continue working from home.

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