

COFFEE'S SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

When Covid-19 hit the UK, training company Well Grounded immediately began transitioning its services online. Its 234 Graduate network was hit particularly hard by Covid-19 – many have lost their jobs or face job insecurity – and Well Grounded is now providing virtual support covering mental health, financial planning, online coffee training and a job brokerage service for work in and outside the coffee industry. It is sending food boxes to graduates and the wider population of coffee employees who need them. Well Grounded also launched a crowdfunding campaign called #SupportThe234 to raise funds for a virtual platform to ensure none of their graduates are left behind. Visit wellgroundedjobs.co.uk for more information and if you need any of this support please contact them.

In Brighton, Pro Baristas – which engages 350 people a year in inclusive speciality coffee training and consulting – shifted rapidly during lockdown to supporting those it had trained who were out of work. They received hundreds boxes of food and coffee donated by Oatly, Minor Figures and a range of roasters. Now Pro Baristas is retooling to support an industry and individuals who will require different solutions. It is piloting and demonstrating safe retail practices, opening two training cafés as combination coffee/grocery shops in creative Brighton spaces, launching a full commercial roastery and broadening its training curriculum to address flexible careers in hospitality.

Founder Ben Szobody told us, "We think cafés will look very different in the future, and will need to demonstrate more inclusivity and accessibility. Anyone in need of access, or wishing to collaborate, can email us at info@probaristas.com."

they weren't accepting new applicants.

Thankfully we came to a comprise: I could run the goods through someone else's account. I tried Leon Zadeh from Saint Espresso, who unbelievably stores his account number in his phone rather than at the back of a kitchen drawer. With the number entered, we paid and exited with our trolley feeling like the coffee god Kaldi had smiled on us this time – but aware that we would need a better plan next time.

Things got better, much better. The team at The Attendant let us bulk-buy on their trade account. Oatly shipped more stock and our team started the task of vetting all the care pack registrations. Roasters including Hasbean, Colonna, Saint, Climpson & Sons, The Gentlemen Baristas, Allpress, Taylors of Harrogate, 80 Stone and Quarter Horse donated coffee. Rude Health got a pallet load delivered at short notice. Mr Black, rCups and Coca-Cola-owned brands Costa and Innocent donated items. There were shortages in the supermarkets, but thanks to these companies' generosity I had enough goods to feed a small army of baristas.

Scott and I assembled care packs on a workbench that served as a makeshift production line – outside, to comply with social distancing. As it turns out, packing boxes is hard work. At best we managed 60 boxes in a day. It took several weeks to make and dispatch all the packs. It was more effort than I envisaged, but more rewarding than I could have anticipated.

As well as providing practical and emotional support to coffee people across the country, it's been a great opportunity to be in touch with industry colleagues and their support, kindness and generosity has been truly heartwarming. The coffee industry faces many challenges, but I'm confident we'll survive because of the good people involved – and I'm increasingly sure we'll thrive if the coffee community pulls together like it did for Barista Care.



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