

BEAUTY

Hair Salons in the South Begin to Reopen, With Some Trepidation

- Salons are ready to reopen, but with owners and consumers worried about safety, the experience looks a lot different.

BY ELLEN THOMAS

Despite concerns from some salon owners over whether or not it's safe, hair salons are getting ready to open back up in parts of the country after weeks of government-mandated closures due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Governor Brian Kemp of Georgia announced Monday that some nonessential businesses in the state are allowed to open starting Friday, including hair and nail salons. South Carolina and Florida opened public beaches this week and governor of Tennessee Bill Lee announced that he is letting his state's stay-at-home order expire April 30, after which most nonessential businesses will be allowed to open. In North Carolina, a stay-at-home order was extended until May 8, though business owners feel that they are next on the docket to get the green light to reopen.

While salon owners in these states are relieved to be able to start seeing clients and making money again, the announcements have spurred mixed reactions from the salon community.

"Some seem really excited to get back, and others feel it's way too fast," said Edwin Neill, chief executive officer of Neill Corporation, an independent distributor of Aveda products in seven Southern states.

Still, Neill said most salon owners he's spoken to in his network are feeling the financial pressure and ready to get back to work as soon as lockdowns in their respective states are lifted. Salon owners are already placing orders with his company, gearing up to open in the coming weeks, he said.

"It seems like a good number [of salons] are planning to reopen [immediately]," said Jay Elarar, ceo of MoroccanOil, which distributes its products in about 10,000 salons on the U.S. market.

Despite concerns over catching the virus, executives say consumer demand for hair services is still there – especially after weeks of service providers shut down across the country.

"Through all of this, there's one common thread we've been hearing – people want to get back to the salon," said Elarar. "You can only go so long without people coloring their hair or God forbid, doing box color at home."

With COVID-19 continuing to spread and no vaccine in sight, the salon experience will look quite different than it did pre-virus.

Health and safety precautions are top-of-mind for salon owners who are reopening. Though individual states are issuing COVID-19 health and sanitation guidelines through their cosmetology boards, the Professional Beauty Association is working on a cohesive protocol designed to help salons get back to business safely. PBA's mandate is expected to be disseminated to state cosmetology boards and to salon owners across the country next week.

"Salons are going to be open, but in a different way," said Elarar, who sits on the PBA board and is working on the task force along with executives from L'Oréal and

Schwartzkopf, that is designing the protocol. "There will be fewer clients per day, a quick in-and-out. Salon staff are going to have to wear masks and gloves."

Neill said that with social distancing in place, a lingering spa day with magazines and Champagne is no longer an option. "It will be more like a trip to the doctor's office," he said, with customers sitting in parking lots prior to appointments and waiting for a text when it's safe to come in, then spending a minimal amount of time in the salon.

Services will likely be limited to "maintenance, not makeovers" like root touchups and cuts, said Dan Langer, president of R+Co and chief marketing officer at Luxury Brand Partners, in order to minimize appointment time and the number of people in salons. R+Co is sold in about 2,000 prestige salons in the U.S. Langer said the owners he has spoken with are choosing to reopen based on personal preference – most are reopening, some aren't.

Some salon owners in states where lockdowns are being lifted are opening due to financial pressure, though they remain worried about the safety of their staff and clients.

Bryan Nunes, owner of Blo Salon in Raleigh, N.C., said his that salon, which employs over 40 stylists, is stocked with the sanitation supplies necessary to reopen, and he's able to be flexible with his staff's schedule and his opening hours to accommodate for fewer clients in the salon at a time. But he worries for smaller salons and independent booth renters in the area, who may be facing delayed shipping time on bulk orders of masks, gloves and sanitizing



Many states have mandated the closure of salons, spas and service-oriented beauty businesses.

wipes. What's more, they'll be taking on fewer clients and making less money, but will be back on the hook for rent once they start business operations back up.

"[These salons] can't get a PPP loan or access to supplies, and all of a sudden [the government] wants them to reopen – there's a lot of moving parts."

Conflicting communication from the government has made it difficult for small business owners to open up safely and effectively, said Nunes.

"My question is why would you close us down to begin with if your opinion now is that it's safe to reopen, even without the necessary supplies? [Salons] want to reopen, but we need to be set up for success."

BEAUTY

Beauty Backs Professional Channel

- A second wave of grants and initiatives from Aveda, Kao and Beauty Changes Lives seek to support the industry.

BY JAMES MANSO

The beauty industry is continuing efforts to support salons and professional channels following closures resulting from the coronavirus.

Kao Salon Division has increased their independent initiatives to help support salons and small businesses. The parent company of Oribe, Goldwell and KMS is halting all invoicing to salons and providing business recovery insight to salon owners. Oribe.com has also introduced an affiliate commission program through their salon partners. Kao Salon's efforts in North America, which includes charitable donations and free product, amounts to \$5.6 million in total.

Trevor Attenborough, vice president of salon commercial for Kao Americas, said best practices for sanitation and social distancing can complicate salon openings. "What you have is salon owners trying to figure out what reopening is going to look like. You can't override authorities, but what does sanitation look like? How can you tell clients about it?" he said.

Salon owners reopening will also have to face a surplus of demand while not being able to run salons at capacity due to social distancing guidelines, Attenborough said. "The next set of

questions will be financial. 'I now have a rent space that's twice as big as what I can do from a capacity perspective, how do I adjust my business to get to that place?' And nobody knows what will happen with social distancing, if there'll be a second wave, if it'll get more strict," Attenborough said.

Aveda has also introduced a multipronged set of initiatives to help the professional channel, which includes 9,000 salons worldwide. The brand has donated \$600,000 to the Salon and Spa Relief Fund, a nonprofit offering grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000. It is giving customers the opportunity to turn their loyalty program points into donations to the fund, as well as an option to donate during online checkout. Their fund-raising goal is \$1.5 million.

In addition to supporting businesses, Aveda is also giving professionals the opportunity to hone their skills during the salon hiatuses. "We created a thorough education program of over a thousand hours of classes with regional experts. We have had over 15,000 participants weekly, and artists from 40 countries have attended these classes. It's an important investment in their education, but also in their connection with others," said Barbara De Laere, senior vice president and global general manager at Aveda. Part of this education initiative is a sanitation protocol the company is disseminating to salons for reopening.

Aveda is also donating product locally near their headquarters in Minneapolis;

has extended salon payment terms, and increased salon sales commission to 40 percent.

From a philanthropic perspective, the nonprofit Beauty Changes Lives has historically offered scholarships to those pursuing professional careers in the beauty industry. As previously reported, they converted the scholarship program into a series of small grants for industry professionals. Most recently, they have repurposed a sum of \$70,000

in donations for their gala (now canceled due to COVID-19) into \$1,000 grants, in addition to the previously offered relief grants offered to nail artists at the onset of the public health and economic crisis.

Applications for the grants, which are categorized by profession, are greater than what Beauty Changes Lives receives for their annual scholarships. "We have had 6,000 applicants for the main grant, and over 900 applicants for the nail grant," Beauty Changes Lives president Lynelle Lynch said. "We are hoping they are using it for personal living expenses, because everyone in the professional industry isn't getting a paycheck now."



Beauty giants like Kao, Aveda and Beauty Changes Lives are supporting the professional channel with a series of grants and initiatives.