

iBuyMoCo Campaign Marks 1st Anniversary



Among those taking the iBuyMoCo pledge at the Monroe County Dairy Breakfast were 2010 Sparta Butterfest Festmaster Harlan Perry and his wife 2010 Lady Butterfest Sandie Perry. Sandie is pictured (at right) with Bernadine Arena, a member of the Monroe County Economic Development & Tourism Committee.

WILTON – The iBuyMoCo campaign marked its first anniversary at the 2010 Monroe County Dairy Breakfast hosted by the Doug and Dawn Birkholz family on their Eagle Drive Dairy Farms south of Wilton on June 5.

The campaign was launched at last year's dairy breakfast by the Monroe County Economic Development and Tourism Committee in response to a University of Wisconsin-Extension survey that showed Monroe County businesses lost \$41 million in potential taxable sales to out-of-county businesses in 2007. The goal of the campaign is to bring 10 percent – or \$4.1 million worth – of retail purchases made outside of the county back to Monroe County.

According to the study, shifting just 10 percent of purchases back to Monroe County will increase personal incomes by \$3.5 million, increase employment by 100 employees and increase municipal tax revenues more than \$700,000, said Nodji Van Wyche, chairperson of the county Economic Development and Tourism Committee.

"It's difficult to know just how much of an impact that

iBuyMoCo is having, but the sales tax revenues in the county in 2009 were up \$65,890 over the prior year. I'd like to think that the iBuyMoCo campaign played a significant role in that increase," Van Wyche said.

In the year since the campaign was launched, 120 businesses and 680 county residents – including 156 people at the county dairy breakfast – have taken the iBuyMoCo pledge.

Individuals who signed up at the dairy breakfast had their name entered in a drawing for a gift basket valued at more than \$100.00.

Donating items to the gift basket were: Curves of Sparta, 2-month trial membership; Inspirations at Dovetail Farm, \$10.00 gift certificate; Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center, \$10.00 family admission pass; Pichette Photography, \$5.00 gift certificate; All-American Do-It Center, \$5.00 gift card; Cranberry Country Mall, coffee mug and cranberry coffee;

Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce, a mouse pad and water bottle, and an iBuyMoCo t-shirt. Mary Michaels of Tomah was the winner.

All Monroe County businesses currently supporting the iBuyMoCo campaign are listed on the campaign's website at www.ibuymoco.com. Businesses interested in joining the campaign can sign up online or request an application form by writing to iBuyMoCo, P.O. Box 704, Tomah, WI 54660. For more information about the iBuyMoCo campaign, visit the website or call (608) 378-3014.

GO GREEN!

If you are currently receiving the Quarterly iBuyMoCo Newsletter by mail, please consider switching to our e-newsletter. To "Go Green," simply e-mail your name and mailing address to: info@ibuymoco.com. If we can switch most of our subscribers to an e-newsletter, we could publish a monthly newsletter and Hot Buys sheet.

500th Person Takes the iBuyMoCo Pledge

TOMAH – The 500th person to take the “I Buy Monroe County” pledge jokes that she is the poster child for buying locally. Emily Brach of Tomah was the 500th person to sign up for the program meant to encourage Monroe County residents to shift 10 percent of their current out-of-county spending back to businesses in the county.

Brach’s father operates a grocery store in her hometown of Prior Lake, Minn., so she has an insider’s perspective of owning a small, locally owned business.

“Buying locally is very, very important to me. I will go out of my way to buy local if I can,” Brach said. “It just makes sense to buy locally. If you patronize local businesses, it helps create more jobs and helps the local tax base. You’re helping to support your neighbors,” she said.

Brach also noted that she finds locally owned businesses generally offer better customer service. “I’d rather go out of my way a little bit to have someone treat me well, smile at me and be happy that I’m there,” she said.

Brach and her husband, Jeremy, a native of Mukwonago, moved to Tomah last May after living in the Atlanta area for 10 years. Mr. Brach is the product manager at Universal Forest Products in Warrens, while Mrs. Brach is a stay-at-home mom. The couple has twin 5-year-olds, Trinity and Aidan.

“We both attended UW-La Crosse, so moving to Tomah was like coming home for us. Now we’re living halfway between my family and Jeremy’s family,” Brach said.

As the 500th person to take the pledge to shift 10 percent of his or her current out-of-county spending back to Monroe County businesses, Brach received a gift basket featuring items from businesses participating in the iBuyMoCo campaign.

The basket contained a copy of “Recipes from Down a County Road with the Amish” donated by Down a Country Road, Cashton; pepper cheddar cheese and Colby jack cheese from A Taste of Wisconsin, Tomah; pencils from Tomah Memorial Hospital; a package of wieners from Foss Fine Meats, Sparta; locally produced honey from Northwood Country Market, Sparta; chocolate covered sweetened dried cranberries from the Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center, Warrens; and a gerbera daisy from Moseley Roadside Market, Warrens. Brach also received an iBuyMoCo t-shirt.



Emily Brach of Tomah was the 500th individual to take the iBuyMoCo pledge. In recognition, she received a gift basket filled with items from supporters of the iBuyMoCo campaign. Brach is pictured with her 5-year-old twins, Aidan and Trinity.

Create It! Events Planned

SPARTA – “Monroe County has many talented artists, musicians, writers and other creative individuals, but most of us don’t know that they’re out there,” says Nodji Van Wychen, chairperson of the Monroe County Economic Development and Tourism Committee.

In an effort to put the spotlight on these talented individuals, the committee launched Create It!, a networking alliance to help artists, musicians, producers involved in direct marketing and other creative entrepreneurs increase their visibility, as well as their sales, Van Wychen said.

Create It! is sponsoring a showcase of participants and their art or products on Saturday, July 31, at the Monroe County Fair in Tomah. Also on display will be reproductions of artwork created by Wisconsin rural artists in the 1940s through the Wisconsin Rural Arts Program.

Several community groups have organized through Create It! as well. An alliance of Tomah and Warrens artists recently formed the Tomah Arts Guild to open a gallery and gift shop in the Area Community Theater building in Tomah. A similar effort is underway in Sparta.

The Kendall Area Arts and Culture Organization is planning an Autumn Ridge Tour on Saturday, Oct. 2. The event includes a 14-stop tour, an art festival, a producers’ expo, quilt show, Model T rides and much more.