

Resolve to Support Local Businesses in 2011

Which three local businesses would you miss if they closed their doors? Maybe it's the restaurant on the corner where you can grab a quick sandwich for lunch. Perhaps it's the local convenience store where the clerk stashes the latest video release behind the counter for you so it will be there when you stop late after work on Friday night. Is it the florist who always seems to know exactly what your wife will love for her birthday and is good enough to give you a reminder call so you never forget the date?

Small businesses (defined as having 500 or fewer employees) are the lifeblood of the American economy, accounting for an astounding 99.7 percent of all employer firms, according to a 2007 study by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Yet locally owned independent businesses are under far more pressure than ever.

Trying economic times that have consumers closing their wallets, shoppers searching for perceived bargains at

large chain stores, the credit crunch and government bailouts helping primarily large corporations have all taken a toll on many small independently owned businesses.

It was that combination of factors that weighed heavily on Cinda Baxter, a Minneapolis-based retail consultant. After listening to several news broadcasts in early 2009 that predicted a dire future for small businesses, Baxter decided to launch The 3/50 Project.

Baxter's idea was simple: if half of the employed U.S. population would choose three locally owned independent businesses and spend a combined total of \$50 a month (or approximately \$17 per business) with them, it would generate \$42.6 billion of revenue annually.

"For every \$100 spent at locally owned stores, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll and other expenditures. If you spend that in a national chain store, only \$43 stays here. Spend it online and virtually nothing comes home," Baxter said.

Baxter stresses that The 3/50 Project does not ask consumers to stop shopping at chain stores or franchises. "Our message is about balance of the money you currently spend each month. We simply ask you to redirect an affordable \$50 back to the locally owned independent businesses that have been forgotten of late," she said.

"Just as there are things in a locally owned store that you can't find in a big box store, there are also things in a big box you can't find in a locally owned store. We simply need to think about where our dollars are best invested. Consider the greater amount of revenue local businesses return to the community, then purchase accordingly. Otherwise, local economies suffer irreparable harm," Baxter said.

To learn more about The 3/50 Project, visit www.the350project.net or write to P.O. Box 16601, Minneapolis, MN 55416.



The employees of the All American Do It Center in Tomah were the winners of the "iBuyMoCo Cookie Challenge." In a friendly rivalry, the employees of the All American Do It Centers in Tomah and Sparta competed to see which store could sign up the most people for the iBuyMoCo campaign. As the winners, the Tomah employees were treated to cranberry cookies from the Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center in Warrens, another iBuyMoCo campaign participant. Pictured left to right are Judy Scheets, Nikki Troutt, Jim Hendrickson and Sue Schroeder.

150th Business Joins iBuyMoCo Campaign

TOMAH – Minuteman Press of Tomah is the 150th business to join the iBuyMoCo campaign. “I agree with the idea of supporting locally owned businesses, so joining iBuyMoCo just made sense,” said owner Tim Meyer.

The iBuyMoCo campaign was launched in 2009 by the Monroe County Economic Development and Tourism Committee in response to a University of Wisconsin-Extension survey that showed Monroe County businesses are losing \$41 million in potential taxable sales to out-of-county businesses.

The goal of the campaign is to bring 10 percent 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 Lorry Erickson, iBuyMoCo campaign coordinator.



Jessica Staude (above) is a graphic designer at Minuteman Press in Tomah. The company offers a variety of printing services, along with free local delivery.

Meyer became the owner of Minuteman Press in August. He worked as a pressman with RR Donnelley in Baraboo for 22 years, but upon learning the Tomah business was for sale, he decided to pursue the opportunity to own his own business.

“I’m putting in some long hours getting the business up and going, but it’s been very enjoyable. I’m learning about printing on all sorts of different types of media than I ever had a chance to work with before. And our customers have been very supportive,” Meyer said.

Meyer’s wife, Kim, works as a human resources director in Baraboo. The couple has two children, Matthew, 14, and Lauren, 8.

While Meyer will be commuting from the family’s rural Baraboo home, he hopes to become involved in local clubs and organizations.

OTHER NEW PARTICIPANTS

Other Monroe County businesses recently joining the iBuyMoCo Campaign include: The Body Temple, Sparta Archery, The Greenery, Dana’s Music, Expressions Studio and LT Sullivan Art & Gifts, all of Sparta;

Tomah Arts Guild Art Gallery, Kurt’s Country Soaps, and Concept Printing, all of Tomah;

Three Bears Resort, Three Bears Chop Shop & Pub, Bill’s Heating & Air Conditioning, Game Craze, Evergreen Acres Tree Farm, Gebhardt Manufacturing, Zukas Healthy Carpet Cleaning, Oakwood House and Quilting Plus, all of Warrens.

All 153 Monroe County businesses participating in the iBuyMoCo program are listed at www.ibuymoco.com.

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To receive the Hot Buy specials monthly, sign up for the iBuyMoCo EXTRA e-newsletter by sending your name and e-mail address to info@ibuymoco.com. Please put “Go Green” in the subject line. Due to the cost of printing and mailing, iBuyMoCo EXTRA is available only by e-mail. If you do not have e-mail, you will continue to receive the quarterly newsletter by mail.

