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Communities across North America encourage everyone to Shift Your Shopping

More than 150 communities across North America, along with partner organizations including American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA) and Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) and New England Local Business Forum, today announced the launch of their Shift Your Shopping holiday campaign, an unprecedented national campaign that encourages residents to take job creation and economic concerns into their own hands by exercising their power to strengthen their own local economies.

Online at www.ShiftYourShopping.org, the campaign seeks to build an annual tradition that strengthens local economies, expands employment, nurtures a sense of community, and provides a more relaxed, fun, and rewarding gift-buying experience.

“We’re asking community residents to shift your purchases of food, cards, gifts, flowers and other holiday purchases to where it matters most, from your friends and neighbors at locally owned businesses. And while you’re at it, see some familiar faces and enjoy the experience,” said Joe Grafton, director of Somerville Local First in Massachusetts.

Americans are about to spend a large portion of their annual shopping budget between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31—the National Retail Federation predicts about \$700 per shopper. Numerous studies show that if those dollars are shifted to locally owned, independent businesses, they’ll generate 2-3 times as much economic activity in local communities than if that money had been spent at a national chain. Across North America, that could mean billions of dollars of local economic impact.

Shift Your Shopping combines the efforts of more than 150 local business alliances comprised of more 38,000 local business. Grassroots groups like Somerville Local First, Asheville Grown Business Alliance in North Carolina and Oakland Grown in California will execute campaigns with their own flair, picking and choosing from campaigns like Buy Local First week, America Unchained!, and Plaid Friday, the colorful alternative to Black Friday. ShiftYourShopping.org provides access to resources from all of these campaigns, including templates that allow anyone to spread the message easily in their community. Anyone can participate and make a direct impact where they live.

“Our locally-owned businesses are an important part of our community, offering customer service that can’t be beat, and a commitment to our community that can’t be matched,” said Grafton. “Let’s support them this holiday season as they support our local economy year-round.”

Locally owned businesses typically generate up to three times the local economic activity of national chains because independents spend more money in the local area, including using more local goods and services such as banking, printing, advertising, legal services, furnishings and more. Through this “multiplier effect,” the added taxes collected from local expenditures provide support for local schools, parks, law enforcement and more.

Numerous studies on the impact of buying from local, independent business have found impressive benefits. For example, a 2008 study of Kent County Michigan by Civic Economics projected shifting 10% of the county’s per capita spending from chains to locally-owned independent businesses would create “almost \$140 million in new economic activity and 1,600 new jobs for the region.”

In addition, annual surveys over the last four years show that places that “go local” do better. For example, last year, the Institute for Local Self Reliance gathered data on annual revenue changes from nearly 2800 independent business. That data revealed independent businesses in communities executing long-term “buy local and independent” campaigns averaged a healthy 5.6 percent increase over the previous year. This gain more than doubled the 2.1 percent increase reported by independent businesses in areas lacking such campaigns. All of those campaigns operated with support from AMIBA and/or BALLE.

“Shift Your Shopping promotes the united vision and voice of thousands of real people in real communities across the U.S. and Canada committed to building strong local economies,” said BALLE Executive Director, Michelle Long.

Beyond the economic impacts, Shift Your Shopping is also about celebrating the uniqueness of your local community, AMIBA Director Jennifer Rockne said, “By shifting the focus of holiday shopping to locally owned, independent businesses, we can strengthen our communities and economy, create more jobs and— equally important— we can enjoy more relaxed and rewarding experiences doing holiday shopping.”

AMIBA and BALLE are both national organizations dedicated to supporting local business alliances across the United States and Canada. They are online at www.amiba.net and www.livingeconomies.org. Find more information about the national Shift Your Shopping campaign, which runs from November through December, at www.ShiftYourShopping.org.

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