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“Go Local” Movement Gains Momentum in Summit County

Summit Independent Business Alliance announces 2009 Summit Unchained results and national survey findings

FRISCO, Colo., Jan. 28, 2010 — The “go local” movement is gaining momentum in Summit County, as indicated by results just released on the 2009 Summit Unchained Challenge. The “buy local” educational campaign, one of several signature programs offered by the Summit Independent Business Alliance (SIBA), took place between Nov. 21 and Dec. 31, 2009. The event “challenged” Summit County residents and visitors to shift at least 10 percent of spending to local, independent businesses. This past holiday season, nearly \$48,000 was generated through the program, a 229 percent increase over last year’s calculation of \$14,600.

“We’re thrilled with the results of the 2009 Summit Unchained Challenge because this tells us that people are increasingly choosing to spend their dollars with homegrown businesses in Summit County,” says Katie Roberts, SIBA’s executive director. “Particularly with the tough economy, people are seeing the benefit of keeping dollars in their own backyard, and their shopping habits are reflecting that understanding. Not only that, but more people are getting excited by the idea of supporting their community’s economic vitality in this sustainable way – the number of participants was up threefold, indicating enthusiasm for the program as well as a deliberate effort to support our homegrown retailers and service-based businesses. For a program that’s only two-years-old, this is an awesome achievement, and SIBA members, volunteers and those who participated in the challenge should feel spectacular about this success.”

Key to the Summit Unchained Challenge is a specially designed punch card that motivates people to support local, independent businesses. It also tracks the amount spent by each participant. This year’s campaign encouraged people to turn in their cards regardless of whether they were partially or fully completed to help SIBA get a better idea of the dollars spent and participation levels. Cards turned in were thrown into a drawing, which was hosted today on Krystal 93, one of SIBA’s founding members and a sponsor of the campaign. Prizes may be picked up at The Next Page Bookstore in Frisco.

“Hundreds of cards were turned in to us, and it was a massive but very rewarding feat to calculate all the money spent at participating SIBA businesses throughout the holidays,” Roberts said. “And we know that many people inevitably didn’t turn in cards because they simply forgot, which means that the program’s effectiveness actually exceeded the calculated grand total of nearly \$48,000.”

The “go local” movement is also experiencing success on a national level. More holiday shoppers deliberately sought out locally owned businesses this past year, according to a national survey of more than 1,800 independent businesses.

The survey was conducted in early January of 2010 by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a nonprofit research organization, in partnership with several other national business organizations. Survey results indicated that holiday sales for independent retailers were up an average of 2.2 percent. That contrasts with the U.S. Department of Commerce figures released Jan. 14, 2010, which showed that overall retail sales were down 0.3 percent in December and up 1.8 percent in November.

The survey also found that independent retailers in cities with active "Buy Independent / Buy Local" or "Local First" campaigns reported stronger holiday sales than those in cities without such campaigns. These campaigns have been launched in more than 100 communities, including Summit County. Independent retailers in these cities reported an average increase in holiday sales of 3.0 percent, compared to 1.0 percent for those in cities without an active Buy Local initiative.

"This survey adds to the growing body of evidence that people are increasingly bypassing big business in favor of local entrepreneurs," said Stacy Mitchell, senior researcher with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. "Amid the worst downturn in more than 60 years, independent businesses are managing to succeed by emphasizing their community roots and local ownership."

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