

COVID 19 RESPONSE

Supporting Local Businesses

As many American businesses shut down or scale back their operations to prevent spreading the coronavirus, you may be wondering what you can do to help.

Even during a pandemic, there are ways to support the many small businesses in your community that might be struggling.

USE DELIVERY SERVICES

Many businesses offer curbside or home delivery options. This has been a growing trend in recent years because of online shopping, but the pandemic has made these options seem less like a luxury and more like a community service.

If a restaurant or retailer offers some kind of delivery service, take them up on it. You'll be able to do your shopping or enjoy a delicious meal without the public health risk of gathering in large groups.

BUY GIFT CARDS

Even if a business temporarily shuts its doors, you might still be able to help them out by buying gift cards for future spending.

See which of your favorite local businesses offer gift cards or gift certificates, either online or in person.

If you have the means, buy a gift card now that you can enjoy later. You can either use it yourself or give it as a gift for birthdays or holidays. Local businesses could use the support right now.



ANNA CHANG-YEN

Tracy Schultz, owner of Ceramics for You in Gurnee, Illinois, provides drive-up service for customers to purchase ceramics kits that can be painted at home and dropped back off at the pottery studio later to be fired. It's one way local businesses are getting creative and meeting their customers' needs.

GET INVOLVED

Helping businesses recover from the temporary pandemic shutdown — a sacrifice they're making to protect public health — will likely require government assistance.

Fortunately, America has a democratic foundation. That means you can push for the best local, state and federal help that makes sense for small businesses in your community.

Attend city council meetings. Write your legislators. Make your voice heard, because supporting the best government response to this

pandemic — whatever that looks like to you — is a powerful way to help the country recover.

BE POLITE

Where businesses are open, be polite and thankful to the people working there. Retail workers are under stress to restock shelves and keep customers calm amid an unusual uptick in demand for groceries, medical supplies and other essentials. If the shelves are empty, that's the fault of customers doing panic buying, not the store's workers. Be part of the solution by not purchas-

ing more than you need.

OFFER TO HELP

Look for ways to help your friends and neighbors who are temporarily out of work. That applies to the basics, like making sure they have food and supplies, to helping them find ways to bridge the income gap until their jobs come back.

For people who are working extra hours during the pandemic — especially health care workers — look for ways to ease their burden. You might be able to offer free child care until schools reopen, for example.

SPEND BIG LATER

Make it a point to support local businesses in a big way as soon as it's safe to do so.

Businesses still have utility bills, rent, loans and payroll expenses during the pandemic shutdown. Their resources will be stretched thin. You can help them survive and thrive for the long term by being ready and willing to do business with them again as soon as they reopen.

With your help, local businesses will be back up and running — and serving as the backbone of your community — as soon as possible.

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Paint-at-home ceramics from Ceramics for You in Gurnee, Illinois.

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Why Shop Local?

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance offers the following 10 benefits for shoppers and their communities when they shop locally owned businesses:

1. Local character and prosperity: In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character have an economic advantage.

2. Community well-being: Locally owned businesses build strong communities by sustaining vibrant town centers, linking neighbors in a web of economic

and social relationships, and contributing to local causes.

3. Local decision-making: Local ownership ensures that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and who will feel the impacts of those decisions.

4. Keeping dollars in the local economy: Compared to chain stores, locally owned businesses recycle a much larger share of their revenue back into the local economy, enriching the whole community.

5. Job and wages: Locally owned businesses create more jobs locally and, in

some sectors, provide better wages and benefits than chains do.

6. Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship fuels America's economic innovation and prosperity, and serves as a key means for families to move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class.

7. Public benefits and costs: Local stores in town centers require comparatively little infrastructure and make more efficient use of public services relative to big box stores and strip shopping malls.

8. Environmental sustainability: Local stores help to sustain vibrant, compact,

walkable town centers—which in turn are essential to reducing sprawl, automobile use, habitat loss, and air and water pollution.

9. Competition: A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long-term.

10. Product diversity: A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based, not on a national sales plan, but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices.

AD SPACE