

Now's the Time to Shop Small

Since 2010, the Saturday after Thanksgiving has been designated "Small Business Saturday." It is a day to recognize small businesses and what they bring to a local community.

"You probably know the direct impact of the small businesses in your community," says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service's rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. "They provide the goods and services I need. My goal is to shop small whenever I can."

"My reason is, I know the people and I find that they take care of me because we have that local connection," he adds.

Yet providing goods and services is just the beginning of what small businesses offer. Many of them provide employment. They also generate sales tax revenue that helps support local needs such as roads, parks and emergency services.

Research also has found that these small-business owners give back to the community in terms of charitable donations. In addition, some provide people to work at charitable events. Also, check how many posters you see in their windows or on their display boards that advertise such events. For some of the bigger events, their entire front window encourages community spirit.

In addition to dollars and other resources, the small-business owners give their time. Often, you find these small-business owners as local leaders, elected officials, and participants in civic and other organizations. If the town has a volunteer ambulance or fire service, they probably are involved.

"The bottom line: They are crucial in developing and maintaining many of the aspects that form the 'quality of life' in communities, be that community a small, rural town or an identifiable district within a large city," says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). "The owners just respond when asked. They keep things going."

Across the U.S., more than 90 percent of businesses are small. The vast majority of those business have fewer than 20 employees. Many have fewer than 10 or even five employees. Yet they generate a substantial portion of our gross domestic product.

Small businesses are not only sellers in the economic system, but they also are buyers and consumers of goods and services, thus adding more to their total contribution. They typically also are the point of departure for new ventures that may, one day, be a major corporation.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of a community. On Nov 29, stop in at your local small businesses. Make some purchases, but also say thanks for what they do for the community and you as a consumer.

For more information about the impact of small businesses or how to start one, contact your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and email address]. Also visit NDSU's small-

business support website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Or check out Facebook at www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz or Twitter at @gmuske.

Other resources include <http://powerofbusiness.net> and www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship. The Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and SCORE, also can be valuable resources.

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For more information, contact glenn.muske@ndsu.edu or call (701) 328-9718. You also can visit our website, www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness.