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**Holiday Sales Increase at Independent Businesses**

*"Buy Local" is on the minds of more Louisville shoppers*

*Louisville, KY* – In an extremely challenging economic climate, more holiday shoppers deliberately sought out locally owned businesses this year, according to a national survey of more than 1,800 independent businesses that included Louisville business owners. The survey also found that independent retailers in cities with active "Buy Local" or "Think Local First" campaigns, like the Louisville Independent Business Alliance's (LIBA) "Keep Louisville Weird" campaign, reported stronger holiday sales than those in cities without such campaigns. These campaigns have been launched by local business alliances in more than 100 cities and towns. Independent retailers in these cities reported an average increase in holiday sales of 3.0%, compared to 1.0% for those in cities without an active Buy Local initiative. Louisville independent retailers surveyed reported a 6.2% increase in sales on average over last holiday season. And more than 80% of the local business owners surveyed felt that Louisville's "buy local" campaign had a positive impact on holiday sales.

Nick Goldring, winner of LIBA's "Holiday Passport Contest," said "I have always liked unique, local shops, but this contest really drove home the idea that shopping independent stores is in our best interest – more of the dollars stay local." The Holiday Passport Contest was launched in 2008 to create awareness about the importance of buying locally, and to give local consumers an incentive to do so. People who collected 10 receipts from LIBA member businesses entered to win \$1,000 to spend at those businesses. Nick spent the bulk of his dollars at Mom's Music.

"LIBA's Holiday Passport Contest gave people a reason to discover new stores they hadn't been to before," said Todd Brashear, owner of Wild and Woolly Video. "Almost half of the people that entered shopped someplace they hadn't been before, and more than half said it made them more aware of the importance of buying locally."

The national survey was conducted by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a nonprofit research organization, in partnership with several business organizations, including the American Booksellers Association, American Independent Business Alliance, American Specialty Toy Retailers Association, Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, and National Bicycle Dealers Association.

The national survey found that holiday sales for independent retailers were up an average of 2.2%. That contrasts with Commerce Department figures, which show that overall retail sales were down 0.3% in December and up 1.8% in November.

Nearly 80% of those surveyed said public awareness of the value of choosing locally owned businesses had increased in the last year (16% said it had stayed the same).

Similar surveys in 2009 and 2008 likewise found that independent businesses in cities with Buy Local campaigns reported stronger sales than those in communities without such an 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."

"These results reinforce what we've heard from our local affiliates -- that their campaigns are yielding real dividends and shifting local spending," said Jennifer Rockne, director of the American Independent Business Alliance. "That's good news for their local economies. Studies show that small businesses keep more dollars circulating locally and generate the majority of new jobs."

"For the third year in a row, this study demonstrates the bottom-line impact of local business alliances running Think Local First campaigns," said Michelle Long, executive director of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. "Local entrepreneurs are the bedrock of the U.S. economy and, when they work together, they make our communities more resilient, unique, and rewarding places to live."

"This survey demonstrates how important a Buy Local/Local First campaign is in helping independent businesses achieve greater sales," said American Booksellers Association CEO Oren Teicher. "This insight about consumers' preferences is consistent with what we have seen since the launch of IndieBound in 2008. Shoppers value authenticity, they want to connect with and to strengthen their communities, and they recognize that bigger is not always better. Because of that, we believe that this is a time of great potential for locally owned businesses that are committed to working together."

To see full survey results, please visit <http://www.newrules.org/sites/newrules.org/files/2010-survey-results.pdf>.

### **About the Louisville Independent Business Alliance**

The mission of LIBA is to preserve the unique community character of the Metro Louisville area by promoting locally-owned businesses and to educate citizens on the value of shopping locally. For more information and a member list, visit [www.keeplouisvilleweird.com](http://www.keeplouisvilleweird.com).

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