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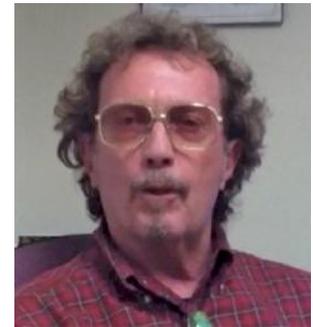
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Small Business Saturday Benefits Local Communities

By Rich Williams, New Mexico MainStreet Director and Arts & Cultural Districts Program Coordinator

Maria-Alicia Cordova cares about her business and the community it serves. Besides offering manicures, haircuts and other personal-care services at Al's Styling Salon in Belen, Cordova serves on the board of the Belen MainStreet Partnership — a community effort to improve the appearance and economic vitality of the city's downtown.



Small Business Saturday — the Saturday after Thanksgiving — draws attention to the important role that Cordova and other independent merchants in New Mexico play in the local, state and national economy.

"Belen has always been good to my business," Cordova said of the venture her father started 57 years ago. "My father raised our family on salon work."



Maria-Alicia Cordova

When communities embrace small businesses, it proves that people can thrive in small towns, she said. "Communities are sustained by local businesses — they anchor a community."

Business owners like Cordova are the core constituents of the New Mexico MainStreet program, an initiative of the New Mexico Economic Development Department. The MainStreet program, which started in 1985, is reviving the state's traditional business districts through investments in infrastructure and amenities that bring new businesses and jobs back to distressed downtowns.

According to a PlaceEconomics report from February 2014, "In the New Mexico Tradition: The Impacts of MainStreet," cities with MainStreet districts have seen 11,400 net jobs created since 1985 and more than \$1 billion invested in upgrading public spaces, buildings and the town's basic physical and organizational structures and systems.

Shop Early and Often

As New Mexico businesses prepare to celebrate Small Business Saturday, New Mexico MainStreet is launching its Shop MainStreet Campaign as a year-round shop-local initiative. The program's theme for 2014-15 is "Support Our Homegrown Businesses."

Both efforts elevate public awareness that shopping locally — not just during the critical holiday season but throughout the year — benefits the community in numerous ways. Local businesses hire local workers; on a larger scale, small businesses created 63 percent of net jobs created in the United States between 1993 and 2013, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Shopping locally also keeps more money circulating at home among area businesses, and it generates tax revenue that supports public services such as police and fire departments, schools and parks. For every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$68 stays in the community, whereas \$100 spent at a national chain leaves only \$43 at home, according to statistics compiled by CustomMade, an online marketplace for custom goods. "Money spent at a local business generates 3.5 times more wealth for the local economy compared to money spent at a chain-owned business."

Shopping close to home also reduces environmental impacts associated with packaging, processing and shipping goods over long distances, according to Environmental Protection Agency data that were part of the CustomMade survey.

But local businesses deserve to be patronized for reasons that go beyond job creation and support to the local tax base. Entrepreneurs who choose to provide a product or service where they live take significant risk to meet local needs, including the risk that they'll be undercut by businesses based elsewhere. Loss of these businesses is a form of economic desertification that can strip a local community of its distinctiveness and independence.

By shopping locally on Small Business Saturday — and throughout the year — New Mexicans help themselves and their communities for the long term.

To learn about New Mexico MainStreet, go to nmmainstreet.org.

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