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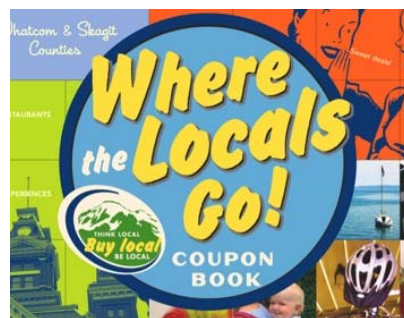
HTA NEWS

Dec. 3, 2006

Study Finds More People Shopping Locally Owned Thanks to "Think Local First"

A three-year-old campaign to encourage people in northwest Washington state to "Think Local First" is having a dramatic effect on spending behavior, according to a recent survey.

Conducted by Applied Research Northwest, the **survey of 300 people in Whatcom County** found that 69 percent are familiar with the Think Local First campaign and 58 percent are making a more deliberate effort to patronize locally owned businesses than they did before the campaign started three years ago.



"These results are phenomenal," said Dr. Pamela Jull, the lead researcher. "Normally, if 1 in 5 households claim familiarity with your program, and change their behavior because of it you would consider it a success. To have nearly 3 in 5 households attributing a behavior change to this program shows an amazing impact."

They survey also found that 86 percent respondents are spending the same or more money at locally owned businesses than they did before the campaign. Only 12 percent reported spending less.

The Think Local First campaign was created by **Sustainable Connections**, a nonprofit membership organization of 535 businesses in the city of Bellingham and surrounding Whatcom County dedicated to building an economy based on sustainable business practices.

The campaign's logo—an image of nearby Mount Baker with the words "Think Local, Be Local, Buy Local"—appears on hundreds of storefronts, posters, tee-shirts, flyers, and advertisements. The campaign regularly produces newspaper inserts that discuss the importance of supporting locally owned businesses and include a directory of the group's members. Events are held throughout the year, including a Buy Local Week in December, which features contests with prizes, such as a month's worth of free meals at locally owned restaurants. The campaign's *Where the Locals Go* coupon book was the best-selling book in Whatcom County in 2005, beating out *The Da Vinci Code*.

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The survey confirmed that Think Local First is having a substantial impact on people's spending choices, said Sustainable Connections Executive Director Michelle Long. She was particularly encouraged by what the researchers found in their survey of the group's member businesses. When making a decision about a business purchase, 89 percent always or often consider whether the supplier of the goods or services is locally owned and/or whether the product is locally manufactured or grown. More than two-thirds said this is more or much more often than they considered these factors before Think Local First started.

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