

Started your holiday shopping yet? Think, buy local

By TERESA MCMINN For the Daily Record/Sunday News York Daily Record/Sunday News

Updated:

InYork.com

An ornate gift box adorned with a tiny hot-pink and black polka-dot high-heeled shoe isn't something most folks would expect to find at a baseball game.

Yet Kathi Viehman, owner of a small business that makes custom gift boxes, shares the same objective as the York Revolution.

Both want to increase business and help grow the local economy.

Recently, they partnered at a function with several other companies for an event geared to capitalize on each others' commerce.

The idea to combine forces came from Buy Local Coalition - a network that encourages local businesses to buy goods and services from each other and share their customer base.

"It's the largest reference network on the local level that you can find," said Colin Cameron, corporate partnerships associate for the York Revolution and member of Buy Local Coalition.

In September, the Revolution hosted a Girls' Night Out at Sovereign Bank Stadium. The event, presented by Memorial Hospital, drew almost 6,000 visitors.

"We contact different vendors . . . It's a really different and interesting night," Cameron said of the popular program that brings more women to the ballpark. "It's always nice to expand your market . . . open our doors to everybody."

Viehman, who makes elaborate gift boxes at her Spring Garden Township home-based business Packaged To Perfection, set up a display at Girls' Night.

"That led to more business and invitations to participate in craft shows and things like that," she said.

Viehman started the box business in February 2011 after working in public libraries.

"I'd left a job and was looking for a creative outlet," she said and described her craft.

"They're handmade paper gift boxes," she said. "I design and create each one starting with a sheet of paper. . . . It's creating the box itself."

The idea for the boxes -- which come in a 4-inch-square size for \$10 and smaller version for \$6 -- came from a love of scrapbooking, she said.

"I'm very passionate about it," she said of creating gift box art.

The new business "started with friends and sort of grew from there."

She later joined the Buy Local Coalition, which "took my boxes to another level," she said.

"It's very, very well done . . . just a very good resource for everyone," she said of the coalition and movement to

encourage shoppers to patronize local businesses. "You're keeping the money in the neighborhood. It builds relationships. It builds trust, and trust in business is often very hard to come by."

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Crystal Davis is one of the founding members of Buy Local Coalition, which was formed about 18 months ago.

The coalition encourages businesses in York, Adams, Lancaster, Dauphin and Cumberland counties to support each other. It also hosts educational and networking events to help its member businesses grow.

The idea for the network came from a group of local professionals including Davis, who works as a sales representative for locally owned KBS -- a dump truck service company in Jackson Township.

Founding members of the coalition include KBS, Penn Waste, Quality Digital Office Technology, Rohrbaugh Insurance, Ream Printing, York Traditions Bank, Kibler Auto Glass, Keystruct Construction and On Site Auto Sales.

"We decided the Buy Local movement was something that could work here," she said.

The coalition, which was recently designated a nonprofit organization and is governed by a board of directors, is free to join and does not include membership dues.

Members of the group volunteer time, goods and services such as space to hold events, food and beverages, speakers, business cards and attorney fees.

"We do have membership across the board and we're really, really growing," said Davis, vice president of the coalition's board. The network gets roughly 25 new members from a variety of industries each month, she said.

"The majority of our members are in York. We hope to expand, get more events from the other four counties," she said. "Our members have seen an increase in their business from other Buy Local Members."

When consumers buy from local businesses, more money stays in the community, which benefits area nonprofit groups and neighborhood projects, Davis said.

"The money recirculates locally," she said.

Marc Ungar, regional manager at York-based MidAtlantic Industrial Equipment and Buy Local Coalition president, said the network is gaining momentum.

"We have seen the power in numbers," he said via email. "We have also seen over 100 (percent) growth in the coalition in a year's time."

THE BUY LOCAL COALITION, a relatively new nonprofit group that serves York, Adams, Lancaster, Dauphin and Cumberland counties, aims to educate the public about the benefits of buying from local businesses.

The growing coalition includes hundreds of local members, such as:

--- Atomic Bounce in York

--- Case's Soy Candles in Felton

--- Dietz Nauman in Mount Wolf

- Grindstone Outdoors in Delta
- Interstellar Studios & Productions in Red Lion
- JAZ Design Company in Rossville
- King's Pet Adaptive Services and Supplies in Wellsville
- Miller & Son in Fawn Grove
- Penn-Mar INK in Glen Rock
- Splash Window Cleaning in Wrightsville
- Unique Scapes LLC in Stewartstown

The group is free to join. Learn more at www.buylocalcoalition.com/index.html.

Local businesses have deep community roots

Dover-area native Dave Cochran was 12 years old when he got a job as a floor sweeper and helper in a shoe repair shop. Two years later, he owned his own business.

"His dad cosigned a loan," said Donna Cochran of her husband and father-in-law. Dave Cochran used the money to buy an old shoe repair shop that was out of business.

That was 48 years ago.

Since then, Dave Cochran moved his store to other locations.

Today, Dave and Donna Cochran own Dave's Shoe Repair in Dover Township. The couple have worked at the location since about 1985.

Loyal local customers have helped them remain successful, Donna Cochran said.

But the path to success is a two-way street.

"He respects his customers. . . . He's friendly, listens to what they want and tells them what they need," Donna Cochran said. "He has a good following in the business . . . a big customer list. You can recognize faces."

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Judy Toomey's father was the original owner of Jackson Township-based KBS trucking company in the mid-1950s and ran the business from their home.

She helped process paperwork for the company when she was a child and continued working for the family business into adulthood.

As a young mother raising her small children, she worked for the business from her home.

Today, she is office manager at KBS and has handled the company's payroll since the 1960s.

Why buy local

--- "By making the decision to use a local company (versus) the big box stores or companies not headquartered locally, you have the opportunity to keep money in our community, stimulate the local economy and keep your friends, family and neighbors working."

-- Marc Ungar, York-based MidAtlantic Industrial Equipment regional manager and Buy Local Coalition president

--- "I'm a big believer in 'I scratch your back, you scratch mine.' . . . Customers that use our business, I try to help them."

-- Chris Markey, general manager of promotional apparel and products company 2theTee Outfitters in West York

--- "It's sustainability for the local economy. . . . (Money) circulates (and) comes back to you eventually."

-- Hunter Lamparter, president of M&M Pallet in West York

--- "When I need a service, I would rather be able to look the person in the eye. . . . It just creates a better connection."

-- Beth Fowler, business mentor for York SCORE in Manchester Township