

Surprising Business Owners on Small Business Saturday



Our Town America of Charlotte Gears Up for Small Business Saturday

The Charlotte Observer (November 2015) – Look for some changes this year with Small Business Saturday, the shopping holiday that happens the Saturday after Thanksgiving. This year's event is on Nov. 28.

Shop Micro Local, the pop-up shop featuring Charlotte-area food and products producers, won't be back this year. Organizers, who first launched the vendors showcase in 2013, say they've been devoted to other projects this year, and hope to bring back the event next year.

Time Magazine reports that American Express, which created the shopping holiday in 2010, is no longer offering a promotion that gives consumers a statement credit for shopping at participating small businesses.

Although the story is subtitled "The bribe for shopping at small businesses is gone," the article also points out that small businesses may no longer need the help. Awareness of the day remains strong, with 88 million consumers shopping in 2014, according to a survey by the National Federation of Independent Business and American Express. That was up 14.9 percent from the previous year. (Shoppers spent less, though – an average of \$162, down 11.5 percent from the

previous year, according to the survey.)

Other key events are returning as expanded versions:

Historic South End is bringing back its tradition of showcasing the area's shops and boutiques, the vendors at Atherton Mill, and running a Holiday Trolley making stops near area shops. Fashion trucks, which made their Small Business Saturday debut last year, will be back.

New this year in South End: Organizers are opening two pop-up shops, at Triple C Brewing and Unknown Brewing. Check out a list of participating shops at <http://historicsouthend.com/small-business-saturday/>.

In downtown Belmont in Gaston County, the Belmont Merchant Association kicks off the day with Breakfast with Santa, which happens 9-11 a.m. at Cherubs Café at 23 North Main St.

Throughout the day, merchants will give away a total of 100 swag bags containing coupons, products and information on different events throughout the month. Shoppers can also pick up a passport to get stamped at different businesses, making them eligible to win a gift basket containing items from participating businesses.

Christina Moose of Meese Jewelry Company, who is president of the Belmont Merchant Association, says the town uses Small Business Saturday to promote happenings throughout December, which include a Dec. 11 Christmas Village event. On Fridays, there will be free gift wrapping stations in two locations, with donations going to local charities.



Elsewhere, local entrepreneur Jane McElhaney plans to drive throughout Charlotte in a decorated car to surprise small business owners with balloons, gifts and massages. McElhaney is a franchisee with Our Town America, which mails housewarming gifts from local businesses to area newcomers.

To contact Jane and Tom McElhaney of Our Town America Charlotte, you can fill out

a Contact Form or call 704-341-4982.

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