

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Survey Finds Support for "Buy Local" Boosted Holiday Spending at Independent Stores**

*The survey was conducted by the Independent Business Forum, a new collaborative network of organizations representing independent businesses.*

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (Jan. 23, 2008)—As major chains report weak holiday sales, a nationwide survey of 1,382 independent retailers has found that a desire to support locally owned businesses is emerging as a factor in people's shopping choices.

The survey, which included retailers in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., found that, even in a difficult economic climate, many independent retailers are holding their own and even seeing sales gains by emphasizing their local ownership and community roots.

The survey found that independent retailers in cities with active "Buy Local" campaigns reported much larger increases in holiday sales on average than those in cities without such campaigns. In the last few years, "Buy Local" campaigns have been launched by local business alliances in more than three dozen communities. Independent retailers in these cities reported an average gain in sales of about 2% over the 2006 holiday season, while those in cities without "Buy Local" campaigns saw an increase of less than 0.5%.

"People made a special effort to shop locally and were vocal about their support," one retailer commented. Another reported: "Our customers are responding to hearing this message both locally and nationally."

Eighty-two percent of the retailers surveyed said that the fact that their business is locally owned and independent matters to their customers.

The survey was undertaken by the Independent Business Forum, a newly formed network of trade associations and other organizations that represent independent businesses. Participants in the forum are working together on issues of common concern to their members.

"It's heartening to see that so many consumers understand the important role independent retailers play in their communities—and that they are increasingly choosing to 'shop local.' Study after study has made clear that locally owned businesses have a far greater positive economic impact on their communities, contribute more to local charities, and are largely responsible for our towns and cities retaining their unique characteristics," said Oren J. Teicher, chief operating officer of the American Booksellers Association.

"Independent retailers are especially susceptible to a sluggish economy, so it is gratifying to learn that consumers are conscious that where they shop matters a great deal to their community," said Kathleen McHugh, executive director of the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association.

"We're seeing the beginnings of a shift in people's shopping choices, particularly in places where 'buy local' campaigns have brought this to the forefront of public consciousness. 'Locally owned' is

following in the footsteps of 'organic' as people look for ways to support a more sustainable economy and revitalize their communities," said Stacy Mitchell, author of *Big-Box Swindle* and senior researcher for the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which administered the survey.

The Independent Business Forum plans to repeat the survey next year. The group is also collaborating on initiatives to increase public awareness of the value of locally owned businesses and to address public policy issues that affect independent businesses.

"We continue to see the power independent businesses and communities gain through local Independent Business Alliances, so it makes sense for advocates of independent businesses to organize and build on that success nationally," said Jennifer Rockne, executive director of the American Independent Business Alliance, which helped to convene the Independent Business Forum.

"NARDA is looking forward to being able to help our members as a result of information exchange with other associations that serve independent retailers. This survey is very timely in light of what we see as a challenging economic environment in 2008," said Tom Drake, president and CEO of the North American Retailer Dealers Association.

Independent Business Forum participants (this is a partial list):

American Booksellers Association (<http://www.bookweb.org>)

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