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Leaders urge support of local business

By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — As the holiday season approaches, the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce and the City of Fairfield are encouraging residents to support local businesses.

The campaign, called "Support Local Business," uses banners and ads with that message, asking shoppers to give their local merchants a try to boost the local economy.

"Small business is the backbone of any business community," said Kert Radel, the president of the chamber. "Our major corporations are vital to economic development as well, so we don't want to dismiss their importance. But we need to support small business whenever we possibly can."

The campaign cites a study by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which notes that "in an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character have an economic advantage.

In addition, local companies create more jobs locally and sometimes provide better wages and benefits than chains. They also require less infrastructure and offer more diversity of products, according to the study.

"This was a conversation the city of Fairfield and the chamber talked about doing. City council wanted to reach out to the business community and the mayor, and we thought this would be a very good campaign," Radel said.

Kathy Carpe has owned the Fairfield Framing Gallery for 18 years and has mostly a local customer base. While a national chain brings back only 15 cents for every dollar spent in the community, a local business puts 45 cents back in the local economy, she said.

"My customers are wonderful. I have absolutely no complaints. They have become my friends," Carpe said. "We all occasionally need to shop at national chains. And that's OK. But buying local really does put more money back into the community."

"As the business community goes, so goes Fairfield," said Councilman Bill Woeste. "You can find just about anything you want right here locally."

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