

Opinion: Shopping locally needs to be more than a 1-day event

By Rhonda Ahbrams, Reno Gazette-Journal

President Barack Obama did it. Republicans did it. I did it. So did 103 million other Americans. We shopped at independent stores on Small Business Nov. 26. We bought gifts in small stores, ate meals at small restaurants. Now, how do we keep customers coming back to small businesses throughout the holiday season?

Small Business Saturday was the most successful “shop local” campaign I’ve seen in my 20 years of advocating for small companies. Yes, I know it’s a promotional campaign started by American Express, but let’s give credit where credit is due. Small Business Saturday significantly raised awareness of the importance of patronizing small businesses.

According to American Express, the sponsor of Small Business Saturday, about one-third of Americans shopped at an independent business on Nov. 26, and sales from Amex cardholders at those businesses increased 23 percent over last year’s Small Business Saturday. More than 2.7 million people “liked” the Small Business Saturday Facebook page; to put that in perspective, that’s more Facebook fans than NASCAR.

“Black Friday was the best day ever in my history, and Small Business Saturday was right up there,” said Pam Hammond, owner of the delightful gift shop, Paddington Station, in Ashland, Ore.

Ashland is always packed the Friday after Thanksgiving as the town hosts a holiday parade and caroling in the downtown plaza. But Hammond said Small Business Saturday kept the

momentum going.

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