

Keeping it loc

Follow The 3/50 Project and you'll support small businesses when you shop.

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It's a simple little flyer that's out to save the world.

Don Stevens and Scott Mackey, owners of Wickedly Sent Soap & Candle Company in Canandaigua, are among the dozen or so business owners locally — and thousands nationally — who are handing out write-ups on The 3/50 Project, a national effort to encourage people to shop locally.

Many people like the idea of supporting small local businesses, but they don't always show it with their actions.

"I don't think it's

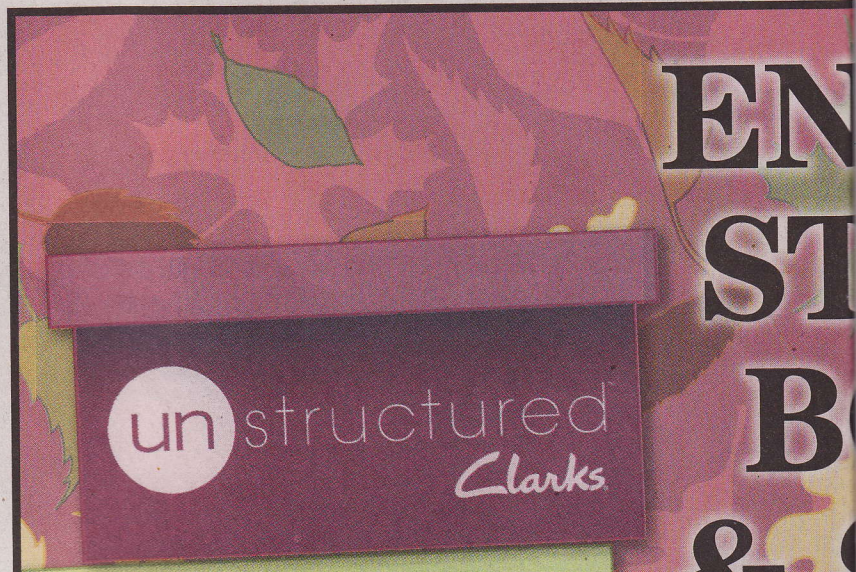
48 cents returned to the community.

The Project has quickly caught on in a few short months, with more than 9,700 registered supporters and 143,000 visitors to the site.

The owners of Wickedly Sent, which specializes in handmade bath and body products, happened upon the site while brainstorming how to get locals into their shop. Stevens and Mackey saw it as "a non-confrontational way to talk to customers about how they spend their money," Mackey says. They print out the flyers from the Web site to hand out to customers and to thank them for shopping locally.



Sales associate Christina Sorrentino of East Irondequoit, right, assists Ke... picking out a bracelet at Craft Company No. 6 in Rochester.





Baxter

consultant who founded The 3/50 Project in March. But, she explains, “we’re so caught up in our high speed lives and we’re flying along so fast.” When we’re going at warp speed, we tend to overlook smaller stores.

So Baxter launched her Web site, The350Project.net, asking consumers to consider three independently owned businesses they would be sad to see disappear, and then commit to spending \$50 monthly between the three.

Out of every dollar spent in an independent small business, Baxter explains, 68 cents returns to the community through taxes, business related purchases, payroll and more. The same dollar spent in a chain store will see just

“I don’t think it’s a conscious choice,” says Cinda Baxter, the retail

“I feel great because I know that the money I’m spending is going back into my community.”

Beth Weeden

to hand out to customers and to thank them for shopping locally.

Beth Weeden, a regular at the shop, has become a strong supporter of the project—with one small complication. “My husband and I were brainstorming together and I said ‘What three stores do you think we should pick?’ And we came up with nine!” Weeden says. “So for us, it was hard to narrow it down to three.”

Weeden says she has been an advocate of shopping locally for years. One of her favorite reasons is the customer service. “Of

course we got to know the owners,” she says. “There’s something about going in and they know what you like. It’s like going in to see friends ... and I feel great because I know that the money I’m spending is going back into my community.”

Lynn Allinger, owner of Craft Company No. 6 in the Neighborhood of the Arts in Rochester, also registered her business with 3/50. And she backs





Photo by Matt Wittmeyer

Local

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it up by not only shopping locally as much as possible but also making it a point to shop in her own neighborhood.

"I want our neighborhood to continue to grow and be successful," Allinger says. "So we try as much as possible to eat in restaurants in our area and spend as much of our dollars as we can on services in our neighborhood."

Other Rochester businesses to sign up with The 3/50 Project include Blanchard Florist in Greece, Dan's Crafts &

Things (a hobby shop in Rochester) and Windsor Cottage (a furniture and home décor consignment shop in Winton Place in Brighton). Signing up simply registers their support; there's no obligation or cost, but businesses can download the flyer that explains the concept of choosing local stores and committing to patronizing them.

Groups like the Business Association of the South Wedge Area (BASWA) have a similar goal. BASWA promotes independent business in the Rochester neighborhood and encourages them to

"The diversity of our South Wedge small businesses is critical to the character of our neighborhood."

Christina Jones

support each other. South Wedge businesses can register at www.baswa.org and receive discounted membership to Visit Rochester, discounted advertising in area publications and deals on merchandise available on the Web site.

BASWA has recently re-invested membership fees in the form of street

benches, banners, planters, totem bicycle racks and many of the garden spaces throughout the neighborhood.

"We tried to make our streetscape much more walkable than it was in the past, to get our residents out and walking through our commercial district," says Christina Jones, president of BASWA and co-owner of

Historic Houseparts in the South Wedge. "The diversity of our South Wedge small businesses is critical to the character of our neighborhood."

Preserving character also was behind Maura Harrison's decision to sign up with The 3/50 Project. Harrison, owner of Sassafras, a flower and gift boutique on East Avenue, says, "I decided to participate because I was visiting people out of town and suddenly realized that every town you go to in the U.S. is starting to look the same. I think that the

U.S. is starting to lose its smaller businesses that make it so unique."

That being said, The 3/50 Project is not about abandoning the chain stores. Instead, it's about moderation and knowing what is available in local independent businesses versus the chains.

"I really don't see it as the big box stores against the small businesses," Harrison says. "It's about putting the best product forward for the customer." □

Local Gifts

To find made-in-Rochester products, go to page 151.