



Things Are Looking Up

From everything I hear around town, the local economy has picked up appreciably in the past couple of months. I feel certain the upswing is due in part to Bloomingtonians making a concerted effort to shop at locally owned businesses.

I am also encouraged by the fact that after the distressing losses of tutto bène and Jazz at the Station, no other local business that I know of has folded. Which is good news. But we can't relax our efforts—the national economy is still in a ditch and locally we are still feeling the pain.

When you shop, keep this in mind: For every \$100 spent in locally owned, independent stores, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll, and other expenditures. If you spend \$100 in a national chain, only \$43 stays in the community.

So here are a few additional steps we can take to improve our economy.

Buy local gift certificates. Gift certificates/cards do make great presents. But pass up that alluring display of gift cards at your supermarket (many are for chain stores that we don't even have in Bloomington!) and purchase gift certificates from local establishments. Just about every store in town has gift certificates—you just have to ask.

Purchase Downtown Bloomington Checks. Bet you didn't even know they existed! These checks are just like gift certificates except that they are good at dozens of downtown shops and restaurants. You can buy them at the Convention Center, or learn more by calling 336-3681.

Pick three stores and spend \$50. "The 3/50 Project" is a national grass-roots movement to save local businesses. "What three independently owned businesses would you miss if they disappeared" is a question asked on its website (the350project.net). Answer that question and then make it a point to spend 50 bucks in each store.

Shop less on the Internet and from catalogues. Unless it is something you cannot find in Bloomington—in local or chain stores—don't spend your money online or with catalogue companies. If you do, *absolutely nothing* comes back to the community.

Support the Mayor's Initiative. *Bloom Magazine* wholeheartedly supports Mayor Mark Krusan's recent proposal to prevent more chain stores from opening on the courthouse Square or Kirkwood Avenue. Almost certainly, this concept is going to meet with tough opposition. You can express your support by calling your councilperson or e-mailing mayor@bloomington.in.gov.

Note: Despite the odds (1 in 10 for magazine startups) and the recession, we're still here. With this issue, *Bloom* completes its third year of publication. People tell us we have become an important part of the fabric of life in Bloomington. If you agree, please patronize the businesses that advertise in our pages—they are all independent and almost all are local. Without them, we could not exist.

Malcolm Abrams
editor and publisher