

NEWS RELEASE



ST. JOSEPH
Chamber of Commerce

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHAMBER'S CHAMPIONS OF COMMERCE CAMPAIGN HELPS SMALL BUSINESSES WHERE IT COUNTS: THE CASH REGISTER

(St. Joseph, MO) -- In 2020, the pandemic and the shutdowns hurt small businesses, especially those in the retail and restaurant sector. To inspire residents to spend more of their money locally, the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce launched the Champions of Commerce buy local campaign. Reporting shows that to date one part of the campaign has brought more than \$55,000 into small business cash registers.

The campaign was multi-faceted ranging from educational videos, webinars and websites about emergency funding, PPE and ordinances to a social media toolkit and a full advertising campaign. One of the last pieces of the campaign was the Champions of Commerce Gift Certificate Program.

Launched just before the holiday shopping season, the Gift Certificate Program aimed to bring cash flow quickly to businesses. Altec, one of St. Joseph's largest employers, partnered with the Chamber to jump start the program. It had been forced to cancel its annual family day but wanted to find a way to thank employees for their hard work. Altec had seen the Champions of Commerce campaign and was inspired to help local businesses, said Lana Beavers, Human Resources Manager.

So far, more than \$55,000 in gift certificates have been redeemed with 42 small businesses.

"It's always good to keep local money local," said Craig Boyer, owner of St. Joe Boot. "We've seen a lot of Altec employees come in. It definitely drove traffic through our doors and has been a good little shot in the arm."

The program expanded to include other major employers and gift card redemptions have remained steady. Of course, a lot of certificates were redeemed near Christmas, when Boyer said a lot of purchases were kids boots, clothes and accessories. But since the holidays, spending has gone back to parents shopping for themselves.

"Every week we see some come in," he said. (Businesses bring the certificates to the Chamber to be reimbursed.) "I don't think we've missed a week of going down to get reimbursed, even when it was bitter cold out."

This is just the result the Chamber and participating large employers hoped to achieve.

"The pandemic made everyone realize how we have to come together, especially in times of crisis," said R. Patt Lilly, Chamber President and CEO. "This circle of major employers helping small local businesses by encouraging employees to shop local is something we are proud of and hope continues long after the pandemic ends."

So far 78 percent of certificates have been redeemed at restaurants, 20 percent at retailers and 2 percent to services. To see a list of merchants that accept Champions of Commerce gift cards, see championsofcommerce.com and click on the gift certificate link at the top of the page.

About the Chamber:

The St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce has been the catalyst for economic growth and development in Northwest Missouri since its inception in the mid-1800s. The Chamber serves as the unified voice of business that advocates, promotes and inspires the St. Joseph area. The Chamber strives to create partnerships and promote a culture of excellence that allows the almost 1,300 Chamber members to thrive and the St. Joseph area to prosper.

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