



Small Business Saturday, SpendRiverbend campaigns will boost local merchants, region

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Today is **Small Business Saturday** and throughout the River Bend area, residents are spending their dollars supporting local businesses and retail shops.

Monica Bristow, president of the Riverbend Growth Association, said it is so important to shop local during the holiday season and said the dollars spent locally turn over several times.

“We also have our new Spend Riverbend campaign and we encourage people to participate through the holiday season,” she said. “Small Business Saturday started about five years ago and it is just one day to spend local, but we wanted to expand that and we worked with other organizations to develop Spend Riverbend.”

Bristow said she thinks it is great to keep the dollars spent local and the **Spend Riverbend Initiative** should be very popular.

“We have the mayors behind it and several other businesses and community members,” she said. “Whether money is spent with Walmart, Kmart or any local business, that helps sales tax revenue and the local tax dollars going back into community coffers. It helps retailers, employers, local street paving and much more. This is something we should be doing year-round. I know I will be out there Saturday spending locally.”

Area residents are encouraged to shop locally with Spend Riverbend, which has been kicked off by a coalition of community organizations and local media. When you “Spend Riverbend” you are helping your friends and neighbors. This united effort is led by Alton Encore, Alton Main Street Association, Alton Regional Convention & Visitor’s Bureau, North Alton-Godfrey Business Council, Riverbend Growth Association and Upper Alton Business Association.

Local media, RiverBender.com, Advantage News, The Telegraph and WBGZ are all also participating.

Community engagement levels in the initiative will be high. A contest will run through Monday, Dec. 21, 2015, for consumers to win great prizes by taking selfies in front of or inside a store in the River Bend. Post it on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the #SpendRiverbend and you are automatically entered. In addition you can bring 10 copies of receipts from local merchants and you can take them to the Alton Regional Convention & Visitor’s Bureau to enter. Prizes include \$1,000 cash, sponsored by Riverbend community organizations. Other prizes are a ride in the Batmobile sponsored by Motoexotica.com; \$500 framing sponsored by Picture This & More, a one-year gym membership sponsored by Nautilus Fitness, a season pass to the new Grafton Ice Rink, sponsored by The Loading Dock, and two tickets to a performance of your choice at the 2016 season at the Liberty Bank Amphitheater, sponsored by Liberty Bank.

“This is the first time I have seen all the local media and organizations come together like this, it is great to see,” said **Liberty Bank President Dale Blachford** of the campaign. “I can’t tell you how much it helps not only the business owner, but it helps you (the consumer). When you shop at local businesses, those tax dollars come back here, so you are going to get it back. If you spend it somewhere else, it doesn’t come back here the same way.”

“When I was appointed to take the lead in establishing the Shop Local section on our site, I was ecstatic, although I knew it would take some work,” said **Brittany Kohler**,

The logo for SpendRiverbend features a stylized white dollar sign with a plus sign inside, followed by the text "SpendRiverbend" in a white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is centered on a solid black rectangular background.

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ger at RiverBender.com/EdGlenToday.com. “Not only was I excited to be a part of something fresh and new this holiday season, but also to be able to offer something that can benefit both shoppers and business owners in our area.”

“The first step was getting the word out and getting businesses on board,” Kohler said. “Then we had to share those special offers with the community and let people know that the opportunity to save money is there, right at your fingertips.”

“We are thrilled about the success of this whole campaign and the customer feedback has been immeasurable,” Kohler said. “We exceeded our goal within a week or two and have nearly quadrupled it since!”

For more visit the campaign website at www.spendriverbend.com. Updates will be posted on the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/spendriverbend>.