

A note from Ron. A concerned customer wrote this recently and sent it to me. I appreciated her views and concern in these difficult economic times. I felt it should be shared with others! Every retail business owner in Casper needs your help... now! -Ron

"Supporting Small Local Businesses"
by Glenda Hadley

Small business owners are vital to the community. They are the ones that offer personal service; they care about the customer; and they live and work in the local area. Many small business owners are struggling today with the burden of inventory, taxes, and trying to compete with the chains, which by the way, they can't.

Chain stores are able to purchase in large quantities thus they reduce prices. The people who work in them do normally live in the community, but the vast amount of the stores income goes out of state and, many times, out of the country. They do not offer personalized service, nor do the employees care if you are a satisfied customer; they get paid either way.

Yes, at times, chains can offer a product for less, but I, personally, like to count the cost savings. If the product fails will I get personal service to repair it or replace it? Will I have to take my time and effort to negotiate the repair? Will I have to take my time to box it up - take it to UPS - and then worry about it coming back in good shape or having to do it all over again? What is the 'real,' warranty of the product and who is responsible? So, if I have to deal long distance with someone then the cost savings isn't really a savings; it ends up costing me more in time, effort, stress, and, sometimes, money. I like personal service and I like knowing the people who own the business.

When I was growing up, my grandparents and parents owned a small neighborhood grocery store. I grew up in that store. We delivered groceries; allowed people to pay for their food when they got paid by keeping charge accounts for them; visited with the customers when they came in (sometimes at length); and we cared about their lives, their families, and their customer satisfaction. Our lives revolved around the business, as is true with all small family businesses. In order to survive and maintain a clientele a small business constantly has to offer something the chains can't.

Chain stores and internet buying have become a way of life for most Americans. The small business owners, who are the backbone of this nation's communities, are often neglected. Most manufacturing is

done in foreign countries these days and imported back into the U.S. This is an unfortunate situation for employment in America. **Small business owners** cannot employ hundreds of employees, but they do offer more than the chains can offer:

They truly care about their customers.

The best book I have read on the subject of supporting local businesses was written by a College Professor named, Scott Savage. He and his wife, after living the "buy, buy, buy," lifestyle in New York, decided to move to a quieter and more honest lifestyle. They choose to eventually join the Quakers in Ohio. He writes in his book, A Plain Life, "Shopping in the local economy was returning money to people - not businesses so much as *people* - whom we wanted to be there for a long time. It was a commitment: If I wanted Yoder's to be there in the future, I couldn't go to Wal-Mart to buy Tasha's (his daughter) boots on sale. In the way of accounting that the Amish were unknowingly teaching us, it would simply cost too much to save that little bit of money."

Here is some good sound economic advice: Always count the real cost.