

BUSINESS connections

There's no place like home

*Whether it's Boone (pictured here) or any of our communities,
SkyLineSkyBest believes in supporting local businesses*





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BUSINESS connections

We love local! That is, we love providing services to local customers, utilizing local companies, supporting local businesses and partnering with our local chambers of commerce to ensure our region's economy gets the dollars it deserves.

We hope this issue of *Business Connections* will help you love local too. Page 3 gets it all started with **7 Great Reasons to Buy Local**; here you'll be reminded of the importance of keeping money within the local economy.

On pages 4 and 5, you'll find more details about how SkyLine/SkyBest is **Walking the Local Walk** by doing business with local companies and supporting our area chambers of commerce. You'll also learn more about **SkyLine's Chamber Participation**, including sponsorships, events and board and committee involvement.

Next, see page 6 for a checklist that can help your business environment **look its best for customers**. When you do business locally, you want to be sure to make a good impression!

Finally, while many local businesses are small businesses, it doesn't mean they don't have a huge effect on a local and even national level. The article on page 7 describes how **Small Businesses Have Big Impact**.

As a local company ourselves, we're right here to assist you with your communications needs. Don't hesitate to call us or stop by any time; we'll help you take the next step in making your local business grow.

Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins
Chief Executive Officer



7 Great Reasons to Buy Local

We all benefit by boosting the area economy

Every time you choose where to purchase goods or services, you have a powerful opportunity to make a difference in your community. When you choose local businesses and locally produced goods and services, you're reinvesting money in your area and helping to create a stronger local economy. Here are some of the top reasons to buy local:

Greater Economic Vitality

The money you spend in locally owned stores has two to three times the economic impact of dollars spent at national retailers. Studies show that for every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$45 goes back into the community and the local tax base. By comparison, for every \$100 spent at a chain store, only \$14 goes back.

More and Better Jobs

For every two jobs a national retailer brings to a community, three higher-wage jobs are lost due to local businesses closing. Small local businesses are the largest employer nationally and in local communities, and they provide the most jobs to local residents.

Protection of Unique Culture

Local one-of-a-kind businesses reflect each area's culture and character, contributing to tourism success.

Improved Product Selection

A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based on the needs of their local customers rather than a national sales plan, results in a much broader range of product choices.



Environmental Benefits

Big-box stores and other national retailers usually require large undeveloped land to accommodate their needs. Buying local means shopping closer to home, which means less sprawl and the resulting habitat loss along with reduced driving and oil dependence.

Increased Support for Community Groups

Local non-profit organizations receive an average of 250 percent more support from smaller, locally owned business owners than they do from national companies.

For every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$45 goes back into the community.

Efficient Use of Taxes

Local businesses typically require a much smaller infrastructure investment compared to nationally owned stores that enter a community. A smaller investment enables the community to use public services more efficiently.

It may not always be possible to buy what you need from a local business, but it's worth taking a minute to think local first.

Walking the Local Walk

SkyLine proactively works with regional companies and supports area chambers



Photo by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com

As a local business with national competitors, SkyLine appreciates it when customers select us to provide their Internet, TV and other services. Along with giving back to its member communities, SkyLine tries to do business with local companies whenever possible. Karen Powell, Public Relations Administrator, says, "We have a purchasing coordinator who looks for local providers first. It's all about being part of the community."

Another way SkyLine helps the local community is through our activities and partnerships with area chambers of commerce. Powell explains, "The chambers do a lot to promote local businesses, especially encouraging the region's many residents and visitors alike to buy local." Here, you'll find descriptions of area chambers' ongoing efforts to support local businesses and communities.

Alleghany Chamber of Commerce **(www.sparta-nc.com)**

The Alleghany Chamber of Commerce works closely with government and community leaders to advocate for small businesses. Ashley Weaver, Executive Director, says, "We try to ensure that any decisions made regarding the economy will have a positive impact on business owners." Because many large companies have left the area, entrepreneurs and small business

owners are becoming more important for workforce development and an improved economy. Weaver says, "Shopping locally not only supports those merchants but supports the community's overall fiscal health."

Ashe County Chamber of Commerce **(www.ashechamber.com)**

Many business members of the Ashe County Chamber of Commerce are very small; 85 percent have five or fewer employees. To boost these businesses, the Chamber publishes a visitor guide and an e-newsletter that includes member information and events; it also allows businesses to display their cards and brochures. In addition, the Chamber has developed a consulting group of retired executives to assist entrepreneurs; this valuable service is free, confidential and available to anyone in Ashe County. "Buying locally keeps the money in Ashe County," says Executive Director Cabot Hamilton. "It helps sustain local businesses that can then employ more local people."

Avery Chamber of Commerce **(www.averycounty.com)**

The Avery Chamber holds many events, such as the Business Expo and High Country Trolley Wine Tours. On the wine tours, people experience local businesses as well as the beautiful scenery along the way. Some decide they want to visit other areas of Avery County and maybe even buy a home in the area. Executive

Director Sue Freeman says, “With just that one event we touch wineries, restaurants, realtors, contractors, builders and hospitality businesses.” The Chamber distributes guides and magazines, and members are listed on the Chamber website with a link to their own website. The Chamber also works closely with the North Carolina Department of Tourism.

Banner Elk Chamber of Commerce

(www.bannerelk.org)

The Banner Elk Chamber firmly believes in doing business locally. President Richard McGuire says, “If we keep money in the community, it benefits everyone including businesses and the tax base. Everyone prospers by doing business locally.” The Chamber helps ensure the success of local businesses through its “Come Visit and Stay Forever” promotion, which includes discounts with local merchants. The promotion is advertised online and through an email campaign. McGuire notes, “The area features many beautiful places to visit including lakes, mountains, resorts and scenic areas for hiking.” The Chamber also sponsors community events including summer concerts, a Fourth of July parade and Christmas in the Park.

We have a purchasing coordinator who looks for local providers first. It’s all about being part of the community.

— KAREN POWELL, PUBLIC RELATIONS ADMINISTRATOR, SKYLINE/SKYBEST

Beech Mountain Chamber of Commerce

(www.beechmountainchamber.com)

The Beech Mountain Chamber of Commerce understands that small businesses are the backbone of the regional economy and that community members can improve the economy through their spending habits. The Chamber supports small businesses directly with a “Lunch and Learn” program. Director Kate Gavenus says, “These events give business owners the opportunity to learn from small business experts.” Those interested in attending a “Lunch and Learn” program or learning more can call Gavenus at 828-387-9283.

Boone Area Chamber of Commerce

(www.boonechamber.com)

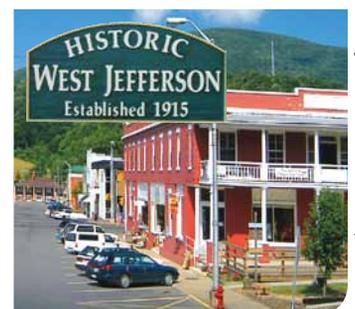
The mission of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce is to support small business through services, workshops, community marketing, programming, partnering and promotion. The Chamber annually publishes *FOCUS* magazine, which highlights the area’s unique

qualities and lists all Chamber members. The Chamber also promotes local businesses with a ShopLOCAL campaign. President/CEO Dr. Dan Meyer says, “Closer is better! We encourage the region to ShopLOCAL, DineLOCAL and GiveLOCAL.” The program includes activities that help Chamber members improve customer service, achieve a competitive marketing advantage and become more responsive to consumer needs.

SkyLine’s Chamber Participation

SkyLine believes firmly in doing business locally whenever possible. To show it, we partner extensively with local chambers. Here are just a few examples:

- SkyLine is a member of eight area chambers.
- SkyLine employees serve on the Ashe Chamber and Boone Chamber Boards of Directors and on various committees.
- For the Alleghany Chamber, SkyLine is among the sponsors of the annual Mountain Heritage Festival, held in September; and airs a monthly Chamber Showcase that spotlights Alleghany Chamber members.
- SkyLine is an Ashe Chamber Partner, and hosts one of the three major Chamber meetings throughout the year—the Outrageously Good Customer Service Award Breakfast—as well as one of the Member’s Blast networking events.
- SkyLine supports the Boone Chamber as a program partner, a Chamber golf tournament and Adult Spelling Bee event sponsor, and a participant in the Boone Business Expo.



Photos by Todd Bush, www.bushphoto.com

How Does Your Business Look to Customers?

Use this checklist to spot and correct common mistakes



The physical appearance of your business speaks volumes and contributes to customer impressions. So it's important to look around through the eyes of your customers. What do they see when driving up to your building? When walking through the front door?

The checklist below will help you identify areas that need attention in order for your business to project a more positive image.

Outside your business

- ✓ Are there letters missing in your signage or burned out bulbs that cause only part of your business name to be visible? Make sure your signage is legible at all times.
- ✓ Is everything clean and attractive near the entrance to your business? Or are there cigarette butts on the sidewalk and weeds around the bushes? You want the first impression that customers have to be a good one.
- ✓ If your business has store windows, do they feature attractive merchandise displays that are changed regularly? Don't make the mistake of using store windows to simply stock shelves of merchandise; it's not appealing.

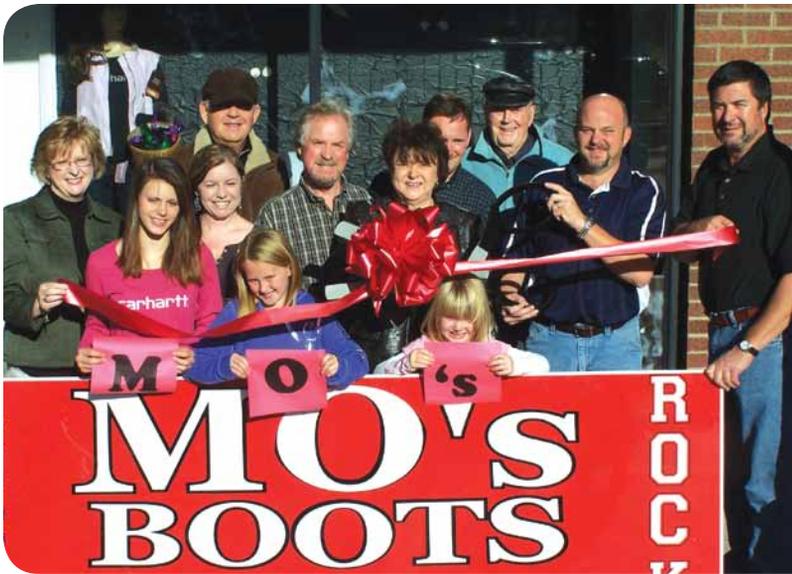
Inside your store or office

- ✓ Does your store or office need a new coat of paint? Is the carpet dirty or torn? Do the floors have broken or missing tiles? If your interior looks tired or poorly maintained, it reflects negatively on your business. Décor matters, so pay attention to it. You may even want to research the psychology of color when choosing new paint and flooring. For example, red makes people hungry and blue is considered relaxing.
- ✓ Do your bathrooms leave something to be desired? If you have public facilities, they need to be kept sparkling clean at all times. Some customers will draw conclusions about your overall level of quality based on the condition of the bathrooms.
- ✓ Is your lighting too low? If you own a retail store, it's imperative that lighting be bright enough so the customers can easily view the merchandise.
- ✓ Does your office look cluttered? Think about how customers feel if they can't find a place to sit because all the chairs are piled high with papers. Keep your office looking organized and welcoming to visitors.

REMEMBER, YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION.

Take the time to critically evaluate the inside and outside of your business on a regular basis. You may want to enlist the help of friends and family members to give you their honest opinions as well. After all, your bottom line may look better if your business looks better.





The Ashe Chamber of Commerce coordinates ribbon-cutting events for new and expanding businesses, including Mo's Boots, which has locations in Boone and downtown West Jefferson.

Small Businesses Have **BIG** Impact

They create most new jobs and help strengthen local communities

Small businesses employ over half of the U.S. private workforce, and there are nearly 28 million small businesses in the U.S., according to a recent *Forbes* article¹. The article also notes that the small business sector is responsible for creating 65 percent of new U.S. jobs since 1995.

Impact on Communities

The positive impact of small businesses doesn't stop there. They often sponsor youth sports teams, support area nonprofits and contribute to the growth and vitality of local economies. Small businesses pay a share of taxes that would otherwise be shifted to homeowners and many provide leadership in such areas as environmentalism and ethics. In addition, they offer a special personal touch that is hard for larger companies to replicate.

Small Business Success

It's a well-known fact that, within five years of starting, about 50 percent of businesses fail. Yet, that means that 50 percent succeed. How do they do it? It depends on whom you ask. Some business managers claim their companies have succeeded due to strong leadership, innovation or luck.² Some researchers have other ideas, including a strict focus on revenue, the ability to change with changing circumstances, financial understanding or marketing ability.

Supporting Small Businesses

Though much of the responsibility for the success of a business is on the owner and employees, consumers can do a lot to support the small businesses they believe in. In 2010, American Express launched an initiative to help individuals and companies do just that. Named Small Business Saturday, the initiative falls on the Saturday after Thanksgiving each year and encourages holiday shoppers to purchase from small and local businesses on this day. Participating in Small Business Saturday is one way to support small businesses; another is to remember to support them throughout the year.

If you work at a company that purchases products or services from small businesses, let others know when they do a great job. This can be done through word of mouth, by posting positive reviews on the company's website, or via Facebook, LinkedIn or Yelp.



Make it a point to work with local and small businesses, even if it costs a little bit more. In doing so, you're helping your local economy and community to thrive.

¹ "16 Surprising Statistics About Small Businesses," *Forbes*, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonnazar/2013/09/09/16-surprising-statistics-about-small-businesses/>.

² "What Really Makes Companies Succeed in the Long Run?" *Forbes*, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kareanderson/2013/06/15-what-really-makes-companies-succeed-in-the-long-run/>.

It Pays to Shop Local



I've had service with SkyLine/SkyBest since the 1970s. Their customer service has continuously been top notch! It always pays to work with local businesses.
- John Brady, owner, Blue Ridge Wood Crafters



From cutting boards to baskets and more, contact Blue Ridge Wood Crafters for all your handmade wooden accessories and furniture.

Contact your local SkyLine/SkyBest business sales coordinator for all your telecommunications needs.

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