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NEWS RELEASE

Coulter: Shop Local This Holiday Season

Announces New Small Business Navigator Program And Microbusiness Grants

Oakland County, Mich., Nov. 17, 2021 – Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter joined local business leaders at VITRINE in Berkley to encourage holiday shoppers to purchase gifts and other items locally, especially on Small Business Saturday.

Oakland County is promoting Small Business Saturday and “Shopping Small and Local” throughout December. The county has created a webpage at OakGov.com/ShopSmall where shoppers can search for community holiday activities and businesses and community partners can discover resources to support shopping locally.

“You can not only get great variety by shopping local, but you’re also supporting the local economy and the workers who are your neighbors, friends and family,” Coulter said. “And your dollars are staying in the local economy when you shop in these small businesses that are the binding threads in the fabric of our communities.”

Genisys Credit Union supplied Main Street Oakland County communities with shopping bags, community banners, and posters for the holiday shopping season.

“As area downtowns are working to build back from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are proud to partner with Main Street Oakland County to help small businesses to build stronger local economies and communities,” Genisys Credit Union CEO Jackie Buchanan.

Joining Coulter and Buchanan were VITRINE owner Susan Rogal and Downtown Berkley Chair Andy Gilbert. Like many business owners, Rogal has faced supply chain challenges which has caused her to adapt in creative ways to keep her shelves full this holiday season.

“We’ve been through a lot recently as small business owners,” Rogal said. “I’ve had to pivot and innovate over the past two years, but I’m grateful for Oakland County’s support and the support of our dedicated customers.”

Coulter also introduced Nilda Thomas, the new lead for Oakland County’s small business navigator program. Using America Rescue Plan Act funds, Thomas will help develop the program to support

small businesses in underserved communities throughout Oakland County, getting small business resources directly to the businesses as they request them instead of business owners coming up to county offices.

In addition to supporting small business shopping for the holiday shopping season, Coulter will join Main Street Oakland County Wednesday evening to award the Spirit of Main Street microbusiness grants, sponsored by Genisys Credit Union, a financial boost for small businesses and downtown management organizations in Auburn Hills, Franklin, Highland, Lake Orion, and Pontiac.

The Genisys and MSOC funded grants can be used for a variety of needs, from payroll and paying vendors to making structural improvements to marketing. Under the terms of the grant, a dollar-for-dollar match must be provided by the applicant. Recipients include Bitter Tom's Distillery, Earth-N-Soul, Healing Hearts Safety Services, Market at Tangerine Square, STS Athletic Complex, Auburn Hills Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and Main Street Franklin's initiative, the Franklin Mom's Club.

Bitter Tom's Distillery is using their matching grant money to beautify their outdoor patio; Earth-N-Soul will retain some marketing and legal services and eco-friendly packaging and products; Franklin Mom's Club, an initiative of Main Street Franklin, will be developing a marketing campaign to reach out to young moms; Healing Hearts Safety Services will increase their advertising; Market at Tangerine Square will expand their space and food and drink menu; STS Athletic Complex will create an outdoor dining area; and the Auburn Hills DDA will launch a branding initiative.

This is the fourth year of the partnership between Genisys Credit Union and Main Street Oakland County. Of the eligible MSOC communities, all 16 have received one or more grants since the program's inception in 2018. Two new rounds of grant funding are planned for the spring and fall of 2022. Eligible small businesses must apply through one of the 16 Main Street communities: Auburn Hills, Berkley, Clarkston, Clawson, Farmington, Ferndale, Franklin, Highland, Holly, Lake Orion, Ortonville, Oxford, Pontiac, Rochester, Royal Oak and Wixom. Go to [MainStreetOaklandCounty.com](https://www.MainStreetOaklandCounty.com) for more information.