

"Federation Corner" column
The Montgomery Sentinel - November 15, 2012

"Shop Small" on Saturday, November 24

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This year major retailers are expanding Black Friday shopping hours to begin in the evening on Thanksgiving Day. That makes sense. Why would one want to spend time in the bosom of their family sharing a lovingly prepared homemade meal when they could be fighting crowds of strangers to buy Chinese made merchandise at a big box store?

There is an alternative to participating in the Black Friday shopping hysteria. You could stay home with kith and kin on Thanksgiving, work off that big meal by sleeping in late the next day, and then start making your holiday gift purchases by joining the trendy crowd that will "Shop Small" on Saturday, November 24.

The idea for "Shop Small" was first promoted by American Express in 2010. It is now a nationwide annual event that encourages holiday shoppers to patronize small brick and mortar retailers in their local communities on Small Business Saturday, the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Participation in "Shop Small" is increasing in Montgomery County, and many retailers will be offering special sales this year to celebrate the event.

I am personally fed up with mega corporations--impersonal multi-national companies that care more about their bottom line than they do about their customers. And they are certainly having their fair share of difficulties of late.

Top executives at the British Broadcasting Corporation are losing their jobs because they helped cover up the sexual improprieties of a now deceased television celebrity who generated significant profit for the media giant for decades while preying on scores of under aged British youth.

The Occupy Movement in England recently announced its demand that huge multi-national corporations like Yahoo, Google, and Starbucks give more back to the communities and patrons who support them. This week Londoners will begin an Occupy Starbucks movement, sitting in at the myriad locations of the coffee giant in that capital city and using them as health clinics, homeless shelters, and providers of other useful public services.

Even the Bethesda based mega giant defense contractor Lockheed Martin has had to release its incoming Chief Executive Officer for engaging in an improper "close personal relationship" with a subordinate employee. (Didn't that subordinate's mother ever warn her about taking candy from strange bosses?) The poor man was harshly chastised by cutting his severance package to a mere \$3.5 million. Imagine what his golden parachute would have been had he not violated the company's code of ethical standards and exposed it to public humiliation.

On the other hand, small businesses--generally defined as companies having fifty or fewer employees--may be small, they are powerful. Local small businesses and independent retailers offer significant support to the communities in which they are located, in large part because the owners and employees are likely to be residents of the community.

Small businesses are responsible for creating around seventy percent of all of the jobs in the United States. And these companies are usually the first in line to support the fundraising efforts of local

charities by donating cash or goods and services. Local small businesses are often quick to offer help to area households in an emergency, too, because those in need are their regular customers.

So why not give a pass this year to participating in the hassle and havoc of Black Friday shopping? Stay the night at grandma's house on Thanksgiving, and then come back over the river and through the woods at a leisurely pace on Friday so you'll be home the next day to participate in Small Business Saturday in your neighborhood.

"Shop Small" this year to celebrate and support small businesses and all they do for our communities throughout the entire year by providing jobs and offering goods and services that are uniquely tailored to meet local desires and needs.

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to theelms518@earthlink.net