

Shop Local! Shop Small!

by Lacey Osborne

AS A TEENAGER, I wanted to open a small retail store, thinking women's clothing or gifts would be right up my alley. I was fortunate to fulfill my dream, opening a bridal registry and special occasion gift shop. As young mothers, my business partner and I experienced the unknown, unplanned challenges. We loved the fun stuff, like going to market, holding open houses and meeting customers. Then, there were the struggles: accounts payable, tracking inventory, taxes, advertising, promotion expenses, plus!

These and other, bigger challenges continue to face local small business owners every single day. As a Chamber of Commerce professional, I still fall back on my years of experience when relating to Chamber members. I can relate to the ups—including greatly appreciating our customers—and the downs, the daily struggles.

They work hard to overcome them—and only you can help them keep their doors open.

So much has changed recently in the operations and management of small businesses. Notable small business trends in 2021 include: E-commerce, alternative payment options, and personalized and empathetic customer service. Businesses with virtual and digital services will continue to be in demand; remote work will continue, and best of all—consumers will support local small businesses!

Yes, shopping local is trendy! It's the act of everyday consumers deciding to buy their produce, clothing and other day-to-day items from a local small business. The Shop Local/Shop Small trend has many benefits, such as building relationships within the community and helping support the local economy—all while building a more vibrant and unified society.

One of my favorite reasons to shop local is it creates the identity of your community. Think

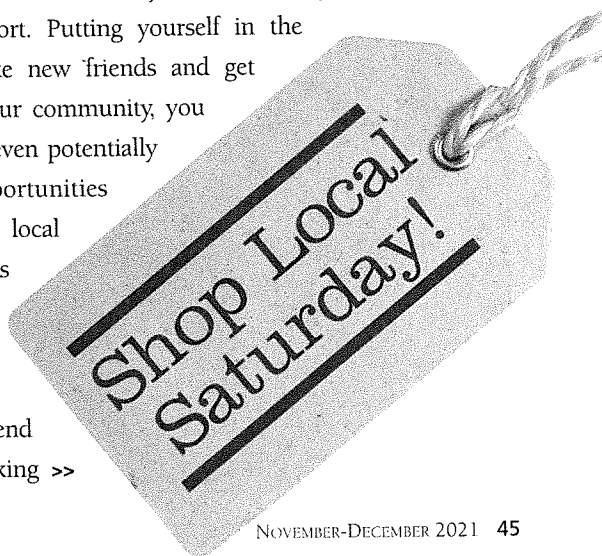
Olde Towne Slidell, old Mandeville, downtown Covington. Each has its own unique character, is a one-of-a-kind neighborhood, and is beloved by citizens and tourists alike.

Shopping local benefits the economy. Choosing to spend locally allows money to be cycled back into our community, which means you are helping boost our local economy. It allows opportunities for local businesses to give back in ways of sponsorships and contributions to community events. Investing in people in your area is an easy way for you to pay it forward to people in your community. When you shop local, not only are you helping grow your area's economy, but you're helping grow your neighbors' dreams. Shopping local also helps ensure

your tax dollars are going back into your local tax base. Local taxes are then used for schools, parks, roads and community improvements, which we all benefit from on a daily basis.

What does shopping local really mean? Simply put, shopping local means enjoying, sharing accolades about and supporting small businesses in your

area. And it's the perfect way to get to know people and discover new places you love! Shopping at local stores and eating at local restaurants are good ways to build relationships and make your community aware of your support. Putting yourself in the environment to make new friends and get to know those in your community, you are networking and even potentially creating new opportunities for yourself. Visiting local shops and restaurants and choosing to spend locally gives you the opportunity to network and befriend your neighbors. Making >>





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connections with the people that surround you encourages word-of-mouth marketing and creates the unified community that we all dream of.

Shopping local also means recommending and sharing your experiences. The power of a personal referral is unparalleled to any other form of marketing. Sharing your recent treasures and finds on social media and by word of mouth allows your friends and followers to see that you're proud to support local businesses—and they should be, too! Using the hashtag #shoplocal connects you with other lovers of local businesses and helps grow the community surrounding this movement. Even just tagging the city that you live in allows your posts to reach a bigger audience and helps keep the trend alive. Social media has helped small business owners have more affordable options to promote their products and services. Still a mainstay, networking events like those our Chamber offers, are great ways to build relationships and a customer base.

The Chamber is a champion once again for Small Business Saturday, which is Saturday, November 27. Small Business Saturday continues to be an annual holiday shopping tradition—just one part of the larger Shop Small Movement.

Small Business Saturday and National Small Business Week are holidays started about a decade ago that have helped jumpstart a trend of shopping local and are celebrated nationally in communities large and small. In 2018, an estimated 17 billion consumers reported shopping or dining at local independently-owned businesses on Small Business Saturday, generating a record-high amount in spending. That's tremendous! However, shouldn't we be supporting our local businesses year-round?

YOU can be the difference in whether the shop down the street survives or dies after 2 years. YOU can be the regular customer that makes the difference so a local craftsman is able to send his children to college. By spending your time and money in local stores, you are changing lives for the better.

Making a point to shop local and show your support at least once a week throughout the year will change your community. So instead of waiting until Small Business Saturday to stop by a local retailer, go today to check out and uncover your new favorite places on the northshore! 🍁

Lacey Osborne is the President & CEO of the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce.

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Contributors

Our contributors give Inside Northside its voice, its personality and its feel. We are proud to highlight a few of them so that you can put a face with a name and get to know them.

Lacey Osborne



Lacey Osborne, in her 30th year as a Chamber professional, is President and CEO of the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce. As a former small business owner and local newspaper writer, she passionately encourages shopping small and local! A New Orleans native and graduate of Nicholls State University, Lacey lives in Covington, gratefully close to her two daughters and her four grandchildren.

Maggie Bokobza



Maggie Bokobza is a freelance writer currently based in Paris, France. Having grown up on the Northshore, she loves to write about the art and culture of her beloved hometown. And while she takes every opportunity she can to visit, she also loves to explore her new city and is constantly on the hunt for the perfect croissant.

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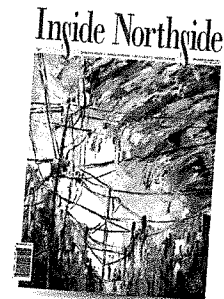
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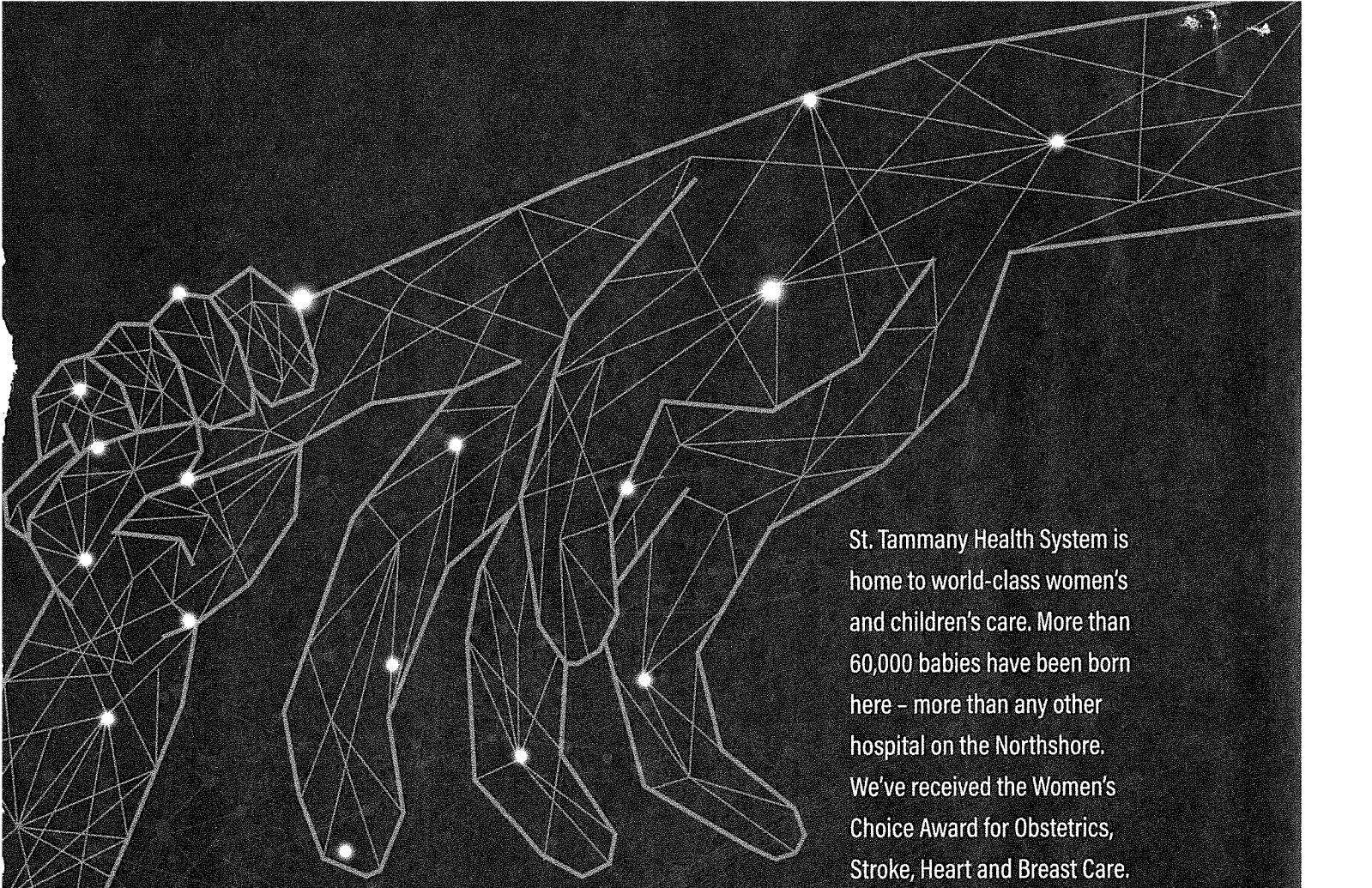
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