

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Chamber of Commerce Coalition Encourages Support for Local Business During COVID-19

Rochester, NY, December 15, 2020 – The Advocacy Coalition of Rochester Area Chambers (ACRAC) is deeply concerned about the resurgence of COVID-19 in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier Regions and its effects on our local businesses and economy.

In response to the obstacles businesses are facing, the chambers of commerce comprising ACRAC have committed to supporting local restaurants, retail establishments, non-profits, and other organizations in every possible way. Today they announced a commitment which involves purchasing gift cards to these establishments for their respective staffs and advertising the products and services of local companies to show their support. The chambers of commerce encouraged their members to do the same.

Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Bob Duffy said, “Small businesses are the backbone of the Finger Lakes region and they have been devastated by COVID-19. Our role as the region’s metro chamber of commerce is to share helpful resources, to advertise the services provided by these businesses, and to lend a hand to ensure they come out of this pandemic strong. In that spirit, Greater Rochester Chamber has purchased gift cards for every member of our staff to local restaurants, salons, gyms, stores, and other venues. Additionally, we sent an email to our entire membership asking them to do so as well.”

Chemung County Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Kamala Keeley said, “As we gauge the impact COVID-19 has had on our regional economy, we universally see small businesses struggling to manage this crisis, especially those placed in Micro-Cluster Zones. We support our fellow ACRAC members in this initiative and ask businesses in the Southern Tier region to do the same. Our small businesses need our help and gift card purchases provide an immediate revenue flow to keep dollars circulating in our local economy and, more importantly, provide direct support for those businesses that make our communities so unique.”

Ontario Chamber of Commerce President Donna Burolla said, “Ontario Chamber of Commerce encourages residents to support local businesses. We are continuing initiatives like COVID-safe grand openings of recently opened businesses and our 21-year old ‘Business of the Month’ program. Messages from public health, public service and related agencies are provided to our business members and friends through regular e-blasts. Many of our residents are employed in nearby Monroe County and we continue to urge them to patronize local businesses through curb-side, take-out, and COVID approved visits as often as possible.”

Tompkins Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Jennifer Tavares said, “Shopping locally is part of everything we do, whether it is for our Chamber or a unique way to show gratitude to our team or members. Supporting local small businesses as a critical component of a sustainable COVID-19 economic recovery strategy, for they have been disproportionately impacted by this crisis. Every dollar we choose to spend locally makes a difference, which is why the Tompkins Chamber has encouraged our members and stakeholders to support local businesses and nonprofit organizations this holiday season.”

Irondequoit Chamber of Commerce President Alice Willis-Hansen said, “At no other time has our tagline ‘United We Prosper’ carried such significance. Standing together in the effort to support our local businesses - businesses that have no doubt struggled, yet persevered and dedicated themselves to providing us with vital goods and services throughout these challenging times; businesses owned by our neighbors, who employ our neighbors, who contribute to our tax base - is critical to the survival and success of our Irondequoit Community as a whole. We are fortunate to have so many excellent restaurants and unique bars in Irondequoit. Please continue to order out and support this hardest-hit part of our business community by purchasing gift cards for your friends, family, and colleagues! So before you hop on the internet or drive a distance to a big box store for a last minute gift, take a walk or a very short drive around Irondequoit, mask up, do business with your neighbors, and give a gift to your community.”

Penfield Business Chamber President Amy Valente said, “We all need to do our part to support our small businesses who are facing threats never seen before. We fully support ACRAC in this commitment asking businesses to *Look Local First* and purchase gift cards from local businesses. To further support this effort, our chamber created a program called *Gift Giving Made Easy* that provides a venue to easily purchase gift cards from small businesses by visiting our website. In conjunction, we have launched a *Shop Small Win Big* holiday contest with prizes of gift cards from our local businesses purchased by sponsors. We urge everyone to shop locally and by purchasing gift cards, this provides immediate support.”

Livingston County Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Laura Lane said, “In Livingston County we are delighted to share the story of how Barilla in Avon has shown their support for their employees and small businesses throughout Livingston County. We were overwhelmed with gratitude when Barilla called to purchase ShopINLivingston Gift Certificates as holiday gifts for their employees! Nearly \$15,000 in certificates were purchased! This was truly an incredibly generous gift not only to Barilla employees but to small businesses throughout Livingston County. This is a great example of how big business can support small business during the holiday season and help to offset the challenges of this COVID economy. The Livingston County Chamber encourages both businesses and individuals to shop local this holiday season and beyond.”

About the Advocacy Coalition of Rochester Area Chambers (ACRAC):

Formed in 2019, The Advocacy Coalition of Rochester Area Chambers is a group of chamber executives from throughout the Finger Lakes region committed to helping our members grow and promoting the region through teamwork and collaborative advocacy.

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