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## Shopping Small is Big in Lamorinda

*By Sophie Braccini*

The holiday gift lists seem to grow longer as the days get shorter. Black Friday is nearly upon us, for those inclined to participate in that bustling post-Thanksgiving tradition. Local retailers are hoping Lamorinda residents will consider visiting the independent businesses just down the street that make our downtowns unique and bring much needed sales tax revenue to our cities.

Four years ago, American Express launched Small Business Saturday. According to the company's website, "Customers and small businesses alike have been able to kick start their holiday shopping season on a day celebrating the uniqueness, charm and economic impact that small businesses bring to communities nationwide."

Add that to the call to "Shop Local," which has echoed throughout Lamorinda for the past few years, and you have a perfect storm. This year, retailers in Orinda, Moraga, and Lafayette - with a somewhat different paradigm - will seize the opportunity to strut their stuff on Small Business Saturday, Nov. 29.

"This is the first year we are seriously digging in," said Sylvia Jorgensen, president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Orinda is taking the event very seriously - the City Council just issued a proclamation recognizing Nov. 29 as Small Business Saturday; and look for a special event banner to appear on the BART bridge.

The Moraga Chamber of Commerce is also supporting local retailers. "Our town's merchants have a lot to offer, and they all want to celebrate their uniqueness on Small Business Saturday," said executive director Kathe Nelson.

"This is about awareness," said Moraga Hardware and Lumber owner Bill Snider, a Moraga resident. "The whole idea is to remind people that there is more than Amazon and Wal-Mart, and let's not forget the small businesses that support the local scout troops and education foundations."

Both chambers of commerce plan to post information about participating businesses on their websites - [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org) and [www.moragachamber.org](http://www.moragachamber.org) (click on the Shop Moraga First tab).

Jay Lifson, executive director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, sees Small Business Saturday as the prelude to the city's largest retail event of the year, which takes place the following week - "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette," a festive family event from 4 to 7 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 6 at Lafayette Plaza. The fun-filled evening includes visits with Santa, the official holiday tree lighting ceremony, one-of-a-kind photo ops, live musical entertainment, crafts, treats and a holiday sing-a-long. "This event is designed as a time for gathering, giving and gratitude," said Lifson.

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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