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## New eCard program helps support Lafayette businesses

By M.D. Jones

Shopping locally can be the lifeblood for small businesses, especially during a pandemic. After allocating \$30,000 of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the federal government for the purpose of stimulating the local economy, the city of Lafayette recently launched the Shop Local Lafayette eCard program. The program, which is in partnership with Yiftee, matches, dollar for dollar, purchases made at participating businesses.

For a limited time, when an eCard is purchased, an equal value bonus eCard is given to the purchaser. The original eCard never expires (but starts to decrease in value by \$3 per month after a year) and the bonus "Twice as Nice" eCard has an expiration date of 90 days. The cards are sold in increments of \$10, \$25, \$50 or \$100, with a limit of two bonus cards per person. That means that if a person buys two gift cards for \$100 each, they could get up to two free bonus cards from the city of \$100 each - doubling their spending power from \$200 to \$400.

Since becoming a participating business in the Shop Local Lafayette program, Lamorinda Music owner Colleen McCormick says, "We've had at least one person so far and it went great. My husband John is with the Chamber of Commerce and he worked a lot on it with Thomas Myers [Lafayette's Economic Development Manager spearheading the program] and we hope the word spreads because it's a great program. It essentially doubles your money and it drives people to small businesses in Lafayette." John McCormick, her husband and co-owner of Lamorinda Music, added, "It's a win-win between merchants and the citizens of Lafayette and it is an excellent use of the ARPA funding because the money goes directly to small businesses in Lafayette."

Lafayette's Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson noted that shopping local not only supports local business owners but helps the overall community, since a portion of the sales tax collected on purchases is used to pay for local needs like police, safety and road repairs.

According to MarketWatch.com, a 2018 study showed that U.S. consumers spend an average of \$59 more than the value of their gift card and a U.K. study showed that gift cards cause 34% of people to visit stores they normally would not have visited.

Kimberly Pinto, manager at Lafayette Park Bistro & Bar, said, "We just started taking [eCards] this week and we're excited for the program." The program is free to participating businesses and according to information about the program on the Yiftee website, "The card recipient and merchant receive the full value for the card, providing maximum benefit to local businesses."

Information, a list of participating business, and a link to purchase the cards can be found at

[www.lovelafayette.com/eCard](http://www.lovelafayette.com/eCard)

<https://app.yiftee.com/gift-card/lafayette--ca>

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