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‘That local feel’: TAP unveils consumer, business perceptions

By HELEN BUSH

Maintaining the vibrancy of Scarsdale Village businesses was the main topic of the Acceleration Project’s “Buy Local Study.” As explained to the attentive crowd at the Scarsdale Library June 16, TAP is a nonprofit that enables professional women to enhance the productivity of local businesses through “marketing, goal setting, financial planning and other business challenges.”

From January to March of this year, the Buy Local Study compiled quantitative data from 517 local residents and 50 businesses, as well as interviews with more than 60 business owners. The study summarizes the habits and perceptions of local consumers and businesses about buying locally, and outlines an enhanced marketing campaign.

The genesis of the project began in November when TAP co-founders, co-CEOs and Scarsdale residents Jane Veron and Lisa Tretler expressed their concern for the vitality of small Scarsdale businesses. Such establishments must compete with the lower prices of large chains, the Internet and shifts in consumer expectations due to the 2008 recession. “We all care about the vibrancy of Scarsdale ... but vacant storefronts impact all,” Veron told the audience. “Thriving retail centers make Scarsdale an attractive place to work, eat and shop.”

According to the study, local patrons visit Scarsdale most often for groceries, dry cleaning, banking, the post office and restaurants. “Restaurants, coffee shops and bakeries show the largest increase in patronage in



Lisa Tretler (co-founder and Co-CEO, TAP), Carol Fitzgerald (Buzzback Market), TAP Buy Local Team: Amanda Hack; Tracy Ullman; Nanette Koryn; Claire Brennan; Deb Pekarek (village trustee); Andreas Larsen; Jane Veron (co-founder and Co-CEO, TAP); Carolyn Stevens (executive director, Scarsdale Chamber of Commerce); Emily Feldstein; Julia Feldstein; Mary Blum.

the past three years,” the study revealed. “Scarsdale consumers also use local medical professionals more often than any other services.” When asked why they frequented these businesses, “convenience” was the most common response, as well as enjoying “that local feel.”

Yet there were disconnects between the expectations of patrons and businesses. Fifty-one percent of surveyed residents said pricing was the main reason they did not shop locally or that they would if more sales and discounts were offered. Yet according to TAP’s research,

businesses underestimated the importance of price, and overestimated the influence of rapport, which patrons “did not value as highly.”

Despite such disconnects, the survey made it clear that Scarsdale residents are aware of the value of local business. As Tretler pointed out, “We don’t have to spend any time convincing our residents that this is important, they already know it’s important. We have to turn this awareness into action.” For businesses, TAP designed a marketing campaign as well as a “uniquely Scarsdale” Tudor-

style logo.

For Scarsdale patrons, Tretler offered this advice: Support at least three local businesses each week that you wouldn’t want to see go out of business, and try at least one new local business each month.

“When you choose to spend your time [and money] right here, you actively improve the vibrancy and desirability of our beautiful town,” she said.

For more information about the Acceleration Project, go to the Scarsdale Chamber of Commerce website, www.scarsdale-chamber.org.