

Buying locally creates a win-win effort



**TERRY
MCGOVERN**
Clarke
University

He is a professor
at the school

I relocated to the Dubuque area in 2011 after spending 20 years in the Air Force and living all over the U.S. from the West Coast to the East Coast.

I was surprised when I returned to discover that Dubuque had a local coffee roaster, Verena Street Coffee. I doubted that a high quality, great tasting coffee could be roasted in Iowa, and I was wrong. I tried Nine Mile Sunset and it was a fantastic roast, full of flavor and richness.

Living all over the U.S. and having tried a wide range of craft coffees, I felt very fortunate to have the best I've tasted right here in our backyard.

I was curious about the company and decided to take a class trip there in the fall of 2012 with my operations management course at Clarke University.

I have taken that class to a number of area businesses so the students can learn how operations happen in the real world setting. When we visit Verena Street Coffee, the students meet the owners and operators of the company Eric and Michael Gantz

(cousins). Michael manages the day-to-day operations and gives the students a terrific educational tour of the company's mission, vision, production processes and supply chain.

During these tours, the students learn that Michael himself roasts nearly every bag of coffee at Verena Street. The class also learns about how serious Michael and Eric are about being responsible, ethical business owners and this as evident by their Rainforest Alliance certification (ethical practices with growers and the environment) as well as the numerous nonprofit groups the company supports in the Dubuque area.

As a veteran, I was especially touched to learn about their Hero and Honor Blends that support wounded warriors and the Honor

Flight of Greater Dubuque program.

What's great about this story is Michael and Eric are a couple of Dubuque guys trying to make a go

TERRY SAYS

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of it with their business. Their company is growing, now available in more than 500 retail outlets. But it's also worth noting that when someone from this area buys Verena Street Coffee, they not only help Michael and Eric succeed, they also are improving our community.

The research on the benefits of locally owned businesses to the communities in which they reside is overwhelming — buying local is advantageous to communities. A few highlights from the studies:

- Locally owned businesses typically provide more than 250 percent support to nonprofit groups than non-independent companies.
- Locally owned businesses increase the economic impact and tax base where they reside.
- People who live in the community where they do business are less likely to leave, and are more invested in the community's future.
- Small local businesses are the largest employer nationally and in our region, providing the most jobs to residents.
- Locally owned businesses make more local purchases requiring less transportation, thus saving fuel and conserving the environment.

Visit the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies webpage for more information about the effects of buying from a local business. Also, while there, check out the video called Zingermans: This is Ownership. It's a fantastic story on how resident businesses are about neighbors helping neighbors.

As you plan your holiday shopping, consider deliberately buying a percentage of your purchases from local businesses. If you're looking for a gift for a colleague, an employee, or loved one who enjoys coffee, I highly recommend Verena Street. It's local and it's great.