



\$250G ad campaign urges Nassau residents to shop locally

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Small retailers in the downtowns of Nassau County are hoping a county-funded television commercial will help them combat the growing popularity of online shopping.

Six merchants -- from Bellmore, East Meadow, Merrick, Seaford and Wantagh -- are featured in the 30-second spot that will air from Oct. 27 through November.

There also will be ads on local radio, chamber of commerce websites and in weekly newspapers.

The \$250,000 campaign, Shop Locally, tells Nassau residents that spending at local stores and restaurants is crucial to the county's economy.

The ads were devised by the county's Industrial Development Agency and paid for with fee income that the IDA receives from companies applying for tax breaks.

"We're at the point that bricks-and-mortar [stores] have to fight back against the Internet," Julie Marchesella, owner of Queen of Hearts Inc., a Merrick boutique that sells plus-size formalwear for women, said Friday.

Downtown merchants are almost always small businesses with fewer than 100 employees. That group accounted for 98.5 percent of Nassau's 47,194 businesses in 2012, according to the most recent census data.

Marchesella, who is in the commercial and serves as president of the Nassau Council of Chambers of Commerce, said the ad expands on the council's past efforts to encourage residents to patronize local businesses. Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano has held news conferences with the council on the topic, she said.

Mangano said Friday, "Shopping locally is a powerful tool that sustains businesses, supports the county's tax base and helps keep jobs at home."

The ad campaign is the latest IDA initiative to boost small companies.

In 2012, the Local Economic Assistance and Development Services program, or LEADS, was started to give entrepreneurs access to tax breaks that previously were available only to large companies. Joseph J. Kearney, the agency's executive director, said the program had aided many victims of superstorm Sandy.