

Buying Local...

Occasionally, the kids and I will get up and let Mom sleep in while we run a few errands. We'll go get breakfast at a place where we know the waitress and several other patrons. After that, we'll stop by the hardware store, meat market, feed store, and assorted other businesses to stock up for our weekend chores. At each stop along the way, we'll visit with friendly faces while we get what we need. A "quick trip to town" can turn into a two hour ordeal. Mom doesn't seem to mind the quiet house and extra sleep. That's what I love about my town, the people and the places.

We could probably drive into the "big city" and hit one big box store and get everything we needed in one stop. It would be cheaper, it might be quicker, but it sure wouldn't be the same. I'll take a few extra stops and a few extra smiles over the long drive any day.

It baffles me that this is not a more common approach nowadays. I guess it's the "Wal-Mart" theory of economics. Our allegiance has shifted from dealing with people we like to looking for the lowest price available. Our fast paced society has blown by good old customer service and durability in exchange for being able to buy as much as possible with our hard earned dollars. I certainly understand the economics, but sometimes, that's a disheartening trade-off.

Now, I want to be clear about something. I want a good deal just as much as the next guy. If I'm buying a packaged, off-the-shelf product I expect to pay fair market value. I understand that a local merchant sometimes has to pay a little more and pass that expense on to me. Within limits, I accept that. Besides, with the current cost of diesel, I'm probably breaking even anyways. On the flip side, we local merchants are required to offer fair prices, great customer service, and as much convenience as small businesses can.

This whole model applies to the business of dentistry as well. We spare no expense when it comes to taking care of our patients. We use the best labs, the best materials, and the best technology that money can buy. I know many colleagues who continue to strive for excellence in patient care. All this comes at a cost, but most hill country dentists still manage to keep fees well below the national average.

For all of your local businesspeople, it's a two way street. We need you to feed our families and you need us to provide a great product or service from people you know and trust. Don't buy local because you should, buy local because you can. That's the American way.

-Questions or comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish through their website www.ParrishDental.com.