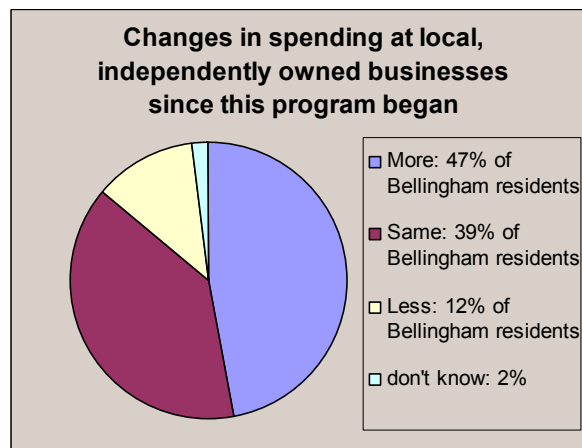
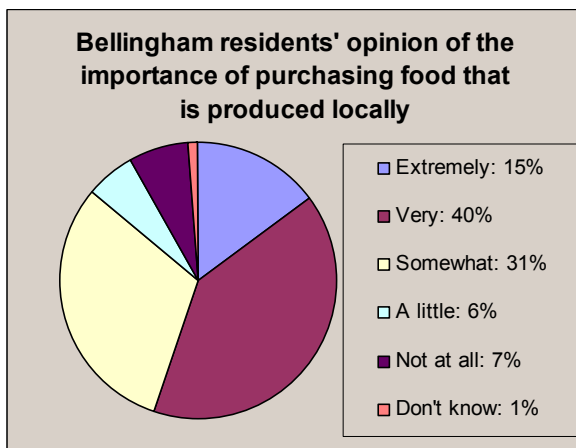
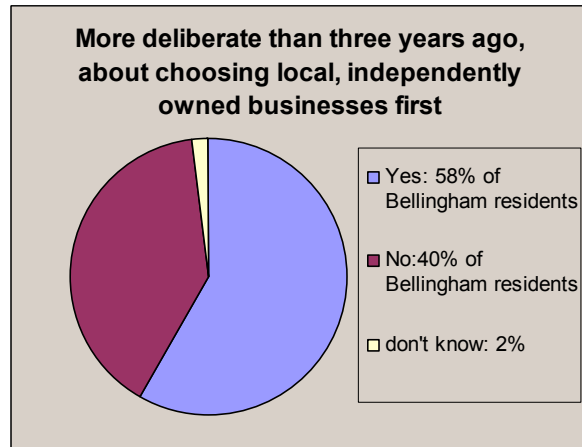
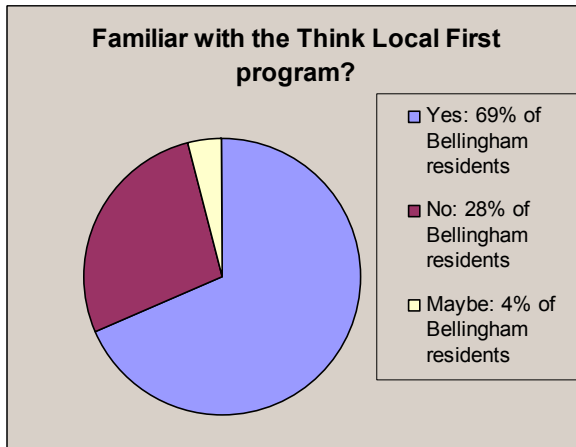




Study Shows 58% of Local Citizens are ‘Thinking Local First’ More Often

November 28, 2006-- BELLINGHAM, WA – A brand new two-part study shows that Whatcom’s Think Local First program is having its intended impact locally. A comprehensive community poll, and a survey of business participants, were both conducted by Applied Research Northwest, (ARN), an independent Whatcom research firm. The study found that local residents are not only aware of this program and its “Think Local, Buy Local, Be Local” and “Think Local, Buy FRESH, Be Local” logos, but are making significant changes in their purchasing behavior because of it. Dr. Pamela Jull, the lead researcher, said, “Actually, these results are phenomenal. Normally, if 1 in 5 households claim familiarity with your program, and change their behavior because of it you would consider it a success. To have nearly 3 in 5 households attributing a behavior change to this program shows an amazing impact.”





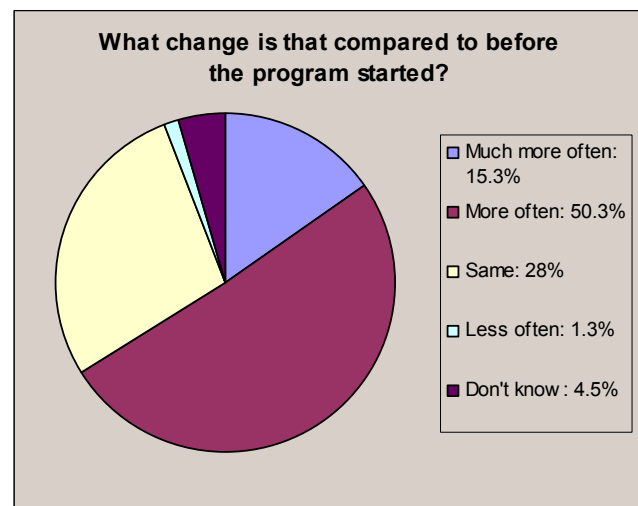
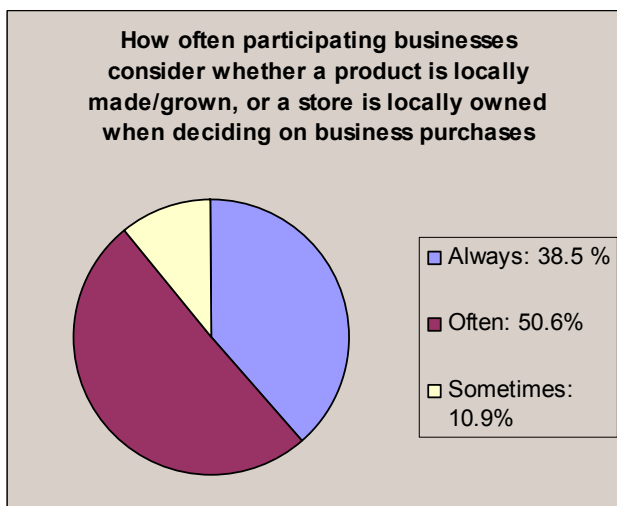
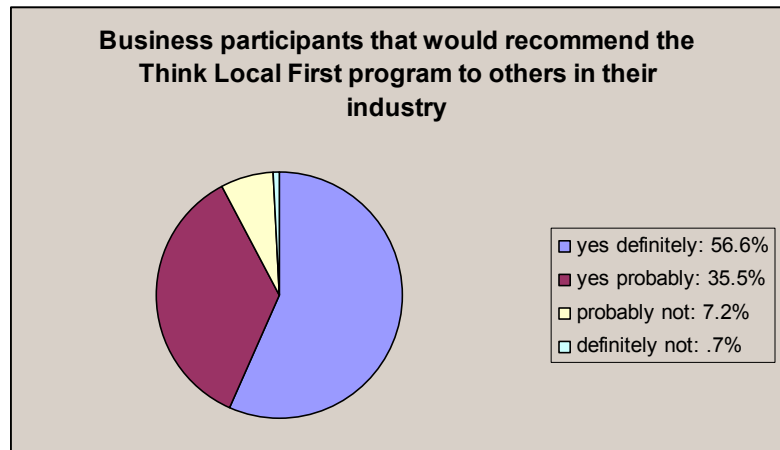
Community Study Methodology: Applied Research Northwest, www.arnorthwest.com, conducted this study. Methodology included conducting a phone poll of 300 randomly selected adults living within the city limits of Bellingham. Interviewers attempted to complete the survey with respondents up to three times at different times of day and on different days of the week. The results are accurate within a 6% margin of error and can be considered representative of all adults living in Bellingham.



Survey of Business Participants

The program’s business participants also report that their customers are thinking local first more often. They also say that this program is responsible for their own increased local business purchases. 92% would recommend the program to other businesses in their industry.

Sustainable Connections executive director, Michelle Long, said she was most pleased to see that since participating, 67% of the businesses have become better community stewards by adopting specific new business practices that lessen their environmental impact and strengthen community. “This kind of reciprocity is our goal. We work with the owners of our local businesses to help them in their stewardship and innovation toward green building, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and more. In turn we ask the community to support our locally owned businesses.”





Business Survey Methodology: Applied Research Northwest, www.arnorthwest.com, designed the survey. It was e-mailed to the 450 businesses that participated last year and anonymous answers were posted to a web-based tool. Response rates were very high, with more than one-third, 157 businesses, responding.

Think Local First is a program that was created by Sustainable Connections to grow the market share of independent, locally owned businesses by increasing awareness about the personal, community and economic benefits of choosing local first. This program has spawned a How-To Kit and is being replicated in dozens of communities across North America.

Think Local First program sponsors include:

City of Bellingham, Cascadia Weekly, Northwest Computer, Village Books, Paper Dreams, Brown and Cole Stores, Bay City Supply, Community Food Co-Op, La Fiamma Wood Fire Pizza, Fiamma Burger, Louis Auto Glass, Diehl Ford, Lithtex Northwest, Samuel's Furniture, Whatcom Educational Credit Union, Bellingham's Business E-View, Bellingham Farmers Market, Downtown Renaissance Network, Fairhaven Association, Fairhaven Runners & Walkers, Flora, Inc., Greenhouse, Griggs Office Supplies, Kulshan Cycles, Mallard Ice Cream/Moka Joe, PetStop, Prostock Athletic Supply, Wilson Motors and Rick Steele, CPA/PFS, CFP

Sustainable Connections, www.sconnect.org, is a non-profit membership organization of 535 businesses and community leaders committed to transforming and modeling an economy built on sustainable business practices. Programs include Think Local First, Green Building, Food and Farming, Sustainable Business Practices & the Green Power Community Challenge, and Business Connections & Events.

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