

For Immediate Release

Mecklenburg County's Gift Card Match Program is Back for a Second Round This round is set to put \$200,000 directly into the hands of local businesses

On Thursday, Aug 6th, Mecklenburg County's CARES Act Committee approved a request by the County's Tourism Coordinator, to fund a second round of the Gift Card Match Program at \$100,000. The program, first launched in May of this year, is designed to support small businesses impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic by offering a dollar-for-dollar match on gift cards purchased through the online store to any for-profit, locally-owned, non-franchise, retail, restaurant or service-based business located in Mecklenburg County.

The first round was funded by special allocations made through the towns and the county tourism department. "We had \$22,000 to use as a matching fund in that first round, says Tina Morgan, Mecklenburg County Tourism Coordinator, and in just under two hours, it was all gone! Not only was that an amazing display of support by consumers willing and ready to shop local but putting \$44,000 into the hands of our local businesses made a real difference to those who were supported. Some were able to instantly pay rent they had fallen behind on while others were able to replenish inventory and forge ahead for a while longer. I am thrilled that we get to offer this again in an even bigger way! Once this round is complete, \$200,000 will go straight to local businesses and shoppers will benefit in a big way by doubling their money!"

The Chase City, Clarksville and South Hill Chambers of Commerce remain unified in this effort and will be working with all of the towns to reach businesses about this next opportunity to participate. Registration is now open and small businesses can find the sign up form at www.VisitMeckVa.com/ShopLocal. Interested businesses can also call any of the Chambers or the County Tourism Office at 434-738-6191 to find out more information. Businesses do not need to be a Chamber member to participate and they have until August 31st to sign up.

The online store will go live for customers to shop on Sept 8th at 6pm. Just visit www.VisitMeckVa.com/ShopLocal and click the store icon to shop. Here, customers will find gift cards to participating businesses in the amount of \$20 each. For each card purchased, the program will match it for as long as the funds last. So, for \$20, you receive a \$40 gift card. Customers will be allowed a \$100 purchase limit in order to allow the funds to stretch across more businesses and more customers.

The platform for the online store is made possible by Virginia's Growth Alliance, a regional economic development group, who had the site developed for retail businesses to use for free. Any business interested in selling online (for free) can visit www.ShopLocalVGA.com.