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YORK COUNTY JOINS ‘LOVEVA’ PROGRAM, OFFERS INCENTIVES TO MERCHANTS & SHOPPERS

*County Partners with Retail Alliance’s Loyalty App, Where Customers
Collect Rewards Across Local Businesses; Provides Grant for Businesses to Get Listed*

(YORKTOWN, VA, November 2018) – Taking its buy-local program to the next level, York County’s Office of Economic Development has announced a partnership with Retail Alliance and a new grant for local businesses. Retail Alliance, a nonprofit trade association serving all of Hampton Roads, created the “LOVEVA” (pronounced “love-uh”) program in 2014 to support local business. Central to the program is its app, which allows shoppers to collect rewards at any participating local business—unlike typical loyalty programs that only work at one store or chain.

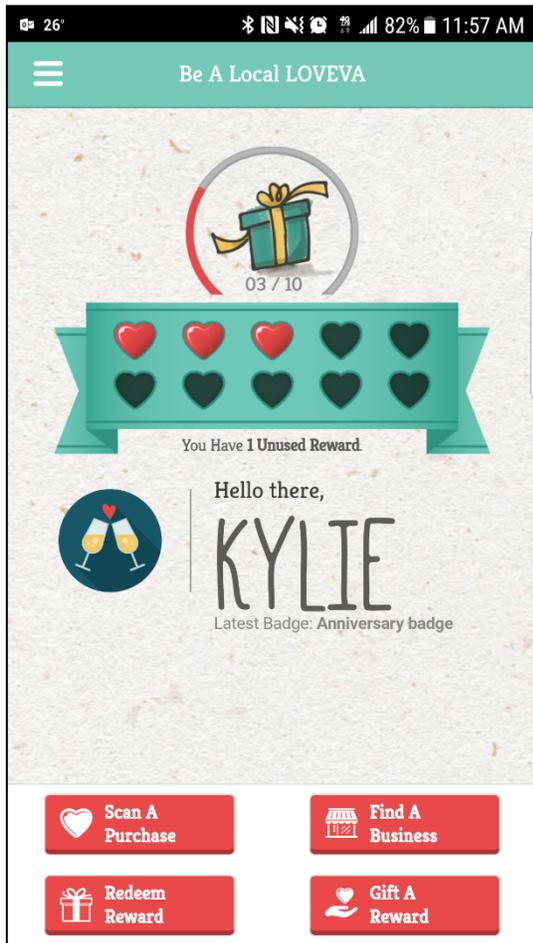
“You can shop at one store and get rewarded at another—that makes it really unique,” said Kylie Ross Sibert, vice president of corporate communications for Retail Alliance. “The app really is banding together businesses across Hampton Roads. I haven’t seen another app that lets you do that.”

While the program was always open to York County businesses, only a handful were taking part. This new partnership creates an easier pathway for participation—especially on the financial front. The Economic Development Authority is offering York County businesses a 50% grant for the \$145 listing fee with LOVEVA. Since small businesses often lack the budget and infrastructure of larger companies, the LOVEVA program affords them many opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach. The app and website, as well as Retail Alliance’s extensive marketing campaign, provide businesses with a loyalty program and a directory of local businesses. It also includes metrics to measure the effectiveness of LOVEVA in their overall marketing efforts.

York County businesses are offered a grant for half the \$145 listing fee with LOVEVA

The County’s existing “Keep It In York County” program will now merge into this regional buy-local effort, making it easier for residents to keep their money within their community. LOVEVA provides a one-stop shop for finding local businesses, and its website explains to shoppers why buying local directly benefits them and their community. The site also hosts a community calendar, to help promote local events, sales, and specials.

“Rather than duplicating efforts in individual localities—each with its own buy-local program, website and marketing efforts—LOVEVA allows us work smarter and make a bigger impact collectively,” said Jim Noel, economic development director for the County.



To be considered “local” under the program, the business must meet at least three of these five criteria:

1. Is the business owned locally and independently?
2. Are decisions made locally?
3. Is the business headquartered locally?
4. Did it originate in Hampton Roads?
5. Is it privately held?

In York County, small local businesses are the lifeblood of the economy, employing thousands of residents and supporting hundreds of community organizations. They pay a significant portion of all local taxes—reducing the burden for citizens—and give back to the community in countless other ways.

One York County business that is already participating in LOVEVA is Simply Unique Jewelry Designs on Highway 17. Owner Tim Wright, a former board member with Retail

Alliance, is enthusiastic about having more local businesses take part. “The more people who use the app here, the happier retailers will be,” he said. “I use it myself, and what I’ve received in rewards are well worth what I put in. You can bring the rewards you’ve earned to my store and get a special offer—right now we’re doing \$25 off any service or product purchase. You don’t have to go to my business over and over ... you can go to the local hardware store or the florist, and then use the reward anywhere you want. For the small cost as a business, it gets results!”

About the Office of Economic Development and Economic Development Authority

The primary mission of York County’s Office of Economic Development (OED) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) is to create a diverse economic base by the aggressive recruitment, expansion and retention of businesses, industries, and tourism, thus expanding the tax base and capital investment in the County and providing new employment opportunities for its citizens. Learn more about the Economic Development Authority and its resources at: <https://www.yesyorckcounty.com/>

About Retail Alliance

Retail Alliance is a non-profit trade association serving the interests of local retailers in Hampton Roads. The organization promotes and supports the healthy growth of retail businesses and trade through education, networking, advocacy, discounts, local first program, and other benefits.

About LOVEVA

Be A Local LOVEVA is a local first program for Hampton Roads. As an arm of Retail Alliance, we support our local businesses and strive to educate the community about the benefits of eating, giving, hiring, and shopping locally first and foremost. Stronger local businesses means stronger communities, schools, non-profits, and a more stable and reliable economy.