

Small Business Saturday boosts sales at local retailers

By Sabina Mollot

Though it may not compare with the madness of Black Friday, with its hordes and herds of bargain seekers camped outside of big box stores – in one recent case, even wielding pepper spray – Small Business Saturday is picking up steam.

Small Business Saturday, a new-ish concept aimed at promoting buying from independent businesses, has in fact done just that this year. The event has been heavily promoted by American Express, which gave customers who made purchases over \$25 at participating businesses credits of \$25 to their statements.

Additionally, a few local shop owners and employees who spoke with Town & Village this week reported definitely seeing a spike in sales over the weekend due to SBS discounts.

As for how much sales went up, Rakesh Samani, the manager of Namaste Books on 14th Street near Union Square said, “It’s hard to say, but it did.”

Namaste was among a list of businesses in the neighborhood participating in SBS by offering discounts, which was promoted locally by the Union Square Partnership.

At the shop, customers received 10 percent off on books and 20 percent off on other merchandise. An employee working at the one-year-old store, which specializes in Eastern/Western philosophy books and other goods, said the big sellers on Saturday were anything having to do with yoga as well as crystals, Buddhism or tarot cards.

Samani, meanwhile, said he would like to see even more promotion next year, possibly with the production of a local business coupon book.

On the other side of Union Square Park, Rothman’s, a men’s clothing shop was also benefiting from SBS and had also done well on Black Friday, according to employees, though they said they weren’t yet sure of



Photos by Sabina Mollot

Discounts at Namaste Books (above) drew in extra sales as did the deals at Rothman’s (below), where ties have been a hit item.



the numbers.

Throughout the weekend, discounts of 20 percent were helping move sales of clothing with, as usual, the most popular gift items being ties. At Rothman’s, ties normally fetch \$50-\$150 a piece.

Other participating shops included lingerie boutique Journelle, which was offering 20 percent discounts, while Paragon, a seller of sporting goods, was offering gift cards as an incentive to spend over \$100. (Spending \$100-\$199.99 would earn a customer a gift card of \$10, while spending \$200-\$299.99 would get a \$20 gift card.)

Numerous businesses in

the Flatiron area also participated, and the Flatiron/23rd Street BID promoted the deal from AmEx.

At one Flatiron shop, Van Alen Books, an employee also reported seeing a bump in sales over the weekend.

Continuing the push to shop local past SBS, the Flatiron BID is now offering free gift-wrapping for items over \$25 that are bought in the district throughout the month of December. The wrapping station will be open on December 2, 9, 16 and 23 from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. each day, at the Madison Square Pedestrian Plaza north of 23rd Street (weather permitting).