

115 Sponsors Step Up to Engage Communities in Shop Local Campaigns

MENLO PARK, Calif., March 22, 2022 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – In pandemic years 2020 and 2021, more than 100 of Yiftee’s almost 400 communities who use its Community eGift Card platform ran dedicated gift card grant or bonus programs to benefit their small businesses, helping them stay afloat. Who were the “hometown heroes” that sponsored these programs during tough times, and continue to do so?

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IMAGE CAPTION: Bemidji, MN Chamber of Commerce features their locally owned grocery store, telephone cooperative and bank as sponsors of their shop local movement, covering program costs for people who purchase their Community eGift Card. The card works at 49 different shops and restaurants in the area.

Yiftee surveyed its communities and found some expected and some surprising results when they asked, “What was the source of funding for your community gift card bonus and grant programs?”

- 1 – City governments were the first to step up: 26.3%
- 2 – Individuals in the community chipped in: 23.7%

3 – Local banks and other employers contributed: 15.8%

4 – ARPA and CARES federal programs were used: 13.2%

5 – Other sources included tourist and hotel tax reserves, Chamber of Commerce/Downtown Association/Main Street budgets, and other county and state funding.

Over the two years, Sponsors contributed \$2.7 million for bonus cards, incentivizing additional Community eGift card purchases by town residents of \$4.1 million. Grant and employee reward programs added up to an additional \$5.4 million. Gift cards and bonus cards can only be spent at local merchants in the Sponsors' communities. These purchases often replaced national brand gift card purchases as Sponsors redirected their budgets to "shop local."

Local financial institutions and employers support their communities

"Both Prudential Financial, Inc. and Audible are strong supporters of the community in which their employees live and work," said Tamara Remedios, Owner of Xplore Communications, who organized the Newark, NJ Community Card program. "When I approached Prudential with the idea of sponsoring a bonus program, they were all in, contributing \$25k. They especially appreciated that their contributions incentivized additional purchases by Newark residents of 2.5x more. Plus, the bonus cards get residents into the 100+ shops and restaurants who are participating in the program before they expire – so it's a quick boost to our local economy when our businesses needed it the most. Audible also jumped on board to give \$10k to support marketing and special programs for the Newark Gift Card. Both institutions are the benchmark of being true community partners."

Towns multiply their federal grant monies by engaging residents in shopping local

Last month, Yiftee hosted a [webinar](#) featuring two live community case studies where CARES and ARPA funds were used as sponsorships. Like Newark NJ, Concord CA hosted 3 bonus program campaigns at the holiday seasons of both 2020 and 2021, and a mid-year summer 2021 program as well. The \$40,000 in federal grants were complemented by \$80,000 in resident purchases for a total benefit of \$120,000 going to 65 local businesses.

Cutler Bay, FL took a different approach with their CARES funding. They distributed \$500 Community eGift cards to 300 residents in need, and the cards could only be spent at qualified small businesses in Cutler Bay. They saw 97.3% of the value redeemed within 3 months – a double win for the residents and businesses with the same funding.

The Yiftee survey documented some great advice for other communities considering similar programs, such as "Give them [Sponsors] as many perks as possible! Put their logo on all marketing materials, spotlight them on social media and encourage them to buy gift cards for their employees or raffle them off as prizes throughout the year" and "Have a sign at their [merchants'] cash registers to remind purchasers to use their e-gift card at that

establishment.”

The Bemidji, MN Chamber of Commerce promotes a locally owned bank, grocery store and telephone cooperative as Sponsors, celebrating their community spirit with logos on the website, and recognition in local press and marketing materials. This way, the community knows and can appreciate that these Sponsors are covering program costs for people who purchase their Community eGift Cards. Their card works at 49 different shops and restaurants in the area, and the program is free for the merchants to participate.

About Yiftee, Keep Local Dollars Local

Yiftee serves almost 400 communities and 13,000 local businesses with simple, secure, PoS-independent eGift Cards that keep local dollars local – more than \$27M in pandemic years 2020 and 2021. The company works with Chambers of Commerce, Downtowns, Main Streets, Business Improvement Districts, city governments and other local organizations to create “Community Cards,” branded for the community and redeemable at 10s to 100s of local businesses. Organizations and individuals purchase them online and send them via email, text or print to friends, family and co-workers to support their local businesses. There is no cost to the organizers or merchants for the program and it can be set up in just a few days. Yiftee also provides custom-branded cards for individual merchants, franchises, and chains.

More info at <https://www.yiftee.com/> and/or email: sales@yiftee.com

Twitter: @Yiftee, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/yiftee/>

MULTIMEDIA:

VIDEO (YouTube): <https://youtu.be/9qhm8D2NPaI>