

Bookstore campaigns to resist Amazon

By Katy Yoder
Correspondent

Paulina Springs Books' owner Lane Jacobson is part of a David and Goliath story. Many bookstores are being crushed by the giant powerhouse, Amazon. The American Booksellers Association is banding businesses together to fight back. To improve his odds, Jacobson joined the ABA's national campaign called "Boxed Out."

An October press release from the ABA encouraged booksellers to educate customers about the long-term ramifications of purchasing from Amazon instead of community-based businesses.

"The time is now for a conversation about consumer choices, the challenges of small business, and the threat of monopolies," the release stated.

Jacobson is extremely grateful for the support his bookstore received during an earlier GoFundMe campaign, as well as sales through their website and limited capacity in-store shopping.

"We're in a pretty good position and not facing any existential threat right now. But 20 percent of independent bookstores across the country are in danger of closing by January 1, 2021," said Jacobson as he set up the "Boxed Out" display in front of the Hood Avenue store.

The ABA's timing for the campaign coincides with the fourth quarter, which is make-or-break time for bookstores. This year, many won't survive.

"The cause of death for these stores may be listed as COVID-19, but the pre-existing condition will be Amazon. This campaign is meant to highlight that," said Jacobson. "More people are beginning to understand the impact online shopping has, and how damaging it can be to communities."

The campaign is not just about bookstores, but buying locally in general.

"So far things have been better than we feared, but our expenses are way up," Jacobson said. "Usually we spend 99 cents to make a dollar but now we're spending a dollar to make a dollar. Bookstores at the best of times have to work hard at breaking even or being slightly profitable. Right now, we're working twice as hard to achieve the same return. We're shipping a lot more books. There's more labor needed with more things to do like monitoring people in the store so everyone's safe. Cleaning products are not cheap, so the expenses really add up."

The focus of this campaign is to resist Amazon.

"The numbers are staggering," said Jacobson. "We pay our employees more than Amazon pays theirs and they're a \$1.6 trillion company. It's bonkers. There was a study in 2016 that showed because of Amazon, there were 44,000 displaced shops, 637,000 displaced retail jobs with only 137 added jobs. So that's a net loss of 500,000 jobs. Not to mention between \$4 to 5 billion in uncollected local and state sales taxes. It's extremely anti-competitive, and the numbers are staggering."

Jacobson says that selling books on Amazon is a lost leader.

"They sell books at a loss to train people to buy everything on Amazon. That's their long-term strategy. The model hamstring authors and publishers. That means authors don't get paid as much. If authors or publishers try to stand up against Amazon it means their books get buried in their searches or they won't reorder them."

Amazon has reached a level where people are conditioned to assume Amazon books are cheaper. But it's not always true.

"Seasonally they raise

prices for high demand items. They don't show the market price and their price anymore. They're phasing that out as they close the gap," said Jacobson.

With a nationwide campaign, bookstores from Washington D.C. to Sisters have banded together. Their shared messaging is attracting national attention. In front of Paulina Springs, slogans on stacked boxes remind shoppers the battle bookstores are fighting to stay in business.

"It's also a riff on the ubiquitous drowning in a sea of Amazon boxes," said Jacobson.

Campaign dates lined up closely with the annual, Amazon Prime day.

"They were forecasted to make \$10 billion on that day. The numbers are hard to get your mind around. When people spend money in local businesses, it recirculates at a much higher and quicker rate than it does when you shop online," said Jacobson. "Local shops are more likely to donate to charities and do fundraisers for the community they're in. That's a massive local impact advantage of 610 percent over Amazon which only recirculates at 4



PHOTO PROVIDED

Lane Jacobson is part of a national campaign to take on Amazon and keep shopping local.

percent locally."

For more information more visit www.paulinaspringsbooks.com, or call 541-549-0866.

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- OCT 29 THUR** Paulina Springs Books Virtual Event **Books In Common Regional Literary Event Series with Beth Piatote and Sameer Pandya** 6:30 p.m. For more information call 541-549-0866 or go to BooksInCommonNW.com.
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The Lodge in Sisters Drive-Thru Halloween 1 to 3 p.m. Drive through the front entrance, where children will receive a treat bag. Call 541-549-5634 for more information.
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- NOV 7 SAT** FivePine Resort **Happy Girls Run** Staggered starts to ease crowding. 5K run/walk and half marathon. A portion of all proceeds benefits SPRD. Register at www.happygirlsrun.com.

Events Calendar listings are free to advertisers. Submit items by 5 p.m. Fridays to lisa@nuggetnews.com