



## Information and Suggested Activities

### 1. INDEPENDENTS WEEK PROCLAMATION

This is a keystone event of Independents Week around which you can build the rest of your activities. If you belong to a participating organization, have your Board endorse the Independents Week proclamation, but regardless, deliver it to your municipal council for official proclamation. Aim even higher and customize our State Proclamation template to submit to your state's governor. Do this no later than early June to give your council or governor's office time to consider it (see the contact information we've included for state proclamations—the lead time and procedure varies, and you may need to do some further investigation). **DO NOT COUNT ON YOUR CITY OR STATE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF THIS—THEY WILL ONLY IF YOU HELP THEM!** Use the proclamation as a media peg for your media campaign. Arrange a press conference or media event at which the mayor presents the proclamation to the community--maybe at an Independents Week kick-off event you have planned. Be on hand when the governor signs your proclamation and be sure to alert your state's larger media via a press release two days prior. Be sure to have board/staff (if you are an IBA or other organization) and independent business representation at the event! Your community media event could occur in the mayor's office, on the steps of a prominent, well-established independent business, in a communal community area such as a square, or another place appropriate and public for the purpose. Your state event is likely to take place in the governor's office. Take the lead in planning this!

### 2. GRAPHICS

#### A. Poster

We've created a ready-to-print poster for your use, as well as one ready to be customized to your community and your independent businesses. Feel free to alter the space to announce events that are part of your Independents Week celebration, bullet points about reasons to support locally-owned independent businesses, etc.

#### B. Buttons

We've included four different button/sticker designs that enable wear the entire week. Three designs are intended for business owners, employees, community members--anyone; the fourth is intended for accepters of the *Indie Challenge*. You can find a local company to produce them for you, or button-making machines are available for rent, and all you need to do is purchase the materials and rent the machine. The designs also will work well as stickers for wear or other placement. Distribute to owners and employees of your member or local businesses. AMIBA does sell another button design, available in different quantities. See it on the merchandise page of our website. **NOTE: where (Community) is indicated, replace with the name of yours!**

#### C. Logo

The Independents Week logo is designed for any use you might see fit, but **do** submit it with any press releases. We've included designs in color and black-and-white and low and high resolution both with a date and without. The media always are interested in graphics to accompany their stories, and your doing the work for them may instigate its use--and gain greater notice for your events. Using the logo in your materials will show you are part of a larger effort.



#### D. Game Card

Designed to go with item number 2, “Find Your Independents” game, under *Activities to Consider*, below. Ready for local customization, including items or people of your choosing on the game grid (you can make this as easy or challenging as you like – you may wish to include specific items [CD for listening, cup of coffee, raft for the pool, etc.], geographical indie business markers [such as tag lines, sign components, building façade elements, mascots, etc.], people – employees of indie businesses [who wear glasses, aprons, greet you at the door, sit behind a desk...]. Use your imagination!)

#### E. Over-the-Street Banner and Downtown Flags

Many downtowns have flag poles and the infrastructure in to hang “over the street” banners already in place. We created templates for this purpose. Talk to your local downtown association to ask how to get your material up and what size the flags and banner needs to be. They also can help you determine a good source for printing these items (your best bet may be a local independent sign company). While banners and flags can be expensive to produce, they also may be used for years to come.

### 3. EMPLOYEE AND OWNER EDUCATION

Much of the success of your local event will be ensured if the business owners and their employees are aware of it, embrace it, and celebrate it! Encourage them to participate with in-store events and promotions, including the “Find Your Independents” game. Provide your store owners/managers with an information sheet and urge them to discuss the event in an employee meeting--or if you are part of an IBA, offer to send someone in from your IBA leadership to discuss it with them. Make buttons or stickers and distribute them to your IBA’s member businesses for their employees to wear for the week.

### 4. MEDIA

We’ve provided you with a press release template—feel free to adapt it or create your own. We all benefit if we’re all speaking the same “language” about Independents Week. Here’s a suggested sound bite to use. . .but use your *own* words!

**Sound bite:** Independents Week--taking the time to recognize [city’s] local independent businesses and the community values they embody: their spirit of entrepreneurship, individuality, uniqueness, and character; giving back to community with time, talent, goods and services, and fulfilling our community’s needs; we’re also recognizing the independence of our citizens: their ability to think and act for themselves and embracing their part in shaping the future of [city].

Suggestions:

Have local anecdotes to provide--concrete and specific examples of the above qualities of local independent businesses.

Be sure to equate those qualities of independent businesses to qualities of the community--how they are analogous to quality of life in your community.

Local media will be your best partners for ensuring the success of your local event. An early contact to with your plans will help gain their interest. A follow-up as the Week draws closer is



vital to ensure you are on their radar screen. Use AMIBA's press release guidelines to help you compose one. If you have contacts at various media outlets, engage them to discover the timeline they recommend for ensuring coverage. Be sure to mention that Independents Week is a national event--chances are good that the media will pay closer attention.

Ideas for the media (through a letter or, better yet, a personal contact):

- 1) Pitch the idea of on-site, live broadcasts to TV and radio stations. When Independents Week was a local event only in Tampa, Florida, the local Fox News affiliate broadcast its morning news program from a different independent business all week long.
- 2) Suggest reporters follow takers of the *Indie Challenge* (see below) to see how they are progressing during the week. They might also bring up issues affecting independent business in your community and around the country. Strongly suggest they TAKE the Indie Challenge themselves and monitor their own thoughts and experiences, too!
- 3) Invite them to participate in activities you plan--such as a kick-off event, picnic or a community bike ride. The media often are looking for different angles to pursue that reflect community events, particularly when July 4th celebrations often are similar from year to year.
- 4) Hold a press conference at city hall, the governor's mansion or your state capital building to document your reception of a proclamation. This is a great opportunity for your mayor or governor to receive some positive media coverage. Suggest to your governor's press officer that your governor create a public service announcement for the week extolling the virtues of the state's independent businesses and their value to the state's vitality.

## ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER

Much of the festive atmosphere for Independents Week already will be in place. Your media outreach will be a big factor in getting IW noticed. Here are some activity ideas to consider, both for your IBA and for individual businesses:

### IBA/Organization

#### 1) The *Indie Challenge*

A great way not only to engage your community, but also the media is by challenging prominent locals to take the Indie Challenge--to try fulfilling all of their needs at local independent businesses for the week. You can use the media to your advantage by informing them via press release and interviews about your challenge--and who you're challenging. It may be a good prompt for those who may be reluctant about being public about their participation or who may drag their heels. Consider inviting **local radio/TV/newspaper personalities, your city council members, the president of your community's Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations, and any other visible folks**. Don't stop shy of state government, either. It's a great opportunity to engage your **local, county, state, and federal legislators** not only in discussion, but participation. Use our button design, *I'm Taking the Indie Challenge*, and create and distribute buttons to challenge-takers. Be sure the media knows who is participating--certainly suggest checking in with participants throughout the week as a potential news story! Consider following up with participants after Independents Week to capture their thoughts on their experience--you may get some valuable quotes. . .and converts to your cause!



## 2) *“Find Your Independents!” Game*

This is a scavenger hunt for items one might need to purchase--but with the twist that folks need to find them at local independent businesses. No purchase is necessary; players merely need to find the item noted on their game card, then get a stamp or sticker from the participating business where they found the item (this requires participating businesses to have such a thing on hand for use--many businesses do). There is space on the game card for players to provide their name and contact information for use in a drawing for gift certificates from participating businesses, which we suggest to culminate the game and Independents Week. We strongly suggest ensuring there are activities to engage children--including gift certificates for the drawing--as children heavily influence adult activity and family spending!

Here are some suggested ways to do this, but feel free to devise your own:

A) Your IBA can collect gift certificates from participating businesses, divvy them up and have the drawing come from your IBA. Your IBA would collect the game cards, perhaps dropped off at participating businesses.

B) Individual stores can hold their own drawings--your IBA can collect gift certificates in whatever denomination/configuration participating stores would like to contribute, then distribute a mixed variety of certificates back to the stores in the same denomination that store submitted (in other words, a store contributes 4 certificates at \$25 each; store receives an equivalent dollar amount of a variety of certificates--they might even request a single \$100 certificate, or choose to give away one of their own certificates for the drawing). This scenario opens the door for some friendly competition among your participating businesses--you may have one store that donates a large amount, thus has a large number for the drawing--an enticement for more players to enter there. They may choose to hold one drawing for all certificates they hold, or several for smaller amounts.

You can determine your own rules. For instance, you may decide that each player only can enter once. Or you could allow as many entries as one wants. The choice is yours. Be sure to print a rules sheet to have available at each participating business, that store employees are educated on the game and know the prizes, that you provide a collection box for participating stores, and have available a list of prizes.

We've designed a game board for use that you can customize and print locally. The front cover contains our Declaration of Independents, the back cover bears an educational message about the benefits to your community of local independent businesses, and the centerfold contains a grid with 14 items to find. You can alter the items to suit your desires--perhaps include items only found in your community, or you can substitute items you might need for an Independence Day party or a day at the beach. We tried to include items that would get people thinking and also take them through the doors of a variety of independent businesses.

Variation~one community conducted a scavenger hunt for give-away items from participating businesses—items such as matchbooks, guitar picks, bookmarks, etc., then asked players to bring them to a designated turn-in location (you certainly could allow folks to keep the items); they needed a minimum number of those items to gain a chance in a big prize drawing.

## 3) *Hold a Kick-off Event or IBA-sponsored Events During the Week*



Ideas:

- a street dance with local musicians and local businesses providing food/beverage (permits are required for this, but you might want to do this in a warehouse, at a local theater, or at a business with a lot of space). A fun twist is to make this a pot luck event. (Also see idea below on contra dancing).
- family picnic or pot luck meal with games and refreshments; invite your mayor, city council members, or local legislators
- moonlight pool party at a public pool (be sure to have life guards on hand). You might consider doing this on July 4 at a pool with a view of the fireworks. Invite folks to bring inflatables to lay on for the viewing. Hold a barbecue or pot luck to go along with it--encourage participants to use locally-produced food products in their offerings. Provide coupons or a directory to independent businesses that sell grilling supplies, barbecue comestibles, pool supplies, bathing suits/towels, flip-flops, etc.
- A “meet your food” event at a member grocery store (bring the farmers there) or a tour of area farms that supply your locally owned grocery stores with produce, meats, dairy, etc.
- A *Keep [City] Weird* 5k fun run sponsored by your IBA and local businesses. Provide *Keep [City] Weird* t-shirts and water bottles for all participants. Have the pool party or picnic the same day.
- An IBA participatory event at a local farmers market--perhaps you bring local musicians to play, provide face painting for kids, food samples from locally-owned restaurants--use your imagination!
- A bicycle tour of the unique aspects of your community--if you have a locally-owned bike shop as a member, they might be engaged to lead this. This could be an alley tour, the “old” section of town, historic homes tour, a loop of the city, a critical mass ride, or a moonlight ride. Stop afterward at a local ice cream shop for treats, or a local restaurant. Perhaps have a picnic or sack lunches catered by one or more of your member restaurants. The folks at the bike shop probably would have some great ideas. . .and if you are fortunate to have more than one bike shop as members, make it a cooperatively sponsored event. Encourage riders to decorate their bikes, and be sure to observe and enforce proper safety rules for your ride. Bike shops can provide a free bike evaluation/minor fix service to accompany the ride--or at any of your other events--encourage participants to ride their bicycles to your picnic or pool party, for example.
- An Independents Night--encourage your members to stay open late and provide in-store promotions to entice community members to venture inside.
- A kick-off sale day at all member businesses.
- A sidewalk artists contest. Supply the sidewalk chalk and the judges. Invite the media--you're bound to get a front page picture or splash on television with the colorful results! Provide prizes for different age/ability groups--coupons or goods from local businesses or local art supply store, restaurant gift certificates, etc.
- Invite community members to a July 4<sup>th</sup> baseball game, if you have a major-or minor-league team in your vicinity. Sit in the cheap seats where you can sit as a group. Bring banners, wear costumes or *Keep [City] Weird* t-shirts. . .and get onto the Jumbo-Tron with your message! Prepare an announcement in advance and find out how to get it broadcast during the game--most major league ball parks do announce the presence of large groups.
- Arrange a community outdoor contra dance with live music. Look for local folklore society, folk music, dance studio or music store contacts for information on availability in your community and how this might be arranged. Possible partners in this might be your local farmers market or food co-op, as well as the folks mentioned above.



- Invite a locally-owned music or drum store to supply a variety of drums and/or percussion instruments (cowbells, maracas, triangles, woodblocks. . .)--and a drumming leader--to create a rhythm circle at one of your gatherings. It's a great multi-age, multi-talent, interactive, community-building activity. Have them appear at a variety of your gatherings and encourage them to hold a drawing for a free drumming lesson (or a free drum!).
- An outdoor movie screening. Project the film on the wall of a building. Be creative in your film selection, and be sure it is family-friendly. Encourage folks to dress up in the spirit of the movie (for example, show "Jaws" and folks come dressed for swimming, bring rafts, beach towels and inner tubes to sit on). Provide popcorn and sodas.
- Engage local filmmakers, a film class, a community-access television station, or university class to film your events during the week documentary-style. Create a movie from it and show the film at another community event, get it aired on community-access television, or collaborate with a local theater to present it as a community event--or present it as outdoor cinema as above--perhaps to culminate your week! Be sure to include outtakes (in good taste and diplomatically, however).
- If your community has an outdoor pedestrian mall or other commercial area (loaded with independent businesses) with an outdoor area, enlist a few teenagers to lead games for kids while their parents shop. Local Girl Scout/other troops might be eager to help, as they can use this as a service project.
- You could be ambitious and host a different event each night of Independents Week!

#### In-store Promotion Ideas

- Local musicians playing in-store
- Local artists/writers to talk about, demonstrate or read from their work
- Balloons to give away
- Provide food samples from local restaurants or ice cream treats
- Provide craft activities for kids that have to do with your business--we know of a great lumber/hardware store that pre-cuts pieces to make a tool box or a bird house from scrap lumber. It's a popular draw at community events!
- Sales on locally-produced items or items from independent manufacturers
- Cooperative events between businesses--like a progressive dinner deal (diners purchase a flat-rate pass or ticket, then can get it punched at participating restaurants for an appetizer, soup/salad, entrée, dessert. Alcoholic beverages purchased separately. Restaurants split proceeds based on what type of meals were redeemed there), coupons for coffee from a local café available at a local bagel shop--and vice versa.
- Locally-owned newspapers could hold an essay contest with a topic pertaining to Independents/independence. Winning essays appear in the paper. Winners get a gift certificate to a locally-owned business
- Radio stations can hold ticket give-aways keyed on music with an "independent" theme.
- Bike shops can offer a free bike tune-up class or give away water bottles. Arrange with them to connect with your community's police department to provide a bike safety course for kids and adults alike.
- Have sidewalk chalk available for kids--or anyone who's a kid at heart--to create art on the sidewalk in front of the store.

Please share your ideas with AMIBA so we can provide additional ideas for future years!