

Strengthen Your Community

(NAPSA)—According to a recent survey by MerchantCircle.com, the largest online network of business owners, about 42 percent of local merchants believe the current economy is weaker now than 12 months ago.

Improving your community is an important part of rebuilding the economy and is easier than you may realize. Here are three ways you can help your local com-



One reason to support local businesses is that they create new jobs in the community.

munity bounce back from the recession and thrive.

- **Shop locally.** Local shops create employment and self-employment; then these people spend in the local economy. Research shows that for every \$10 spent in an independent shop, \$25 is generated for the local economy.

- **Volunteer.** Check the local paper or websites such as VolunteerMatch.org to learn what you can do to help your local schools, libraries, charities and community centers.

- **Staycation.** Save travel expenses and strengthen your community by enjoying a staycation or weekend getaway at home. Discover all the local treasures including parks, museums, theaters and unique shops.

An easy way to find businesses in your community is through www.MerchantCircle.com, an online network of over 1.3 million local businesses. When you visit the site, you can search for businesses and service providers, get coupons, read reviews and learn about special events and offers. The Merchant Circle.com “Answers” service lets you get free expert advice from local businesses in your community and around the country.