

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Media Contact:**

Daniel Bancroft  
Economic Action Group  
daniel@eagworks.org  
(330)-979-5247

### **#STAYINTHEKNOWWITHYO!**

## **YO! APP CELEBRATES YO! WEEK 2023 THROUGH SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES**

The YO! App is bolstering Downtown Businesses and Shopping Local during the week of November 20 – 26, with promotions all week culminating with “YO! Day 2023” on Shop Small Saturday (November 25<sup>th</sup>). The City of Youngstown encourages the community to utilize the YO! app to support the city’s small businesses while earning rewards!

Supporting the city’s businesses is especially important this week, with 20% EXTRA rewards back to customers and DOUBLE redemptions back to businesses. Customers that redeem \$20 or more in City Bites on November 25<sup>th</sup> will receive \$5 back in rewards!

Aimed to invigorate local businesses impacted by ongoing downtown construction, the YO! App introduces its latest initiative, the “Discover Downtown” Reward offer. Customers can earn an extra 20% in rewards when supporting Downtown Businesses – that gives you extra money to redeem back at local businesses!

The YO! App is a state-of-the-art mobile app, sponsored by the City of Youngstown and managed by Colu Technologies, designed to strengthen the Youngstown economy by fostering community engagement and support for local businesses. The YO! App has seen major user growth with over 3,000 downloads and \$40,000 worth of rewards spent at local businesses so far! Colu Technologies licenses the software and manages the programs for various cities around the country.

The YO! App acts as a local reward system allowing users to accumulate and use points known as “City Bites”, with each equivalent to \$1. City Bites are earned by users as a reward for shopping at participating local businesses. Users can then redeem their City Bites like cash for goods or services at any of the 30 local businesses categorized as “redeeming businesses” on the app. This is fully funded by the City of Youngstown – businesses do not have to pay for the app, nor do they have to offer discounts.

“Cities that champion their constituents are looking for innovative ways to support local consumers and businesses. The City of Youngstown is one of those cities,” explains Christopher DiGirolomo from the Colu team. “With the downtown construction posing challenges for many businesses, the City of Youngstown believes it is essential to introduce an offer that would

entice residents to rally behind these establishments. The 'Discover Downtown' Reward offers users enhanced incentives when they frequent businesses within the designated construction zones, counteracting the downturn these businesses have experienced."

Feedback from both businesses and users has been overwhelmingly positive since the app's inception. Local establishments report noticeable increases in sales and patronage, attributing much of the resurgence to the app's incentivization.

"The app is a great way of connecting everything in Youngstown. I know that's a big issue our city deals with. But I like the deals and earning and spending the Bites. It definitely drives you to connect with more businesses," said Aspasia Lyras-Bernacki, owner of Penguin City Brewing.

"A lot of customers are enthusiastic about redeeming their points, and it makes us glad to see how this program supports us small businesses in Youngstown," says Kalli Georgalos, owner of Mocha House in Youngstown. "We are really grateful!"

For businesses or users interested in learning more about the YO! App, please visit <https://youngstownohio.gov/yoapp> or contact Daniel Bancroft. #StayInTheKnowWithYO!

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# Testimonials

"I think it's amazing to see how the program has grown to what it is today. I made sure to become apart of it as soon as it became available, in order to support our city doing great things.

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we are really grateful!"

-Kalli



Kalli  
Owner  
Mocha House

**The YO! App is an invaluable resource for students**, providing crucial financial support throughout their college years.

By utilizing City Bites, participants gain a greater understanding of their civic responsibilities through the support of local businesses in Youngstown, which ultimately contributes to our local economy.

-YSU Student Government  
Association



YSU Student  
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But I like the deals and earning and spending the bites, **it definitely drives you to connect with more businesses.**

Would love to work on more events with YO APP.

- Aspasia



Aspasia Lyras-Bernacki  
Penguin City Brewing  
Company