



## SUCCESS STORY

# TIP JAR CONTEST: SERVING UP SUPPORT FOR STRESSED RESTAURANTS

Efficiency Smart launched the Tip Jar Contest in June 2021 to help ease the financial burden on restaurants in its service areas. Efficiency Smart promoted the contest in its 26 participating communities in support of their local restaurants while spreading the word about its energy efficiency program.

In response, more than 100 people nominated 43 different restaurants on Facebook, five nominators won restaurant gift cards, and five restaurants won additional rebates to reduce the upfront cost to install energy-saving equipment.

The Tip Jar Contest gave communities a platform to support their favorite restaurants in a new way while providing a morale boost to an industry suffering job and sales loss.

One nominator in Newton Falls, Ohio wrote, "Our town has lost many businesses, suffered a tornado and endured through the pandemic. Through it all you could count in Roby Lee's to find a way to feed our hometown delicious homemade food."

Another nominator in Newark, Delaware commented, "It's a great locally owned restaurant that does a ton for the local community and local (and state) First Responders. The two owners are also two of the nicest people you'll ever meet and would be the first people to step up and help anyone and everyone if asked."

All the communities involved were able to promote their favorite local restaurants while learning more about how energy efficiency contributes to thriving homes and businesses.



**43**

Restaurants Nominated



More Than

**100**

Unique Nominators



**26**

Communities Impacted

### Bowling Green Café Wins Support to Weather Challenging Times

The Tip Jar contest created quite a buzz in Bowling Green, Ohio, where Call of the Canyon Café has been a town fixture for more than 25 years. Its new owners took over in August 2020 and faced the daunting task of trying to retain staff and keep the business afloat amid pandemic challenges.

Fortunately, the café received a little extra support to weather the storm and save on energy bills. After café patrons nominated it for the Tip Jar contest, the response from the community was swift: hundreds of town residents voted for the local favorite to help it secure the win.

“The amount of support people gave us was overwhelming,” said the café’s co-owner Ardy Gonyer. “When we found out that we were one of five finalists, we were hoping for 25 to 50 votes from our followers on Facebook. I think we ended up being closer to 250.”

After the café won the contest, Efficiency Smart helped the café select a new, all-in-one energy-efficient line cooler and prep station. The equipment will reduce maintenance issues and monthly electric bills.

“The cooler was exactly what we were looking for, and the process was super easy,” said Gonyer. “The Efficiency Smart staff made checking specifications and ordering the equipment seamless. They’re great to work with.”

The publicity generated by the Tip Jar Contest also drove new business to the café. The boost was a boon for the café and the City of Bowling Green, which contracts with Efficiency Smart to provide energy efficiency services to town residents and businesses.

“Having a municipal utility is one thing that makes Bowling Green stand out in comparison to our neighbors, and Efficiency Smart is a component of that,” said Mary Hinkelman, Executive Director of the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce.

“The community engagement through the Tip Jar contest was amazing and I feel strongly that Bowling Green rallied around this restaurant to win,” she added. “It was an impactful way for Efficiency Smart to say, hey, look at what we do.”

Efficiency Smart’s Tip Jar Contest helped dozens of communities promote energy efficiency and support local businesses.



Call of the Canyon in Bowling Green, Ohio

**The community engagement through the Tip Jar contest was amazing and I feel strongly that Bowling Green rallied around this restaurant to win. It was an impactful way for Efficiency Smart to say, hey, look at what we do.**

**Mary Hinkelman**

Executive Director, Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce

### Wadsworth Sub Shop Saves on Upgrade for Aging Refrigeration

In Wadsworth, Ohio, The Sub Station was one of the contest finalists who benefitted. Owner Matt Reed worked with Efficiency Smart to save on energy-efficient refrigeration upgrades to the shop's beverage and produce cooler. The upgrades use less energy while keeping products fresher for longer, from lagers to lettuce. And the exposure from the contest helped drive more foot traffic to the restaurant.

"We did this project through Wadsworth's Small Business program," said Reed. "It was a one-page application, and it wasn't hard at all, especially with Efficiency Smart's help. I'd recommend the program to anybody I knew—just the ease of it."

### Innovation Helps Small Businesses Stay Strong

Efficiency Smart is always looking for ways to help its municipal utilities engage more people in taking advantage of the benefits of public power and energy efficiency. Providing technical assistance and financial support for new efficient equipment are two important ways to meet that goal. Community engagement is another. In the case of the Tip Jar Contest, Efficiency Smart was able to support restaurants in gaining new customers while spreading the word to other businesses and residents about ways to save on energy bills.

"I think it's great to get the community more involved to help businesses," said Sara Bluhm, Economic Development & Community Engagement Administrator for the City of Milford, Delaware, another community that participated in the Tip Jar Contest. "It's not easy to run a mom-and-pop shop. This is an easy and inexpensive way to help while supporting local businesses and putting them out there."

Efficiency Smart deploys community engagement as a proven method for engaging more people and businesses in saving energy. Moving forward, Efficiency Smart will continue to support Tip Jar contest winners—and all participating communities—in lowering their energy use.

### Set Up an Efficiency Program Today

Since 2011, Efficiency Smart has helped residents and businesses use less energy and save money in more than 60 communities in four states. For more on how your business or community can engage, please contact us.



The Sub Station in Wadsworth, Ohio

**I think it's great to get the community more involved to help businesses. It's not easy to run a mom-and-pop shop. This is an easy and inexpensive way to help while supporting local businesses and putting them out there.**

**Sara Bluhm**  
Economic Development and  
Community Engagement  
Administrator, City of Milford