

**Second Saturday: A Basic Profile**

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Small businesses play a crucial role in society and our economy as a whole. In recent years, the push to help small businesses has increased drastically, especially after the pandemic. Luckily, there is an event in Talladega Alabama doing just that. Talladega's "Second Saturday" is a place where vendors can sell their wares and promote their services. Food trucks and stalls line the streets and the energy is incredible. I was even lucky enough to play a part in the operation and planning process as well. This is an event close to my heart and I can't wait to share it with you.

As the name suggests, "Second Saturday" takes place on the second Saturday of every month. This event was based off of many other events like it such as the one in Oxford by the same name. The event took place in the square of Talladega, a part of the town that is rich with history, but doesn't see nearly enough visitors. The events would be advertised throughout the following month in order to increase the number of visitors. The city of Talladega would block off the roads to the square in order to facilitate a large number of food trucks and vendors, as well as live music.

Speaking of vendors, the businesses selling their wares and services here came from all over Alabama. The stalls could range from small woodworking shops to massive manufacturers looking for new hires. Vendors had the choice of providing their own canopy, or renting one alongside a table and chairs. Stalls would be lined up down the street, and everyone pitched in to help each other set up for the day. It wasn't uncommon to see vendors purchasing wares from one another, increasing business even further.

My favorite stalls were definitely the vendors selling art. From woodworking to statuary, it was a gold mine for hand-made goods. There was one shop that sold vehicles made out of wood, from tanks to tractors every part would be hand-made and incredibly detailed. One shop

sold custom earrings with gems I'd never even seen before. Right beside it you could see the church handing out free popcorn and inviting people to join them Sunday. Everyone would have a chipper attitude and you could always expect a smile.

My role in all of this was helping vendors set up their stalls and booths. I would bring out the tables, chairs, and canopies and help put them together. I have fond memories rushing from stall to stall with sandbags to keep the tents from flying away from the wind. Everyone knew each other and if they didn't they would by the end of the day. Rain or shine, there was always a decent amount of vendors who showed up and helped out. I loved the community that the events brought together and I was happy to be a part of it.

My father actually started doing these events in Talladega originally, gathering musicians and vendors in order to draw a crowd. We own an event center so providing the tables and chairs was a given. Sometimes the events would be more of a concert with the vendors being the secondary aspect, drawing larger crowds and tourists to Talladega. At one point we had set up a mobile stage so that the artists would be closer to the food trucks and vendors without getting in the way.

When it comes to food trucks, your choices could vary from boiled peanuts to New Orleans style crawfish. It was always interesting watching them set up because everyone had their own method and entirely different menus. You could smell the freshly cooked food from across town, scents like tacos, burgers, and wings. You could grab a kebab from one truck and then a churro from the next for dessert. A wide array of vendors from all over Alabama with an even wider array of choices.

I discovered so many businesses that I would have never even heard of if I hadn't been there. Small mom and pop shops that make custom ice cream flavors, and another shop with

thirty different types of lemonade. The events were a great place for businesses to grow their network and market their products. Providing a crowd to small businesses that usually wouldn't see much foot traffic. I think the purpose of the event is really important and that it really does bring people together. Developing a community of people following their dreams and looking toward the future.

Unfortunately, Second Saturday no longer takes place in Talladega, this is due to a variety of events but mainly funding. I truly miss helping out with the events and witnessing all of the interesting people and vendors who would show up. The event was very close to my heart, something that was likely aware due to my writing of this article. Thankfully there are similar events to this throughout the state and the rest of the world, providing attention to small businesses that need them.

Small businesses are the backbone of our society, but sometimes they need a helping hand too. Bringing these people together to share their passions with us was an amazing experience. I got to meet people from all walks of life with dreams as big as their hearts. Walking through the square and seeing happy faces and people coming together to share their passions will always be a wonderful memory for me. People say that all good things must come to an end, and Second Saturday was definitely a good thing. I hope that you will check out the one in Oxford and support small businesses in the future. Let's keep building each other up and discovering new things.

From this essay I have learned that when writing about something you are personally connected to, it is easy to overestimate your knowledge on the subject. I think that I will take a more distanced approach to research in the future. I definitely could have gone into more detail and I feel like I repeated myself too much as well. Writing a profile was new for me but I definitely enjoyed the experience.