



[Editorials](#) | [Letters](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Blogs](#)

Wednesday, September 23, 2009 |

[Orange, VA](#) 72° Feels Like: 72° Clear

Why bash Walmart? Let's look at the store's positive impacts.

Text size: [small](#) | [medium](#) | [large](#)

WORTH RICHARDSON, EDITORIAL COLUMNIST, DWRICH27@MSN.COM

Published: September 23, 2009

Watch for falling prices and negative comments when getting near any Walmart. In the history of consumers, Walmart is the most frequented store, but it has also been met with much negativity wherever it goes.

Complaints against the retail giant range from poor working conditions to long lines to resistance from local business owners. The benefits Walmart provides in our community and nation are rarely pointed out. It can save consumers and local businesses hundreds of dollars on an individual basis and provide much needed jobs.

Most recently, Walmart has announced the expansion of its generic prescription drug program. The retailer offers a 30-day supply of common generic drugs ranging from penicillin to prednisone for only \$4 and a 90-day supply for \$10.

In order to make the program more accessible to consumers, Walmart is now offering prescriptions online with free shipping. Walmart's head of health and wellness said "our \$10 mail delivery prescription program is a true reflection of Walmart's commitment to drive unnecessary costs out of the health care system so Americans can live healthier, better lives."

Sounds like Walmart has accomplished more to make health care affordable recently than Washington, D.C.

In modern-day mythology, it is said Walmart rolls into town dropping prices and driving mom and pop stores out of business. This notion is statistically unfounded. In fact, a Cato Institute report concluded that over the past 30 years, Walmart's growth has had no significant impact on the overall size and growth of U.S. small business activity.

The study, entitled "Has Walmart Buried Mom and Pop," used a variety of methods and statistics. It was also concluded that Walmart has had an impact on putting some Mom and Pops out of business on a local basis, but in a macro perspective the impact was null.

Walmart has thrived during this recession in comparison to other retailers as consumers look for the most economical prices. As a result, Walmart's sales in Q4 last year jumped 7.2 percent to \$401 billion.

Walmart's hourly employees were rewarded with a bonus in March that totaled \$2 billion. This \$2 billion in bonuses can be viewed in the same light as any of the recent stimulus checks we have received in the mail

from Uncle Sam. However, Walmart did not have to finance its checks and go further into debt.

Where do most employees in America work? Far and away, it is Walmart. The largest employer in the United States, with over 1.5 million employees, is also very selective in its hiring process, statistically.

A recent opening in Florida had Walmart's hiring center there swamped, as there were six applicants for every 1 job. The store's compensation and work environment must be attractive to at least part of the labor market.

Opponents of Walmart are quick to complain about the impact on the surrounding community or point out its so-called terrible working conditions. A company the size of Walmart is bound to have isolated negative events. Some employees will endure unpleasant conditions, and some Moms and Pops will be put out of business.

However, in the big picture, millions of Americans can afford groceries and prescriptions because of Walmart, and many people who would not have jobs do because of Walmart.

Richardson's column runs Wednesdays on the editorial page.

Reader Reactions

Posted by (Sandalwood) on September 23, 2009 at 9:40 am

With a 70% turnover rate they must not be doing everything right for their employees. I bet there isn't a dozen employees at our local Walmart that has been there five years or more.

I wouldn't mind them so much if 90% of their stock wasn't "Made in China". And, yes, I do shop there but I'd be much happier to bring something home that said, "Made in USA".

[Report Inappropriate Comment](#)

Page 1 of 1