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A CLOSER LOOK

‘We’re so happy to be here’

Sycamore’s Meijer retail supercenter opens Thursday with no fanfare or ribbon-cutting

By KATRINA J.E. MILTON
kmilton@shawmedia.com

SYCAMORE – Sycamore’s newest store, a 159,000-square-foot Meijer supercenter, will open at 6 a.m. Thursday.

The store, located at 541 Puri Parkway, normally is open 24 hours a day, but is open from 6 a.m. to midnight during the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior shopping hours are 6 to 8 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and essential worker shopping hours are 6 to 8 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Store Director Dean Hutson said the store will open “with no fanfare or ribbon-cutting” due to the pandemic.

“It will be just the customers and us, and I kind of like it better that way,” Hutson said. “We want to offer a friendly superstar shopping experience when you come here. We offer so much in our store. Anything you need, we probably have it: pet items, pharmacy, clothes, groceries, even spark plugs.”

All about Meijer

Meijer is a family-owned, regional retailer based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There are more than 240 supercenters in six states, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois and Wisconsin, that employ about 70,000 team members.

All Meijer stores give about 6% back to the community in which they are located. The Sycamore store has already given $30,000 to community organizations: $15,000 to the Sycamore Public Library, $4,000 to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, $4,000 to the Kishwaukee Family YMCA and $10,000 to the DeKalb County Youth Service Bureau.

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Sycamore Meijer Store Director Dean Hutson talks about the grocery department Tuesday during a tour of the new store that opens Thursday.
Sycamore City Manager Brian Gregory said that development of the Sycamore Crossings commercial center began in 2006 and that discussion with Meijer and land developer First Midwest Group began in 2014.

“We’re excited any time a new business comes to town,” Gregory said. “Meijer has a supercenter concept. It’s more than just groceries, it’s a one-stop-shopping experience. We hope that Meijer will be a commercial anchor store that will bring more development to Sycamore.”

Sycamore Mayor Curt Lang said that he is excited to have Meijer come to Sycamore because “Meijer supports and is involved with the community.”

“[Meijer] will be a great partner to the community for many, many years to come,” Lang said. “The store has great quality, is family-owned and it has a good location, right off of Peace Road. It’s terrific for Sycamore and our surrounding area.”

In addition to ample car parking in the on-site parking lot, customers can travel to the new Meijer store via Huskie Line. The bus will stop at the end of the parking lot at the bus stop every hour from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

A Meijer gas station opened four weeks ago. In front of the store, as a separate business, a Jiffy Lube is under construction and is planned to be completed later this year.

Inside the store
The Sycamore store is one of five new Meijer supercenters opening nationwide Thursday. All five supercenters feature the same new store design.

Hutson describes the store’s ambiance as “a blend of retro and urban,” with dark exposed steel ceilings, retro signage and subway tile.

“It all starts when you walk into the store, which has a clean, modern look and straight lines on the exterior of the building,” Hutson said. “The store has elevated vestibules with lots of natural light.”

Upon entering the grocery section, to the left is produce, straight ahead is the deli and to the right is a grab-and-go section, with ready-made meals ready for purchase. A seating area is located near the entrance with tables and a soda fountain, with cups available for purchase at cash registers. A Starbucks and restrooms are located at the front of the store. Customers can access free Wi-Fi throughout the store.

The store features 26 registers, including self-checkout sections. Self-checkout stations will not accept cash at this time. Curbside pickup and delivery also are available.

The store has arrows directing customers one way down aisles for social distancing during the pandemic.

The large beer, wine and spirits department is in the back middle of the new Sycamore Meijer Store that opens Thursday.

The deli counter, which sells items such as deli meats and rotisserie chicken, has overhead digital menus and a sushi bar, with sushi made to order. The bakery is connected to the deli. The store’s meat section has a large glass window, where customers can watch meat being cut. Meijer sells fresh-cut meat, including pork chops, steaks and Certified Angus Beef. Cold items, such as dairy and the freezer section, are located in the back left of the store.

A wine, beer and spirits section is located to the back middle of the store, with a register located in the department and refrigerators of beer along the back wall. Dry and canned goods are located to the right of the alcohol section.

A large pet section is located in the back right corner of the store. Vet IQ, a veterinary clinic that offers exams and shots, is at the front of the store and can be accessed through a separate exterior entrance.

“We have fish, pet toys, sweaters, upper-end and lower-end pet food,” Hutson said. “Pets are family, and we understand that. We have everything you could possibly need for your pet, whether it is a dog, cat, fish or bird.”

The store has an outdoor lawn and garden section, but Hutson said that items are not outside “because it is the tail-end of flower-planting season.”

A section with electronics, books and back-to-school items is located next to the lawn and garden section.

The store’s pharmacy, which offers a drive-thru, is at the front of the store near the right entrance. Cosmetics are organized like a department store in alcoves, not in one long aisle.

The center of the store features clothing, shoes, baby, card and gift sections. The store sells licensed Sycamore High School, Dekalb High School and Northern Illinois University (NIU) apparel.

Hutson, a graduate of NIU, said he is happy to work at a store so close to his alma mater.

“Sycamore still has that small-town feel, the history, beauty and architecture is amazing,” Hutson said.

An historic mural, with black and white Sycamore photos provided by the DeKalb County History Center, hangs on the inside front wall of the store.

“Meijer is always very careful and selective where we open stores and we’re always looking for places that are a great match,” Hutson said. “This community and location is perfect, local officials have been great, everyone has worked really hard – we’re so happy to be here.”