PX grand opening displays new look

Civilian shopping area included in celebration

Story and photos by
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APG News

With cake, balloons, live music and merchandise specials, the Aberdeen Proving Ground Post Exchange showed off its

new and improved appearance after months of renovation during a grand opening celebration that drew hundreds to the facility April 12.

A rainbow of red, white and blue balloons greeted customers who took part in the festivities.

Many commented on the main building s wider aisles and improved lighting which gives it a much larger appearance.

"It s almost a new store now," said John Shiroky, regional manager of Consolidated Exchange services, Fort Meade.

"With new fixtures, flooring, lighting and upgraded images, it s as close to having a new store without building one from the ground up," he said adding that the new digital sign in front of the store will not only display the time and weather conditions, but also advertise special promotions or events.

He said that meeting customer needs remains the goal of the exchange services.

"Anytime we can make our services and facilities better, we will," Shiroky said. "We owe it to our customers to provide them with a comfortable shopping experience."

Thea Sarver, PX manager, added that improvements include a wider variety of merchandise choices as well as new seasonal items located in the store s Four Seasons shop.

"We were able to bring in a large selection of ready-to-assemble furniture, and there are good deals on lawnmowers, barbecue grills, plants and lawn furniture in our Four Seasons section, just in time for the warmer weather," Sarver said.

Shoppers took advantage of the special prices and giveaways that were offered as part of the reopening festivities.

"I like everything about the new look," said Sgt. Sophia Green as she and fellow Soldier Staff Sgt. Lisa Hunter shopped for bargains.

"It even seems [the personnel are] friendlier with new personalities," she said.

Hunter said she admired the new furniture and shoe selections as well as the cashier lanes and wider aisles.

"Now it s more in line with what you find at other installations," she said.

Entertainment for the event included live music by Jazz artist Shaakir, a native New Yorker and Berklee College of Music alumnus, who has been on a military tour entertaining troops and their families since Sept. 11, 2001.

New to the PX is ready-to-assemble furniture, center. A larger variety of plants, lawnmowers, grills, bath towels and more is now available for military ID card holders.

Concessions are for everyone

Concessionaires located in the outer mall of the PX participated in the event as well, giving away promotional samples, coupons and raffling off merchandise.

Many don t realize that these services are open to everyone, not just military ID card holders.

The Cup Gourmet Coffee Shop

Opened earlier this month, The Cup Gourmet Coffee Shop is managed by co-owners Laura Magsanen and Tracy Siler. The Cup offers gourmet coffees, espresso and cappuccino as well as pastries and wraps.

"Our coffee is the freshest you ll find anywhere," Magsanen said. "It s fresh roasted every day."

"Now this is fresh coffee," Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dan Singh agreed as he sampled their coffee and pastries.

The shop hours are 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday thru Friday; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

"We re asking everyone to stop in," Siler said. "We think you ll find it s a great way to start your day."

GNC – General Nutrition Centers, Inc.

For health enthusiasts or those just looking to eat smarter, the GNC store offers a full range of vitamins, vitamin supplements, energy and weight loss enhancers as well as protein bars and cough drops.

Shelly Smith, manager, said that what puts the store above other franchises is that the GNC Gold Card discount is everyday.

"That s a big savings for everyone," Smith said.

She added that the store is poplar with Soldiers and civilians.

"We have a large selection of adult and children s vitamins and multivitamins, and our weight loss and muscle enhancers are most popular among the Soldiers," she said.

The store also supports Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs and donates thousands of dollars in gifts to Soldier athletes annually.

Petals & Blooms

Petals & Blooms is a full-service florist shop that uses the Teleflora service to deliver flowers nationwide. A subsidiary of the National Floral Supply of Maryland, Inc., the shop is managed by Missy Bratton and Glenda Devage.

"We are primarily here for service members but civilians can make purchases as well," Devage said. "Anyone is welcome to our services.

She said that much of their sales are "spontaneous," but like any florist shop, it experiences busy periods.

"Valentines Day and Mother s Day are probably our busiest, but much of our sales come from anniversaries and birthdays," she said. "Folks don t have a lot of time for gift shopping. This makes it quick and easy."

Parties, promotions and retirements are also popular as well as weddings.

"We offer a full range of bridal services as well as a discount for events taking place at Top of the Bay," she said.

The shop also delivers orders received from Soldiers deployed overseas in Iraq or Europe to local family members.

"We deliver as far north as Havre de Grace and as far south as Joppa, normally within a 15-mile radius." Devage said.

The floral designers are Johanne Wing and Tierra Bailey, a 16-year old part-time employee from the Harford Tech Floral Design Program.

Hair Salon

Roxanne Freeman manages the mall s Hair Salon, which features walk-in service for just about anything.

"We specialize in highlighting, relaxing, perm waving, cuts and styles," Freeman said.

"Anything can be done by walk in or by appointment," she said.

Shelves filled with hair care products for sale adorn the shelves in the salon which consists of half a dozen sinks and reclining chairs and a tastefully decorated waiting area.

"I really like it here," Julissa Chavez, 12, said as she received an eyebrow wax removal treatment from Freeman.

The shop hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday thru Friday; 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Anthony s Pizza

For a fast lunch on the go, or a tasty dinner alternative, there is Anthony s Pizza. Managed by foreman Ron Howard, it offers plain and specialty pizza, whole or by the slice, a variety of Buffalo wings and salads.

Customers can eat in at one of the lobby tables or take out.

"People can also call in orders for faster service," Howard said.

Sodas and Otis Spunkmeyer cookies also are available.

Anthony s Pizza hours are 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday thru Saturday, and 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday.

Lone Wolf Specialty Den

Run jointly by Lone Wolf Jim and Boot Guy Ray, who has a similar establishment in building 4311, the Lone Wolf Specialty Den offers military novelty items like jackets, boots, T-shirts and accessories.

"We probably have the largest patch collections in the area," Jim said, adding that military and civilian boots, T-shirts and western wear, such as hats, boots, and boot bracelets are the store s biggest movers.

In addition, the den offers a full range of services, including custom embroidering, silk screening, military jackets, logos and novelties, flags, custom guidons, shoe/boot repair, fashion and sport clothing and FAX and copy service.

Shine Stand

For a professional look to your footgear, stop by the Shine Stop for the "shine of your life," according to operator Orie Frink.

"We specialize in boots but we do everybody," Frink said.

"He s really good, I always come back," said Spc. Anna Chica, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 61st Ordnance Brigade, as she sat back for her boot shining.

Also a barber with the mall s barber shop, Frink said he shines boots as time permits.

"If I can t do it on the spot they can drop them off and pick them up later," he said, adding that he has a full service buffing machine as well.

"We clean and shine but we can t repair them," he said.

The Shine Stand is open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday thru Friday.

Intermittent vendors

Frequently appearing in the PX mall, with services for everyone, military and civilian, are businesses set up by private vendors most of whom are local residents or employees.

Burrart Design

Owned by Diane Burrier, a graphic artist with the U.S. Army Environmental Center, BurrartDesign is a custom made-to-order air brush service.

Burrier said she sets up shop at the PX several times a year, usually before holidays. Her silk screen designs are 100 percent original and based on orders from clients.

"They can use the samples I have or they can bring in photos or designs they have in their heads," Burrier said.

She fills orders on a while-you-wait basis, about 20 to 30 minutes, or clients can pick them up at a later date. Her T-shirts come in children s and adult s sizes.

For more information, visit **www.burrartdesign.com**

The Corner Store

The Corner Store offers an assortment of jewelry and gifts. Gold and silver chains, military branch rings, cubic zirconia and diamonds, for a fraction of the price.

"All items come with a lifetime warranty," said manager Connie Anderson. "The best part about operating here is getting to know all the Soldiers," she said, noting that they are her most frequent customers. "They really like the personalized photo greeting cards and dog tags," she said.

"We also are offering grills for gold teeth which are becoming very popular," she said.

The concession is open on the 1st and 15th of every month.

Spc. Anna Chicas, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 61st Ordnance Brigade, left, recieves boot shine service from Orie Frink, right, manager of the Shine Stand in the Post Exchange foyer.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dan Singh enjoys a cup of coffee and pastries from The Cup Gourmet Coffee Shop during the PX open house April 12.

Artist Diane Burrier demonstrates her air brushing technique used at her kiosk located in the PX.

Proprietor Connie Anderson rearranges the ring display on the Corner Store jewelry and gift stand.

Roxanne Freeman, manager at the Hair Salon, gives Julissa Chavez an eyebrow wax treatment.

Soldiers wait in line for lunch and refreshments at Anthony s Pizza.

Lone Wolf Specialty Den

GNC

Petals & Bloom