

Lidl hits Peninsula supermarket scene

New Hampton store brings out bargain hunters for 8 a.m. opening, giveaways

BY TARA BOZICK
tbozick@dailypress.com

Curiosity and low prices attracted hundreds of shoppers in Hampton to the opening of one of the first U.S. Lidl grocery stores on Thursday morning.



The German-based European grocery giant opened its first 10 U.S. stores Thursday, including stores at 2000 W. Mercury Blvd. and at 6196 Providence Road in Virginia Beach. Another nine Lidl stores are expected to open in Virginia this summer, including a store at 11076 Warwick Blvd. near Harpersville Road in Newport News.

"I'm loving it," shopper Joyce Little of Hampton said.

She and her husband Doug were the first in line at 4:45 a.m. for the 8 a.m. grand opening. Their dedication won them a \$100 gift card and they had a nearly full shopping cart within 20 minutes.



After the ribbon-cutting, Hampton Mayor Donnie Tuck helps hand out shopping bags to the customers; here, he greets Stacey Cummings on her way into the new Lidle store on Mercury Boulevard.

The Littles had been shopping at Lidl's rival, German discount grocer Aldi.

Like the Littles, other early bird shoppers were price-conscious consumers who studied the weekly sales ad. Theresa Brooks of Hampton is willing to try Lidl's private-label items, which comprise about 90 percent of the store, for a deal.

"I wanted to see what it was all about," Brooks said. "I want to shop in Hampton."

Lidl's building in Hampton features about 20,000 square feet of retail space with a simple layout of six aisles with refrigerated and

frozen items around the perimeter and 11 checkout lanes.

The bakery, fresh produce and flowers greet shoppers at the entrance while personal care, household and garden items are in the middle near the "surprises" section of limited-time nongrocery items including headphones, exercise accessories or inflatable kayaks.

While Lidl offers an affordable wine and beer section, gluten-free options and organic items, the store doesn't have as much selection as big-box competitors. Gregory Bicheler of Hampton wished the store had more low-sodium



JUDITH LOWERY/DAILY PRESS PHOTOS

Rhonda Miller, hearing that the wine was pretty good, stocks up for her July Fourth party. Lidl's Amberlyn Fletcher assists with checkout.

options for his diet, although he was lured in to find fresh fruits and vegetables at low prices.

The Hampton Lidl opened next to Interstate 64 down the road from Peninsula Town Center at the former site of a Hampton Bay Plaza and Suites. Competitor Aldi is planning to open a store a mile away down Mercury Boulevard off Saville Road this summer.

The arrival of Lidl is likely to shake up discount grocers that attract customers on price, such as Wal-Mart, Food Lion, Aldi and Dollar stores, Food World publisher Jeff Metzger has said.

In May, Kroger, which also sells

private-label items, announced it would be lowering prices on about 3,000 items for stores in Virginia.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Mayor Donnie Tuck said the Lidl opening fits with Hampton being a "city of firsts."

"This is historic for Hampton," Tuck said.

Lidl is planning grand opening activities and specials all week-end. The store is open daily from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Bozick can be reached by phone at 757-247-4741. Sign up for a free weekday business news email at TidewaterBiz.com.

NEWPORT NEWS



CAROLYN ROGERS/DAILY PRESS

It's a gas

Tom Rumely demonstrates the natural gas fueling process at Thursday's checkpoint rally at Virginia Natural Gas public fueling station. The rally is a part of the transcontinental "Sea-to-Shining Sea" program, and is intended to inform the public about the benefits of natural gas vehicles. See more photos from our staff photographers at dailypress.com/visuals, or visit their photo blog at fullframe.dailypress.com.

Mathews County officials address heroin, opioid use

Law enforcement leaders say, 'you can't arrest your way out of' the problem

BY FRANCES HUBBARD
fhubbard@dailypress.com

MATHEWS — Four people die each day in Virginia from an overdose of heroin or opioid prescription painkillers.

Last year, 1,133 deaths were reported in the state from heroin or opioids. That's more people dying from overdoses than in car crashes, said Valerie Prince, with the Three Rivers Medical Reserve Corps.

Statistics on Virginia are "horrendous," Prince said. "I'm sure we probably are not the worst state in the nation, but we are in the running."

Mathews County has seen five overdose deaths since 2007 from heroin while use of the drug has risen. Three of those deaths were in 2014 alone, Sheriff Mark Barrick said. The increased drug use has contributed to a rise in certain crimes.

Commonwealth's Attorney Tom Bowen said 60 to 70 percent of cases in the court system are drug-related, including theft and driving under the influence.

"This is not a new issue. This is an issue that has been going on," Barrick said, recalling his days as a patrol officer in Newport News in the 1990s. "We are dealing with what was not an understood problem which is now coming around to being more understood."

On Thursday, Barrick, Prince, and Bowen presented statistics and information on drug use specifically geared toward Mathews County at a two-part community meeting held by the Mathews County Resources Council. The meeting started with a screening of "Heroin: The Hardest Hit," a documentary from the attorney general's office.

According to the film, heroin abuse often starts with a dependency on prescription painkillers such as oxycodone, hydrocodone and morphine. Hampton Roads is particularly vulnerable to the spread of the drug because of access at its ports.

Heroin is not just "an urban drug," Barrick said. It affects all types of people and all ages.

"It's our kids, parents, and



FRANCES HUBBARD/DAILY PRESS

Commonwealth's Attorney Tom Bowen speaks Thursday at a meeting on heroin and opioid usage held by the Mathews County Resources Council at the Mathews Volunteer Rescue Squad building in Hudgins.

grandparents. That's the problem that we have now. It's not on the street where everybody can drive by and see it. It's in somebody's living room.

"That's a hard battle to fight, especially in a community like Mathews because it's so small and everyone knows everyone," Barrick said. "Drug work is particularly hard here for the simple fact people don't want to talk. They don't want to rat out someone they know. They are afraid of the consequences."

Barrick said he is highly concerned about fentanyl — a syn-

thetic drug up to 100 times more potent than heroin. The drug is sometimes added to heroin, causing an overdose, and can be dangerous to law enforcement if found at a crime scene.

Some law enforcement and all first responders now have the ability to administer naloxone or naran, which can reverse the effects of an overdose and cause immediate withdrawal symptoms.

At the meeting Thursday, Prince urged people to remember to dispose of leftover prescription medicine and reach out to some-



one who may have a problem.

The Mathews County Sheriff's Office has a box for safe disposal of medication in its lobby at 10622 Buckley

Hall Road.

"This is a long-term problem that is going to exist," Barrick said. "You cannot arrest your way out of it."

"This is an ever-growing epidemic and we are way behind where we should be," Bowen said. "It's a prevention, public education, public health and law enforcement issue. You can't just say it's one or the other; we all have to be more active and we have to mirror those together."

The Mathews County Resources Council will hold a second meeting on Sept. 21 at the Mathews Volunteer Rescue Squad building in Hudgins to discuss how the community is dealing with increased drug use, focusing on the medical, psychological and legal aspects.

Hubbard can be reached by phone at 757-298-5834.