

Quad-Cities
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East Moline opens its shiny new Jewel Osco

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EAST MOLINE -- Shoppers paraded through the grocery aisles of the new Jewel Osco food store during its grand opening Thursday at Kennedy Square in East Moline.

The new Jewel at 107 Avenue of the Cities replaced the first Jewel Osco at 4143 3rd St., which closed Wednesday afternoon after 35 years of operation.

About 100 people, including Jewel Osco managers, store employees, city staff and invited guests attended the 35-minute ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Two Jewel executives donned black T-shirts with orange East Moline lettering in honor of store director Don VandeWoestyne's East Moline roots.

Mr. VandeWoestyne dedicated the new store "to all the Jewel Osco employees that made Jewel Osco what it is today."

The company's goal is to take customers from Hy-Vee and bring them to the new Jewel Osco, said Jewel district manager Maria Smith. Hy-Vee opened a new store in Milan two weeks ago and has major stores to the east and the west of the new Jewel.

The 55,000-square-foot replacement store is the first Jewel combination store with an in-store bank. American Bank & Trust also opened a full-service branch inside the store on Thursday.

Mr. VandeWoestyne credited the completion of the store in 28 weeks to his "A-team" of dedicated and hard-working employees.

"We had a lot of bumps along the way," he said. "People were worried about me, but I had a lot of help behind



Photo: Gary Krambeck

Dean Welch, left, a Jewel Osco employee, helps customer Darlene Teijido take her grocery cart out to her car, shortly after the ribbon-cutting and opening of the new Jewel Osco store in East Moline Thursday morning.

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me."

The end result "is a nice asset for the city and the company," he said.

Mr. VandeWoestyne said the main curve was the birth of a baby April 12 to Osco store director Leanna Slater, who attended the opening with her newborn and spouse.

Jewel meat department manager Tom Barker was honored during the opening ceremonies for his "over and above" customer service.

East Moline Mayor Joe Moreno said it meant a lot that he and city staff could save Jewel from moving to Moline.

The city pledged \$720,000 in sales tax rebates to Jewel over six years and extended 1st Street between 41st Avenue and Avenue of the Cities. The extension opened property to the west of Kennedy Square for commercial development.

The old Jewel building will be converted into new commercial retail space. Property owner Bud Johnston, who attended the grand opening, said he was thrilled with the Jewel project.

"Now we're going to work and fill (the vacant store) with companies that people will want to come and see," he said.

Jewel had two construction projects going simultaneously in the Quad-Cities: the East Moline replacement store and a remodel of the Jewel store in Silvis.

Contracting Corp Midwest of Moline was the general contractor on both projects, along with the Jewel Osco construction team and a dozen or more local subcontractors.

Jewel, based in Melrose Park, is the Midwest division of Albertson's of Boise, Idaho, a Fortune 500 company with annual revenues of \$36 billion and more than 2,300 retail stores.

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