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## STC's new Blue Goose slated to open March 1

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ST. CHARLES – A bigger, better Blue Goose is just around the corner.

After months of construction, the Blue Goose Supermarket is nearing the beginning of the next era in its eight-decade run as St. Charles' independent grocer.

In early March, the store will relocate about two blocks from its current spot in St. Charles' downtown, moving from the corner of First and Illinois streets to its new site, now being completed at Route 31 and West Indiana Street.

"The last day of business at the old location will be March 1," Blue Goose owner David Lencioni said. "Then, we reopen about one week later at this new store.

"And we can't wait."

As work on the store's exterior wraps up after about seven months of construction, the work has shifted to the inside of the store.

In recent weeks, workers have installed coolers for produce and freezers for the frozen food aisles, painted the ceiling and walls, and installed wall treatments.

"We're finally nearing the end," Lencioni said.

He hopes the work could be wrapped up within six weeks, allowing time for store personnel to begin making the space into what the public would recognize as a supermarket.

The new store will include a number of improvements over the old building.

Most of the new space will be dedicated to a bakery, deli and expanded produce and frozen food sections.

The store also will feature a coffee bar with a small cafe-style seating area; an olive bar, featuring many varieties of fresh olives, as well as olives in marinades and prepared using other techniques; and a larger artisan cheese section.

"We've got a small (artisan cheese section) right now because we wanted to see how it would do," Lencioni said. "And it has exceeded our expectations."

The new Blue Goose also will include several other modern conveniences, including two self-checkout kiosks, a digital photo printer, and an ATM.

He said the improvements were designed to help the store promote itself as a supermarket of choice for area shoppers.

In the Tri-Cities, the Blue Goose stands as the lone independent grocery store, competing against a number of national and regional chains, including Dominick's, Jewel-Osco, Aldi and superstores from Wal-Mart, Target and Meijer.



Blue Goose owner Dave Lencioni explains the bakery area to a visitor to the new location at Indiana Ave. and Second Street. A March opening is planned. (H. Rick Bamman photo)

Lencioni said he hoped that the improvements at the new Blue Goose will help his store overcome a stigma under which it suffered.

"I have a problem with people trying to put us in a box, and say we only appeal to a certain kind of person, or who call us 'upscale,'" Lencioni said. "We tell people that we don't care if you make \$30,000 a year or \$1 million, you're going to find something to like here."

Lencioni would not discuss the cost of building the new store.

But he said, like most construction projects, the construction cost had overrun its original budget.

And he anticipates that the increase in sales generated by being in a better facility should offset the cost.

He estimated that the new store should increase sales by about 60 percent.

"Once I get over how much this cost, I think I'll be glad I did it," Lencioni said.

## COMMENTS

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