

# News Clips Report

## Hammond Square's Best Buy hires 100

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The 'big blue box' store Best Buy will open to the public at Hammond Square a week from today with \$20 gift cards to the first 50 customers who enter the store at 9 a.m.

General Manager Chris Rice was busy Wednesday overseeing training of new employees and stocking of shelves at the 30,255-square-foot store with a construction value of \$2,500,000.

Intermittently, he had to explain to customers outside that the store, located at 2020 Hammond Square Drive, facing the interstate between Best Buy and Target, is not quite ready to open.

The store will sell consumer electronics like home theaters, DVD players, appliances, cameras, computers, global positioning systems, musical instruments, CDs and DVDs and more. While the store compares in size to the Covington store, the warehouse is smaller so there's more inventory in the floor, he said.

Another feature of Best Buy is the Geek Squad, a repair and installation group of professionals, Rice said.

So, if you buy a flat-screen TV, they will come out to your house and install it, he said.

Repairs are done in-store, and the items don't have to be purchased from Best Buy.

An employee friends and family night, by-invitation-only, will be held Wednesday and a private shopping event is scheduled Thursday.

The public is invited to the ribbon cutting event Thursday at 5 p.m.

So is Gov. Bobby Jindal and every local official he could think of and members of the chamber of commerce, Rice said. He doesn't know if Jindal will show up, but he wants the governor to know Hammond is doing well.

'We think it's important from the Best Buy perspective,' he said. 'While others are closing, we're opening and providing 100 jobs.'

See BEST BUY, 2A

Only seven employees have been transferred from Baton Rouge and Covington Stores, like Jonathan Singleton, a Southeastern Louisiana University student who's been commuting from Hammond to work in Baton Rouge. Rice said Best Buy prefers to hire locally.

'If they live here, they care about the community and we do, too,' Rice said.

Rice, a native Texan, has been in Hammond three months and in Louisiana four years at stores in Lake Charles, Lafayette and New Orleans. He's already hired about 70 full- and part-time employees with positions left for another 30. Response has been overwhelming. He was still doing interviews on Wednesday. He advertised in the newspaper, held two career days at Southeastern Louisiana University and did some direct recruiting, all from the Hammond community. The store is open seven days a week and is eager to accommodate the schedules of college students it hires.

The Hammond Best Buy also plans to partner with local organizations, like Southeastern Louisiana University, in community service projects. The store will present TARC and Special Olympics each a check for \$5,000 on the day of the grand opening. He also plans special shopping days to give back to those who serve the community, including firemen, policemen, teachers and hospital workers. He will shut down the store and invite them in for special discounts and package prices.

He's definitely hooked on Hammond.

'I love it. This is a close-knit community and really cool,' he said.

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Though he hasn't met Mayor Mayson Foster yet, he said he's looking forward to meeting him and has plans to join Hammond Chamber of Commerce.

A lot of training will take place this last week before opening, he said.

Kyle Richard, manager of Best Buy Mobile, was working with his squad at the Mobile Center, the store-within-a-store for cellphone purchases. He said the crew there offers impartial informed advice on different types of cell phones, allowing customers to explore the many features and brands before making up their minds. He was working with employees John Dunnington, Singleton, Brittney Reed and Krasia Corbin who will all be working in the mobile unit and are all local residents.