



Andre Beauregard walks the aisles of his family business, Shopper's Corner, in Santa Cruz on Thursday. Shopper's Corner has been in business for 73 years and recently purchased new reach-in freezers and other energy-saving equipment.

LARISSA MUELLER/
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Shopper's Corner reaps benefits of energy-efficiency investment

Be Bus 5
Store sees daily electrical cost drop by more than 20 percent

By JONDI GUMZ

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SANTA CRUZ — Andre Beauregard's face lights up like a million bucks when he talks about the new refrigeration equipment at Shopper's Corner on the Santa Cruz Eastside.

That's how much the Beauregards invested in energy-efficient freezers and coolers to stay competitive in a market that includes Trader Joe's, Costco, Whole Foods, Staff of Life and New Leaf.

The improvements have cut the store's daily electrical bill by 20 percent to 30 percent, according



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Margaret Spencer bags groceries while her mother Ashley pays at Shopper's Corner on Thursday. 'I've been coming here my whole life,' Ashley Spencer said. 'I used to do that when I was her age — right here at this counter.'

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to energy analyst Matt diCicco.

"It's a showcase," said diCicco, who is with EnergySmart Grocer, a program funded by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. ratepayers to cut energy use. "I've never seen a store save over 30 percent."

Customers like Elizabeth Bourget, a personal chef, are appreciative.

"I love that store for its efficiency as well as the selection of what they offer to customers, the best use of minimal space," she said, complimenting the people who make those choices, and singling out meat, wine and local items. "I do not shop in grocery stores with infinite aisles. They represent what's wrong with our society."

Last year, Shopper's Corner became the first market in California to install refrigerated cases with light-emitting diode lamps, the most efficient lighting available. The most savings resulted from a highly technical cooling system that takes into account the outdoor temperature rather than running as if it were 90 degrees outside, an option selected by surprisingly few grocers, according to diCicco.

"Here at Shopper's we are always trying to be responsible," said Beauregard, 28, who is preparing to take over from his father.

He recalls standing on a milk crate to bag groceries at age 11. He proudly points out the historical plaque for the building at 622 Soquel Ave., constructed in 1928, and photos on the wall of his grandfa-



Mary Ignizio peruses the new LED-lighted vegetable shelves at Shopper's Corner in Santa Cruz on Thursday. Ignizio said of the store's recent improvements, "I've been shopping here for quite a while. It looks nice. It especially shows off the peppers!"

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ENERGYSMART GROCER

WHAT: Audits of energy use, technical assistance and rebates for equipment

INFORMATION: <http://energysmartgrocer.org/> or call 866-961-6153.

ther, who bought the market in 1939.

He knows many customers by name and he expects his son, born in February, will grow up around the store, too.

"People have a fun time working here," he said.

He says he sees signs of economic recovery.

"Sales are picking up good for us," he said, predicting 2010 may be the second or third best year compared to the peak in 2008.

With this investment, will prices go up?

"No," said Beauregard. "We compare prices and we beat or match others on the markup."

He began working with EnergySmart four years ago on plans to update the store's 10-

year-old refrigeration cases.

DiCicco produced a list of potential projects that would qualify for PG&E rebates and estimates of savings.

"Everything that had a reasonable payback, we went for it," said Beauregard, defining reasonable as two years.

He started by installing strip curtains on cooler doors, then replaced fan motors, switched to compact fluorescent bulbs, and installed controls to keep freezer doors from sweating.

He spent 2009 planning for new freezers, which were installed last year.

Hussmann Corp. of Fremont delivered and installed the refrigeration over a couple of days working around the clock.

Local contractor Trip

Cheney supervised the project, tearing up the meat department and rebuilding it to fit the new equipment.

"He can do just about anything and doesn't miss a thing," said Beauregard.

Other work was done by Bogner Sheet Metal and Duncan Plumbing of Santa Cruz, Tucker Hardwood Floors of Soquel and Central Electric of Watsonville.

With equipment costing \$850,000 and installation expenses of \$170,000, Shopper's Corner obtained financing through Comerica Bank and plans to pay back the money over the next 10 years.

Other locally owned markets have taken advantage of EnergySmart Grocer, including New Leaf Community Markets, Johnnie's in Boulder Creek, Deluxe Foods in Aptos and the Summit Store.

Statewide, the program has saved millions of dollars since 2002, but delivering a message about energy efficiency remains a challenge.

"Fan motors, heat resistors, it's not sexy at all," diCicco said.