



Dorothy Jantze feeds Nathan Young.

## County's shoppers converge

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SANTA CRUZ — It was a feeding frenzy. After being open only three hours Thursday, the new Costco warehouse had 5,000 customers.

More than 3,000 of them waded through the human swarm to the back of the 121,000-square-foot store for a free breakfast smorgasbord consisting of pancakes, French toast, ham, pastries and coffee.

Even seasoned warehouse shoppers — like Gordon Walters of Brookdale, who said he's shopped at Costcos from Seattle to Sand City — were astounded by the monster store.

"Its size and variety are the best I've

seen," he said.

Warehouse manager David Aue said his store opened with \$8 million in merchandise.

"The newer buildings get a little bigger each time," Aue said.

Area locals who had never experienced Costco-style consumer saturation wandered apparently without aim, eyes focused on a distant horizon of four-tiered pallet rack.

"It's like Disneyland!" exclaimed an overwhelmed Gloria Schwab of Scotts Valley.

"This is the best thing that's happened to Santa Cruz in a while. All the money that

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goes to (discount stores) over the hill will stay right here," she said.

To Santa Cruz residents, the store seemed foreign culturally, as well as economically.

"This isn't a Santa Cruz-type thing," said Michelle Egan. "This is a real middle-America thing."

Sure enough, Charlotte and Jim Reynolds of Kansas City were pleased to find a store "similar to

the Sam Walton warehouse (Walmart) at home" while on vacation in Santa Cruz.

A nun who lived in Hong Kong for nine years had no problem with the mass of people, either.

"Compared to downtown Hong Kong, this is not crowded," said Maureen Theresa of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows.

She said Americans had grown "bigger and hungrier" while she was away, though she questioned the nature of that Costco-sized appetite.

"People hungry for material things are really hungry for something spiritual," Theresa said.