

# On your mark... get set... shop!

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**CAPITOLA** — One of the season's first rains didn't dampen spirits Wednesday at the grand opening of the expanded Capitola Mall — the county's only indoor shopping mall.

More than 500 people attended two ribbon-cutting ceremonies. One was for the mall expansion, which adds 18 new stores; the other was for the mall's new anchor tenant, J.C. Penney.

When all the dignitaries were through talking and the balloons floated out of sight, however, the serious shoppers took over. It took less than an hour for the 91,805-square-foot Penney to be jammed. The mall will be open until 9 tonight.

Of course, there were many firsts. They included:

- Matthew DeGorio of Aptos, the 2-year-old son of Laura DeGorio, experienced his first ride on an escalator in the Penney store, which took a great leap forward — or rather, up — by housing the county's first escalator.

- Said Matthew, "It was fun. I liked the ride." Said Laura, laughing, "We're kind of hard-up for cheap thrills."

- Judy Hotchkiss of Live Oak was the not-so-proud recipient of two "firsts." She may well have been the first to exchange merchandise when she decided a pair of pants she had just bought for her 3-year-old son, Jason, were too small. Jason, meanwhile, was the first child to be terrified of "R.J. the Magic Clown," who was entertaining kids in Penney's Children's World department.

- Capitola Mayor Jerry Clarke drew the first laughs when he told the crowd at the ribbon-cutting, "Being the head of a household of two professional shoppers — luckily, one of which is in school today and the other is at work — I'm



Capitola Mall and city officials whoop it up as they cut the balloon ribbon to open the expanded mall. Photos by Bill Lovejoy

sure my family will do all they can to make this addition a success."

- Sharon Marshak, a J.C. Penney decorating consultant, was busy answering the first of many questions from shoppers. The most common question?

"Where are the restrooms?"

On the other hand, everything is not new. Rosalie Scott and Frances Canepa have both been with J.C. Penney since it was located on the Pacific Garden Mall in Santa Cruz. After the store closed in 1981, they worked at the catalog store.

Canepa is in her 40th year with J.C. Penney, while Scott has more than 10 years in. Both are excited about being located in a "big store" again. "I'm so excited, I just have to calm down," said Scott.

It's a homecoming, too, for J.C. Penney Operations/Personnel Manager Bob Smith. An employee since 1968, Smith started with the downtown Santa Cruz store, but was transferred to San Jose after the store closed. Of the new store's 220 employees, Smith said 98 percent are new local hires.

The \$35-million expansion nearly doubles the mall, adding 304,575 square feet to the existing 381,098. For those who haven't shopped the mall recently, it truly is an all-new mall, complete with new lighting, color schemes, flooring, seating, free-standing plants and flower beds.

Shopper Tom Monahan of Capitola was impressed with the changes, commenting on "the large sweeping curves" of the interior mall. "I like the way it leads you up from the fountain," he

said. "It's very pleasant to look at, even though things are a little crowded."

The crowds weren't just at J.C. Penney either. No fewer than 11 existing mall stores have been remodeled, including Mervyns, and they all appeared to be drawing shoppers and browsers alike.

Of the 18 new stores, Sports Stuff owner Dave Alioto reported being "real busy already." He said "49er souvenirs" were popular items.

Track 'n' Trail District Manager Ken Yarak said, "Sales have been good already. Whenever you open a wing in a new mall, people are curious, too." Added Alioto, "We're getting a lot of people just coming to experience the mall."

That "experience" includes some distractions, such as stores still under construction and workers scurrying about to get them completed. The mall's new food court, for example, where 10 restaurants will eventually be grouped around a common seating area is yet to open.

Mall Manager Julia Walker said 25 new stores will be open by Thanksgiving, another nine by next March and another anchor store — Gottschalks — in 1990. More than 100 stores will eventually grace the 50-acre site.



Kristina Smith touches up before the crowds hit Penney's salon.