

Eastside Ace to host grand opening

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SANTA CRUZ — Eastsiders are happy to have Ace Hardware on the Eastside.

"We sure like it," said Frances Sha, who lives in the neighborhood. "Before, we had to drive clear to Orchard Supply."

Susan Grasso, shopping Thursday with her son Charlie for a shop vacuum, is another satisfied customer.

"We've been in three times," she said.

Owner Rodney Hoffer, who opened three weeks ago at the former Blockbuster video rental shop, was thrilled to see the Ace Hardware sign go up Thursday at 1214 Soquel Ave. A grand opening is planned for today, Saturday and Sunday.

The sign was produced locally by Northwest Signs of Santa Cruz. Hoffer said it took months to get the requisite city permit.

Hoffer, who owns Ace Hardware stores in Aptos and on the Santa Cruz Westside, had planned in April to open an

IF YOU GO GRAND OPENING FOR ACE HARDWARE

WHERE: 1214 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz

WHEN: Today through Sunday
REGULAR HOURS: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

INFORMATION: 457-2222

independent hardware store. After doing more research, he opted to go with Ace.

Among the advantages: Better prices through the buying power of 5,000 Ace stores, the Ace rewards card for customers, and the ability to add two popular brands, Benjamin Moore paint and Craftsman tools, currently not available at the Westside or Aptos locations.

Opening a new store has created jobs.

"We hired seven new employees," said Hoffer. "Two more start next



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Ace Hardware, now open on the Eastside at what was formerly a Blockbuster video store, finally has signs up in the store.

week."

He is still reviewing resumes to fill additional openings; applicants can drop off resumes at any of his store locations.

Employees wearing red vests with name tags offered

to help shoppers find items Thursday as the smell of popcorn, a treat for the weekend, wafted in the air.

Cashier Elizabeth Mabrouk, one of the new hires, is working full time until her classes begin at

Cabrillo College.

She estimated she had put in 100 job applications, but because of the slow economy didn't hit pay dirt until two weeks ago.

"It took me all summer," she said.