

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

From the Staff of the Towns County Herald and West Printing Company

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Christmas returns to Fairgrounds Thanksgiving night

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With the holidays quickly approaching, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds prepares to once again host a collection of dazzling walkthrough Christmas light displays along with other holiday activities including a petting zoo, arts and crafts, music concerts, and more.

2022's Mountain Country Christmas in Lights opens on Thanksgiving night, Thursday, Nov. 24, running from 6-9 p.m. From then until Dec. 10, the show will be available every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, to include an Outdoor Craft Market.

Then, as Christmas draws closer, the lights will open every night from Dec. 15 right up until Dec. 23 to give folks even

more opportunities to get in on the holiday cheer.

Keep in mind that on Saturdays, the Fairgrounds will be opening early at 4 p.m. for extended Crafts Show opportunities.

Whether the tree calls for a shiny new ornament to put the finishing touch on holiday home décor or families are still searching for just the right Christmas gifts, there's a little bit of something for everyone at the Crafts Show.

According to Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason, "All the booths are filled, and we've got all the displays up and thousands and thousands of lights."

Also, Cowtown USA will be returning with a new addition. Just like in years past, kids will be able to interact with the petting zoo and see live demonstrations of milking cows by

hand, but in 2022, a camel will be coming to the Fairgrounds alongside its bovine buddies.

Thomason said that "the camel's not big enough for them to do rides this year, but it'll be on display."

Santa himself will be setting up his own area where children can take photos and perhaps whisper an item or two off their Christmas list into the Jolly Old Elf's ear.

"You can have all the food you want," Thomason said, elaborating that alongside several food trucks and booths, firepits will be available for guests to roast marshmallows, hot dogs, and s'mores as they see fit.

In addition to the standard Fairgrounds festivities, the Towns County Sheriff's Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, Dec. 3.

Starting at 5:30 p.m.,

the parade will wind through the Fairgrounds and then make its way through town, featuring floats representing local businesses and organizations, impressive mobile displays of Christmas lights, and other winter wonderland cheer on wheels.

Wednesday, Dec. 7, is specially reserved for nursing home drive-thru guests so that everyone has a chance to see the lights, regardless of mobility. The next day on Dec. 8 will be Towns County Night, where Towns County residents can enjoy the light show for free that Thursday.

Thomason also said that although "we didn't get to buy any big (new) displays," there are many new lights that have been added to the walkabout for 2022.

The First Annual Dailey and Vincent Christmasfest will



Mountain Country Christmas in Lights originated at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds in 2016, when then Commissioner Bill Kendall committed \$150,000 in hotel-motel tax revenues to jumpstart the effort.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

kick off at the Anderson Music Hall on Dec. 2 and 3, with multiple artists performing on both nights.

On Friday, Dec. 2, from 2-3 p.m., Rhonda Vincent will

take the decorated stage before Dailey and Vincent come on from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Closing out the first night will be "Roots & Boots," a package

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Early voting for senate runoff starts November 28

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Early in-person voting for the U.S. Senate Runoff Election between Republican Herschel Walker and Democratic Incumbent Raphael Warnock will begin next week, running Monday, Nov. 28, through Friday, Dec. 2.

A runoff is needed because neither Walker nor Warnock cleared the majority hurdle to win outright. Walker earned 48.5% of the vote to Warnock's 49.4%. The election will only feature the top two vote-getters, leaving out Libertarian Chase Oliver, who garnered 2.1% of the vote.

In-person early voting will occur in the Towns County Board of Elections Office at Suite A of 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee, with voting hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., even during lunchtime.

Runoff Election Day voting will take place Tuesday, Dec. 6, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Hiawassee and Young Harris precincts of Towns County.

Voters may request mailed absentee ballots through Monday, Nov. 28. If people checked that they were elderly or disabled on a previous application this year, they should re-



Early in-person voting will take place at the Towns County Elections Office, located in the same building as the Board of Elections Civic Center next to the courthouse. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

ceive a mailed ballot automatically without having to submit another application.

Folks wanting to utilize the official drop box to turn in their absentee ballots can find it in the Elections Office during early voting hours. Completed absentee ballots may also be dropped off at the Elections Office up to 7 p.m. on Election Day.

By accessing the "My Voter Page" at <https://mvp.sos.ga.gov/>, voters may request an absentee ballot and find their registration status, precinct information, mailed absentee

ballot status, voter participation history and more.

Nov. 7 was the voter registration deadline to be eligible to participate in the federal runoff.

Unlike Warnock's victory in the 2020 Special Election Runoff that secured Democratic control of the U.S. Senate, the Dec. 6 General Election Runoff will result in either a 50-50 or 51-49 split in favor of the Democrats, with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris potentially serving, once again, as the Democratic tiebreaking vote in legislative decisions.

Marines, patriots celebrate 247th birthday of the Corps

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – The United States Marine Corps first came into existence on Nov. 10, 1775, via a resolution by the Second Continental Congress directing that "two Battalions of Marines be raised" to serve as landing forces with the then newly created Continental Navy.

Following the American Revolution, the Marines were abolished in April 1783. Then, on July 11, 1798, Congress ordered the creation of the Marine Corps and directed that it be available for service under the Secretary of the Navy.

From 1799 until 1921, the Marine Corps' birthday, known as Marine Corps Day, was celebrated on July 11.

On Nov. 1, 1921, then 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, John A. Lejeune, directed that a reminder of the honorable service of the Corps be published by every command, to all Marines through-



Local Marine Corps League members celebrated the Marine Corps birthday Nov. 10 with this cake-cutting ceremony.

Photo by Mark Smith

out the globe, on the original birthday of the Corps, Nov. 10, which continues every year to this day.

On Nov. 10, 2022, Unicoi Detachment 783 of the Marine Corps League, along with the entire United States Marine Corps worldwide, carried out Gen. Lejeune's directive, celebrating the Corp's 247th birth-

See Marines Birthday, Page 3A

TCSO confiscates more meth laced with fentanyl in drug bust

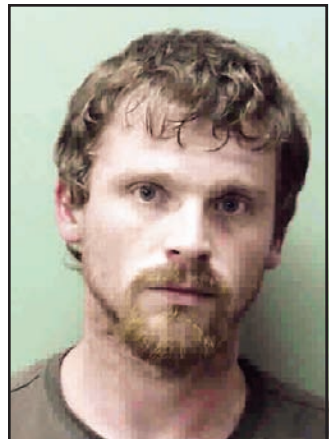
News Special
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On Friday, Nov. 11, a Towns County Sheriff's Drug Investigator received information regarding drug activity and a fugitive from justice at a residence on State Line Road in Hiawassee.

Drug Investigators, a K-9 Unit and Deputies raided the location. As a result of the raid, two suspects were located in a tent behind the residence.

Investigators confiscated several packets that were packaged for sale and field-tested positive for methamphetamine laced with fentanyl.

Nathan Brent Bradley, 31, of Hayesville, North Carolina, was arrested and charged with felony possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; felony possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; felony possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana; and possession of drug-related ob-



Nathan Brent Bradley



Sandi Hope Pate

Sandi Hope Pate, 33, of Morganton, was also arrested and charged with felony possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; felony possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana; and possession of drug-related objects.

Following the arrests,

Sheriff Ken Henderson commended his Drug Investigators and K-9 Deputy for their hard work, and he would like to thank the community for sharing information about drug activity, saying, "Together we can make a difference."

All persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

ALDI to welcome shoppers with Dec. 1 Grand Opening

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE – For months, people have been asking when the new ALDI Grocery Store will be opening in Blairsville. Thankfully, the wait is almost over, with the store set to open next week at the intersection of Farmers Market Way and Georgia 515.

ALDI will be holding a Grand Opening for the public on Thursday, Dec. 1, starting with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 8:45 a.m.

The Grand Opening will feature free shopping totes while supplies last, and Golden Tickets will be handed out to the first 100 customers of the day, potentially redeemable for up to \$100 in the form of an ALDI gift card.

People will also receive the opportunity to enter a \$500 ALDI gift card sweepstakes that will run Dec. 1-4, with one lucky winner to be selected.

Those who can't wait until Dec. 1 can get in a day early, as ALDI will open its doors on Wednesday, Nov. 30, for a "Sneak Peak" shopping



The first ALDI opened in Iowa in 1976, and since then, the discount grocer has cultivated fiercely loyal supporters who make up an enthusiastic fanbase.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

experience. Once open, store hours will be Monday-Sunday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"We're new to Blairsville, and we can't wait to meet you," per the website aldi.us.

"Right now, we're stocking our shelves with aisle after aisle of products you'll love. We've got everything from fresh produce delivered daily to everyday essentials you can

never have enough of.

"So circle the date 12/1/22 and come experience a better way to shop. You can find us at 595 E. Highway 515, Blairsville, GA 30512."

ALDI offers a unique shopping experience that will augment the grocery options already available locally, said Mitch Griggs of the Union

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Blue Ridge 1,669.37
Chatuge 1,917.99
Nottely 1,761.49

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SPORTS BASKETBALL

Tuesday, Nov. 22
@ Union County
7 & 8:30 PM

Kindergarten
Turkey Letters



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TCHS
Student of the Week

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Young Harris
Christmas Tree
Lighting
Dec. 2

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Marine Corps...from Page 1A



Awards were presented to Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, Alton "Doc" Coleman, Tammy K. Coleman and Brandy Creel during a 247th birthday celebration for the Marine Corps in Young Harris this month. Photo by Mark Smith

Some of the highlights are the singing of the Marine Corps Hymn; the reading of Gen. Lejeune's original 1921 message; the reading of a message from the current Marine Corps Commandant, Gen. David H. Berger; and the reading of a birthday message from the 64th Commandant of the Marine Corps League, Johnny Baker.

The Marine Corps League, as a veterans organization – the only congressionally chartered United States Marine Corps-related veterans organization – always displays the Missing Man Table on Marine Corps Day, acknowledging and honoring those Marines who gave their lives in defense of America and its way of life.

And then there's the Cutting of the Cake ceremony, performed using a Marine officer's Mameluke sword, which is symbolic of the annual renewal of each Marine's commitment to the Corps, and the Corps' commitment to America's quest for peace and freedom

worldwide. As part of the Unicoi Detachment 783 Marine Corps Day celebration, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw – the latter unable to attend – were acknowledged.

Ordiales was awarded an Honorary Membership in Unicoi Detachment 783, and U.S. Air Force veteran Brandy Creel was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for her many hours of service throughout the year to the Detachment.

Unicoi Detachment 783 Commandant Alton "Doc" Coleman was named Detachment Marine of the Year. And Tammy Coleman, Adjutant and Paymaster of Unicoi Detachment 783, and Doc's wife, was named Detachment Associate of the Year.

"As Marines, we are extremely proud of our history and our legacy. The Marine Corps League also has its history and legacy, and we are just

as proud," said Baker in his Marine Corps Day letter.

Continuing, "As each of you celebrates the 247th year of the birth of the Marine Corps, I ask that you please remember our legacy and those that served before us. Think about and remember the esprit de corps that made us who we are today, United States Marines."

The first verse of the Marine's Hymn is as follows:

"From the Halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoli
"We fight our country's battles, in the air, on land and sea.

"First to fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean,

"We are proud to claim the title of United States Marine."

Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment 783 enjoys membership in both Union and Towns counties and remains active with various veteran and community-oriented initiatives throughout the year. Happy birthday, Marines!

Corporal Claud Norman Stephens' Family receives Gold Star Banner and Certificate

At the Veterans Day ceremony held on November 11th at Union County High School, Patriot Sid Turner, a US Army veteran of the Vietnam War, and President of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution, accompanied with Stephen Weaver, Vice President awarded the Gold Star Banner and certificate to Henry Lee Stephens whose brother perished during the Korean War. Members of the Stephens family looked on as the certificate was read recognizing the loss of "Corporal Claud Norman Stephens, who was declared dead while missing in action on November 28, 1950 in North Korea while defending our Nation and the freedom of oppressed people. Corporal Stephens dedicated service and selfless sacrifice bring great honor to his country and to his family. The Stephens family name will be added to our Gold Star Banner Honor Roll. May the Lord bless and keep the Stephens family safe."



(L-R): Stephen Weaver, Henry Lee Stephens, Sid Turner

family member who died in combat.

"No one has given more to our Nation than our service members lost in combat and the Gold Star families left behind," said Turner. "These heroes paid the ultimate sacrifice in order to protect our freedoms, and we remain in service to their families as they carry on with courage and dignity despite their devastating loss."

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter of the Georgia SAR Society was chartered April 1, 2000 and is nationally recognized as one of the top five chapters of over 600

chapters worldwide. With a modest membership of only 42 individuals, The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter is one of the most active and involved SAR chapters in the country. For more information about the Sons of the American Revolution and the programs we offer, contact Chapter President Sid Turner at (706) 745-3410. Information about joining either Sons of the American Revolution or our companion organization, Daughters of the American Revolution, can be found on the SAR website at www.sar.org and the DAR website at www.dar.org.

Flu Vaccination: The Best Protection Against the Flu



The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is urging Georgians to get vaccinated against flu right now. Flu activity is already widespread in Georgia – earlier than we've seen in recent years. With Thanksgiving just two weeks away, you have time to protect yourself and your family and friends by not waiting another day to get vaccinated.

"The single most effective way to prevent the flu is the flu vaccine. Everyone over the age of six months should get a flu vaccine said Kathleen E. Toomey, commissioner, Georgia Department of Public Health. "The holidays bring gatherings with family and friends and increase the likelihood of spreading the flu. Now is the time to get vaccinated."

It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu, so it's important to take preventive measures now.

New for this season, there are three flu vaccines recommended for individuals 65 years and older. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about which vaccine is best for you. However,

if you can't get one of the quadrivalents, don't delay getting vaccinated. Any flu vaccine is preferable to no flu vaccine.

Flu vaccine is available at public health departments, doctors' offices, grocery stores, neighborhood clinics and pharmacies. To find a location near you, click on <https://www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines/>. Flu vaccine can be administered at the same time as COVID vaccine, so it's a good time to get your updated booster, too.

Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, chills and fatigue. One of the most pronounced flu symptoms is an overall feeling of achiness and malaise that comes on quickly.

In addition to the early arrival of flu, respiratory syncytial virus or RSV is also affecting a high number of Georgians, especially young children and older adults. RSV is a common respiratory virus that causes cold-like symptoms but can lead to lung inflammation and to pneumonia. It is especially serious in infants because of the small airways in their lungs. Call your healthcare professional if you or your child is having difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing worsening symptoms. There is no vaccine for RSV.

There are, however, tried and true measures to help prevent the spread of respiratory

illnesses like flu and RSV:

Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and warm water; Alcohol based gels are the next best thing if you don't have access to soap and water;

Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow or arm to help prevent spread of the flu; Avoid touching your face as flu germs can get into the body through mucus membranes of the nose, mouth and eyes.

It is critically important to stay home from school or work if you are sick to keep from spreading infections to others. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease, pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years, but especially those younger than 2 years old. You should be free of a fever, without the use of a fever reducer, for at least 24 hours before returning to school or work.

For information about flu and how to prevent it, log on to dph.ga.gov/flu. You can learn more about RSV at <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>.

Georgia weekly influenza reports can be found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/flu-activity-georgia>. The reports are updated on Friday.

Lake Chatuge Rotary Club November 15th Meeting



The Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge met on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, at Brass-town Valley Resort at noon.

The program for the day was presented by Towns County High School's October and November Students of the Month.

Brook Murrell is the October Student of the Month. She is a Senior at TCHS.

Brook has always gotten straight A's on her report card. She is currently attending TCHS, while also taking college courses. She is on the UCB Junior Board of Directors, and plays basketball and soccer. As a member of the FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America), Brook recently placed 5th in the nation in a competition in word processing.

She is also a Beta Club member. Currently, Brook works at Stephanie McConnell's Law Office. She plans to attend Kennesaw State University, majoring in Early Childhood Education and Development, with the goal of becoming a pre-school teacher. She already has a good start on her post-high school education, and expects to have completed 30 credit hours by the time she graduates from TCHS.

Tabitha Barnes is the TCHS November Student of

the Month. She is also a senior at TCHS.

Tabitha loves to play basketball, and loves to go bowling. She has always taken honor's classes, and has never gotten anything less than an "A" on her report card. She is now the Captain of the TCHS girls' basketball team, working at the Deer Lodge in her time away from school. She is currently taking college classes along with her high school classes. Tabitha hopes to attend the University of West Georgia in Dahlonega after graduation. She intends to major in Biology, and hopes for a career as either a radiologist or possibly an athletic trainer.

After Rotarians heard from the Students of the Month, Superintendent Roy

Perren updated them on a project at the Elementary School that rewards good behavior with books. When a teacher "catches a child doing something right", whether it be academically or socially, the teacher can reward the student with a token.

At the school, there is a special vending machine, where the student can use his or her token to trade for a book. The Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge is one of the Organizations that donates money to this project.

There being no more business to discuss, the meeting was ended with a quote from Thomas Edison: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

GMF Christmas...from Page 1A

performance featuring Sammy Kershaw, Collin Raye, and Aaron Tippin at 5 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 3, will begin with The Hoppers from 2-3 p.m. while the Isaacs go on-stage from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Finally, Dailey and Vincent will

round out the second concert night beginning at 5 p.m.

Christmasfest admission for one day is \$75, and the cost to attend both concert evenings is \$135. Anyone who purchases concert tickets, whether for one or two days, will be able to enter

the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights show for free.

For those who would rather not attend the concerts, admission to the light show is \$7 for individuals 12 and up. Anyone under 12 can enter for free.

ALDI Opening...from Page 1A



Among other things, ALDI is known for its unique cart system, where customers insert a quarter to borrow one and get their money back upon returning the cart.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

County Development Authority, who noted that ALDI is not a super discount store, but it's also not an independent or full-service grocer – all of which are currently represented in Union County.

Instead, ALDI is a discount grocer that has developed a niche of its own, catering to shoppers who wish to save money while also enjoying quality items and a greater frequency of new product availability that changes over time.

"Every ALDI store has a similar, easy-to-navigate layout," said Shaun O'Keefe, Jefferson Division Vice President at ALDI. "A typical store is approximately 12,000 square feet of retail space, making ALDI stores much easier to navigate than traditional grocery stores, and will feature open ceilings, natural lighting and environmentally friendly refrigeration and building materials.

"Customers can also expect a wide product mix at the Blairsville store, including organic meats, fresh produce, gourmet cheeses, sustainable seafood, on-trend items, award-winning baby essentials and so much more, including our limited-time ALDI Finds, all at unbeatable prices."

Continued O'Keefe, "At our core, ALDI is different by design. More than 90% of our store consists of ALDI-exclusive products, and 1 in 3 ALDI-exclusive products is award-winning (as of February 2022, based on a survey of everyday nationally distributed ALDI-exclusive branded products, excluding produce).

"And when it comes to value, ALDI won't be beat on price – in fact, we're even dropping prices on 50 traditional Thanksgiving staples this year to help our customers enjoy a delicious meal and alleviate some worry about rising food costs.

"We've seen lots of competitors try to follow our lead, but our focus remains on providing shoppers with an outstanding value on quality food and products. We're confident in delivering on that promise.

"We look forward to serving the Blairsville community and providing residents with the best grocery shopping experience."

ALDI keeps prices low in multiple ways, by offering an extensive array of private label items; providing quality products from emerging brands

at lower prices; avoiding "non-essential services like banking, pharmacies and check cashing to bring more savings to you"; displaying items "in their original shipping boxes to save on restocking shelves"; trimming costs by not employing grocery baggers or cart attendants; and more.

Known for employing a small staff in each store, ALDI in Blairsville will be diverging a bit from that practice, according to Griggs, who said the store will open with 25 employees while maintaining a goal to eventually bring a total of 40 new jobs to town.

The bulk of the employee base for the local ALDI is likely to come from Union County, though hiring will draw from the entire region to staff the location, with Blairsville being one of "2,000 stores across 36 states with over 25,000 employees."

As to how ALDI came to Blairsville, Griggs said the project has been in the works since around the time Food City closed its doors about five years ago.

"We had a grocery gap, (and I did some cold calling) with the various grocers to see if I could entice a grocer into considering our market," Griggs said. "ALDI is one of the folks I contacted, and I probably contacted every grocer known to man."

At the time, ALDI was not doing small, rural markets, sticking instead with more suburban areas like Gwinnett and Cobb counties, Griggs said.

"So, that was all fine and good, and about once a year I'd call to check in on them," he continued.

While attending a recent International Council of Shopping Centers trade show, Griggs found himself in conversation with a commercial broker who told him that "ALDI is starting to look at smaller markets."

That prompted Griggs to reach back out to ALDI, which confirmed that it was indeed beginning to consider smaller markets.

"And that's when we began really trying to entice them into this market, started sending them market information and all the usual things I do to recruit a national retailer," Griggs said.

He first got them to look at the empty Food City building, "because that was my first

priority, to go ahead and back-fill an existing space that was vacant."

Ultimately, ALDI turned down the old Food City location, as it didn't match up with the company's desire for a free-standing store, "and that space was bigger than they normally build as well, so it just wasn't a really good fit for them, and they passed."

Griggs then showed ALDI the roughly 2-acre parcel of land the store now resides on, but at the time, it wasn't an investment the company was ready to make.

However, several local investors teamed up to acquire the parcel "and were able to get it at a price point where suddenly I was able to put that back on the market as a potential site for ALDI."

Griggs and the new property owners jointly approached ALDI, successfully getting a "letter of intent executed that secured the site while we worked through all the details, and off we went and running."

The last piece of the puzzle fell into place in February when Union County Government sold a 0.51-acre adjoining strip of property to ALDI, which needed the extra space to make the project work. Construction began shortly thereafter, and the rest is history.

"This will be a great addition to the community," Griggs said. "It'll help fill a niche that had been vacant with the closure of (BI-LO/Food City), while being separate from that BI-LO niche and not competing so directly.

"We'll have distinct experiences; we'll have the super discount stuff at Save-A-Lot, and we'll have the discount at the Walmart Supercenter. And then, we'll have the (independent grocer) experience at Foodland, and we'll have the full-service experience at Ingles.

"And we'll have the ALDI experience as well. It's a good fit for the community, and I think folks will be really happy about it."

Be sure to check out weekly "ALDI Finds" that drop every Wednesday, to include "new food items, small kitchen appliances, seasonal decor, outdoor furniture, gardening tools and more that come to our stores, all at the low prices (customers) love."