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Express Convenience Centers™ debuts fresh, fast deli

Program involves regional foodservice providers Festival Foods and Lamers Dairy

Consumers looking for alternatives to high calorie, fast foods are going to have more choices thanks to a partnership between several northeast Wisconsin companies. Recent increases in obesity have led consumers to demand fast, convenient foods on the go.

One valley based company has a solution—healthy, fresh meals on the go at convenient locations across northeast Wisconsin. Express Convenience Centers recently launched a service for customers called “Dashboard Dining.” The program features fresh, not frozen, sandwiches and food items with a twist—they’re all provided by regional business partners.

At all 19 Express locations, customers will be able to select fresh sandwiches, fruit, salads, veggie cups and vegetarian options all made at Festival Foods’ catering headquarters, The Marq, 3177 French Road, DePere. Milk products and daily delivery service are supplied by Appleton-based Lamers Dairy/Dairyland’s Best.

Express team leaders say the fresh deli foods are a response to customers’ lifestyles. “Increasingly our customers want a one-stop shopping experience,” said Jim Anholzer, general manager of Express Convenience Centers. “They’re busy but can still purchase gas, groceries and now a healthy lunch on the go all at Express.”

According to the National Association for Convenience Stores, the trend of offering fresh food has accelerated in the last decade. The result is convenience stores have continued to evolve from gas stations that happen to sell food to restaurants that happen to sell gas. (www.nacsonline.com). A 2007 study shows food prepared on site is a category leader, accounting for 47.27 percent of total foodservice sales in convenience stores nationally.

For Lamers Dairy, the partnership helps strengthen relationships between local businesses and consumers. “Trusted brand names are a major factor for our customers,” said Tom Lamers, vice president of sales and distribution for Lamers Dairy/Dairyland’s Best. “They recognize our name, they recognize that we provide milk to Festival Foods and they recognize the Express brand. Our customers trust these names as local and providing high quality.”

The Dashboard Dining program will provide fresh meals prepared daily at The Marq, the catering headquarters for Festival Foods. Chefs at the facility prepare meals for the company’s 13 stores in Northeast Wisconsin as well as their catering business.

“Festival Foods is a family-owned business and it was important that we partner with other locally-owned companies,” said Nick Arlt, director of public relations for Festival Foods. “This program is a unique approach for convenience stores as we’ll be making deli sandwiches specially for Express but with the same quality and ingredients we use in our other catering.”

The Dashboard Dining program will be available at all Express Convenience Centers beginning July 27, 2010. For more information, please visit www.expressconvenience.com.

Express Convenience Centers™ is a division of U.S. Venture, Inc., and owns and operates 19 retail outlets located in Wisconsin throughout the Fox Valley, Oshkosh and Green Bay. The stores are a leader in guest-focused convenience shopping and have won the “Best of the Valley” award two consecutive years. Express, along with the other seven divisions of US Venture Co., Inc., is proud to be an active and caring member of our communities. For more information, please visit www.expressconvenience.com.

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