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## Convenience Stores give new meaning to “fast food”

### *Drive-thru windows designed with busy moms in mind*

It's the perfect marriage of convenience and necessity—a drive up window at a convenience store.

The Express store located at 217 S. Memorial Drive, Appleton, features the only drive-up convenience store experience in the region. The company decided to locate a drive-up window as an added service to its customers and to take the concept of convenience to a new level.

Express Convenience Centers® owns and operates 19 stores in Northeast Wisconsin. The company is a division of U.S. Oil, Inc., headquartered in Combined Locks. The Memorial Drive store is the only one of its stores with a drive up window.

Nationally, convenience stores are providing a growing number of services for customers: 92 percent have ATMs, 68 percent sell money orders and 16 percent have a carwash. According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, a growing number are offering new services such as drive-thru windows (6 percent).

The drive up experience is a direct response to faster paced lifestyles. “So many moms will get gas, but go somewhere else for the gallon of milk and a loaf of bread,” said Lorie Beyer, retail business leader for Express. “Now guests can get their fuel, then drive up and get grocery necessities without leaving the car.” Express Convenience Centers refers to all customers as “guests” and puts an emphasis on superior guest service.

The Memorial Drive location was a new location for the company and was built in 2007 complete with the drive-thru window. During winter months, the drive-thru served almost 100 people a day; traffic continues to be strong purchases due to the convenience.

“I don't have to worry about leaving the kids in the car,” said Carole Hanson-Holt, Appleton. “I visit about four times a week for milk, bread, soda, snacks and all the necessities. It's just easier and more convenient.”

Express is also part of a trend with more stores becoming a hybrid of a supermarket, gas station, restaurant and even a bank—one-stop shopping for busy consumers.

In addition to convenience, the drive-thru is also a safety consideration for customers. “**Wisconsin weather is a factor, so seniors don't have to get out of their cars and moms have the convenience to get the supplies they need without taking their kids out of car seats,**” said Kelly Dewey, Express Marketing Manager.

At Express, customers drive up and read a list of items and prices on a large, outdoor board—all items in the store are available from the drive-thru including food, snacks, soda, beer and others. Items are updated frequently based on the purchase data collected through the drive up lane. Just like fast food,

customers place their order over a microphone and Express staffers collect their items from store shelves. Team members wear head sets and are able to pull specific items from store shelves.

“It’s quicker for someone to go through the drive-thru than it is for them to walk through the store,” Beyer said. “Our team members know where everything is and in many cases we have the items bagged by the time the guest is at the window.”

As Express stores are remodeled, the company will consider installing additional drive-up windows due to the success at the Memorial Drive store.

Express Convenience Centers® is a division of U.S. Oil, 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 eight divisions of US Oil Co., Inc., is proud to be an active and caring member of our communities. For more information, please visit [www.expressconvenience.com](http://www.expressconvenience.com)

**SIDEBAR INFORMATION: National statistics on convenience stores, source: National Association of Convenience Stores**

- Convenience stores have an unmatched speed of transaction: the average time it takes a customer to walk in, purchase an item and depart is between 3 to 4 minutes. Here's the breakdown: 35 seconds to walk from the car to the store, 71 seconds to select item(s), 42 seconds to wait in line to pay, 21 seconds to pay and 44 seconds to leave store (*Source: NACS' 2002 Speed Metrics Research*)
- Consumers are embracing convenience stores like never before. An average store selling fuel has more than 1,000 customers per day, or more than 370,000 per year. Cumulatively, the U.S. convenience store industry alone serves 137 million customers per day and 50 billion customers every year. (*NACS 2007 State of the Industry Report*).
- The convenience store industry is a destination for on-the-go meals: it now accounts for \$9.3 billion in combined sales of food prepared onsite and commissary/ packaged sandwiches (*Source: NACS 2007 State of the Industry report*).
- Convenience stores provide a growing number of services for customers: 92 percent have ATMs, 68 percent sell money orders and 16 percent have a carwash. A growing number are offering new services such as a drive-thru window (6 percent) or customer seating in the store (17 percent). (*Source: NACS 2007 State of the Industry Index Group*).

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**MEDIA NOTE:** to shoot photos/video at the Memorial Drive location, please contact Kelly M. Dewey, Sales and Marketing Manager, 920.730.7128 Office, 920.450.1185 Cell