

BUSINESS

Allstate ribbon cutting

Tosaf USA announces first US facility in Bessemer City



Alan Carpenter is pictured holding scissors. Mayor Rick Murphrey, assists. To their left are agents Freda Heafner Hoerlén and Elaine Alexander. Behind Carpenter, at left, is David Ramsey, manager of the four offices.

Allstate Insurance employees celebrated the ribbon cutting at their new Kings Mountain location at 308 E. King St. last Tuesday.

Staffers, city leaders and members of the Cleveland Chamber joined in the ceremonies, that included prize draw-

ings and cake, cookies and punch.

The office, which opened in May, provides home, auto, motorcycle, boat, life and retirement insurance. The branch's owner, Alan Carpenter, also owns Allstate branches in Shelby, Gastonia and Lincolnton.

Tosaf USA, Inc. is planning to locate its first U.S. manufacturing facility in Bessemer City in the next three years, creating 75 jobs in five years and investing \$31.1 million.

The announcement was made by Gov. Pat McCrory, N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

The parent company of Tosaf USA, Tosaf Compounds Ltd., is based in Israel and specializes in the manufacturing and marketing of advanced polymers and compounds. The company's products are used by plastic molders and professors serving a wide range of industries including automotive, medical, electrical and packaging. The Bessemer City facility will be the first entry into the U.S. market.

Salaries will vary by job function, but the average annual wage for the new jobs will be \$38,895. The Gaston County average annual wage is \$35,868.

The project was made possible in part by a performance-based grant from

the One North Carolina Fund of up to \$225,000. Companies receive no money up front and must meet job creation and investment performance standards to qualify for grant funds. These grants also require and are contingent upon local matches.

"That Tosaf USA would choose North Carolina for its first U.S. manufacturing plant says volumes about what we have to offer," said McCrory. "Tosaf USA found hardworking employees, a great quality of life and the infrastructure needed to be successful."

"Foreign investment is crucial to growing North Carolina's economy," said Secretary Decker. "When companies such as Tosaf USA choose to locate here, it continues to position our state as a good place to do business across the globe."

"It is positive when new and existing industries are able to create jobs for the hardworking taxpayers in North Carolina," said Rep. Kelly Hastings. "I want to personally welcome this company to North Carolina and to our area."

Shoppers take to Wal-Mart at grand opening

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Following a brief welcome from the store's manager that was accompanied by a prayer from a local minister and a message from the mayor, Wal-Mart got down to doing what it does best early Wednesday morning at its Kings Mountain grand opening.

Shoppers at the newly minted Neighborhood Market wasted no time hitting the aisles and filling up grocery carts with cola, cereals and baked goods.

The outdoor opening ceremonies, which kicked off at 7:30 a.m., were greeted with near freezing temperatures offset slightly by warm English muffins and hot cocoa and coffee served by Wal-Mart vendors. More than 100 early risers — Kings Mountain City Council members, Cleveland County Commissioners and Cleveland

Chamber members among them — showed up to get a glimpse of the town's newest full-sized grocery store.

There was even a group of eager West School Elementary students on hand to provide a frost-bitten rendition of the "Spar Spangled Banner."

"We look forward to serving your shopping needs," said store manager Sue Jones, adding that the store employs 93 people. "But more than that, we want to be citizens of this town."

Since construction began, the store has made thousands of dollars in charitable donations to the Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry and the Kings Mountain Fire Department. Globally, Jones pointed out, Wal-Mart has donated more than billion meals to the needy in recent years.

Chip Sloan, pastor at First Baptist Church, described the world's largest

retailer's arrival in town as a blessing — both to shoppers trying to make ends meet and to those looking for jobs.

Mayor Rick Murphrey told the crowd that the new store opening is the culmination of on and off talks between the city and Wal-Mart.

"This is a big day for Kings Mountain's economy," he said.

Inside, the new store's wide aisles quickly took on the look of a store in its thousandth day instead of its first.

Karen Bell caught the tail end of the opening ceremonies on her way in to shop at the new store. A fan of the discount grocery store Aldi's Gastonia location and the Wal-Mart in Shelby, she said she was curious what the new store looked like inside.

"I like the deals," she said, looking over a number of grocery items and



Store manager Sue Jones is joined by Kings Mountain Mayor Rick Murphrey, members of the Cleveland County Chamber of Commerce, Wal-Mart officials and other local business leaders at the store's grand opening Wednesday morning.

paper products in her cart.

Although for many the visit to Wal-Mart early Wednesday represented just another trip to a gro-

cery store, some were content just to stroll and inspect the shelves of the 41,000 sq. ft. space for deals or to chit-chat with a

collection of regional Wal-Mart officials, including district managers, managers of nearby stores and Jones herself.

