'Marketplace' officially opens

Ribbon cutting was Friday

By MARY JANE PITT

On a chilly morning last Friday, several dozen community residents, local leaders and New York State officials gathered at the front doors of My Town Marketplace and wished owners Albert Rodriguez and Lisa Barrios the absolute best of luck in their new business venture.

But wait, you might say! Didn't the grocery store open over a month ago? It did. But, the official grand opening of the renovated grocery store took place on Friday.

At the grand opening, they gave tours of the store, cut a ribbon, there were some speeches, and then a coffee and doughnut reception inside, following the outdoor festivities.

Rodriguez and Barrios thanked all who attended the ceremony as well as the investors in it, and those community residents who have been shopping there. Then they let others do all the talking.

First up was Town of Highlands Supervisor Ed Magryta, who praised the "beautiful market".

"This is an example of success," the supervisor said. "It is full of all the regular things that the large chains offer, but it has more. It is local, convenient and has the personal touch that makes it much better. Albert and Lisa have poured their heart and soul into this effort and it shows. From a super clean store to the large selection offered, this store is a model of things that can be done when smart, dedicated citizens give back to their community."

Highland Falls Mayor Joe D'Onofrio also praised the couple, especially for pushing through the large amounts of paperwork and red tape needed to secure all their funding and both governmental and private investors.

He, too, thanked the community for supporting the store, noting that it is imperative for senior citizens in particular to have a local store.

He also mentioned the impending snow storm: "You're going to have a good day today," he said, as the parking lot continued to fill up. "If there's snow in the forecast for tomorrow, they'll be here today!"

Several others also spoke, including Kim Lattimer from the Low Income Investment Fund.

After touring the store, she called it "exactly what we intended".

She said as the project came to her desk she heard tales of local residents driving "over the river and around the mountain" and thought "this is exactly the right type of project for us".

John Whiteman, from the Food Trust, said he hopes the store will help the community.

"Grocery stores are an economic anchor in towns," he said. "Communities without grocery stores have higher rates of heart disease, obesity, etc."

New York's Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets, Darrel Aubertine, said the importance of the store in Highland Falls "is easy to see" by the turnout of local officials and residents.

He told Rodriguez and Barrios that he was "happy to be here to celebrate with you".

The store created 25 local full and part-time jobs, a "tremendous shot in the arm to our local economy," Magryta said.

"There is an old saying, 'If you build it, they will come'," the supervisor added. "We have all come today to celebrate this grand opening of My Town Marketplace. We salute Albert and Lisa for their fine effort and wish them and our community continued success."

The store has remained in 'grand opening' mode this week, with special sales and banners hanging outside and inside the store.

Photo by MJ Pitt

Lisa Barrios and Albert Rodriguez cut the ribbon at the grand opening.

Photo by MJ Pitt

My Town Marketplace owners Lisa Barrios and Albert Rodriguez, left, listen as New York Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets Darrel Aubertine speaks at the grand opening of the grocery store last week. Local community leaders are on the right. On the banner in front are the state and private agencies which helped get the store open.

Photo provided

USAA's new Financial Center opened at its location just outside Thayer Gate last Friday afternoon. Here, USAA President Army Maj. Gen. (ret) Joe Robles, West Point Financial Center Manager Paul Grossman and Member Relations Specialist Nancy Sherwitz, cut the ribbon at that celebratory event. Many attended the grand opening.