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Celebrating Sam's Club reopening at 25 Pace Boulevard

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Governor Lincoln Chafee, Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce representatives and local officials, directors of area non-profit organizations and I - along with many excited Warwick shoppers - recently joined Sam's Club management and staff to celebrate the grand re-opening of their store at 25 Pace Blvd.

The celebration began with a "soft opening" the evening before, when the company presented more than \$30,000 in grants through the Sam's Club Foundation. Among a half-dozen beneficiaries was the Warwick Family Shelter. The shelter was the recipient of the largest donation, of \$20,000 - it's also one of the largest grants the organization has received from any private entity to date.

The following morning, Club manager Gabriel Urueta led a brief speaking program before the store was officially opened for business. He spoke of the dedication of Sam's Club employees, who worked for over two years to rebuild a welcoming new facility after the old building was razed due to safety concerns. The club, at roughly 136,000 s/f, features a variety of member-only services, including a fresh bakery, battery and tire center and caf  , and also showcases products from a number of area companies, including Warwick Ice Cream and Cape Cod Cranberry Harvest Jelly.

A pharmacy will be open to both members and the general public, offering generic prescriptions ranging from \$4 to \$10 and reduced-cost brand name medicines. A hearing aid center has a certified audiologist to help customers with personal listening devices and hearing aids.

In addition to their investment in the community - both through their commitment to rebuilding and reopening in Warwick and their support of charitable causes - Sam's is contributing to job growth in our city. Sam's Club has hired 140 new associates to work in the Warwick club, bringing the total workforce at Wal-Mart and Sam's Clubs in Rhode Island to more than 2,400 people.

With the enthusiasm of the Club associates and the many shoppers who have been eagerly awaiting the return of the store, there's little doubt that this location will continue to flourish. We look forward to celebrating their future successes with them.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick and the chairman of the RIPTA board of directors.

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