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New 89,000 s/f Market Basket opens at 25 Pace Boulevard - by mayor Frank Picozzi

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Frank Picozzi

After decades of having to cross the Massachusetts border to shop at Market Basket, Rhode Islanders can now visit the popular grocery chain's first Ocean State location. We are thrilled to welcome Market Basket to Warwick, where they've found a home at 25 Pace Blvd. off Bald Hill Rd. (Rte. 2). Since its grand opening on May 21st, customers from throughout the state have been flocking to the store, which is getting rave reviews from long-time customers and new patrons alike for the affordable prices and more than 50,000 items sourced from around the globe and stocked for purchase.

The 89,000 s/f Warwick store marks Market Basket's 85th location. The company, founded in Lowell, Mass. 104 years ago, will soon be adding four more Market Basket locations – two stores in Massachusetts, one in New Hampshire, and one in Johnston, are presently under construction. The Warwick store is bringing in 70 to 80 employees from other stores as well as 350 new associates, who will join Market Basket's companywide roster of over 27,000 employees. The store will be open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Sunday.

David McLean, Market Basket's operations manager, said the Warwick location carries a couple of hundred products, like Autocrat Coffee Syrup and specialty coffees, that they've discovered their longtime Rhode Island customers have a special affinity for. In the past decade, consumer tastes have also shifted toward special categories, such as organic, gluten free, grass fed and cage free, and Market Basket carries a wide variety of products to meet those needs. The company's goal, McLean said, is to provide customers a "one-stop shopping" experience where they can find everything they're looking for in one store. In addition to the departments one would typically find in a grocery store, Market Basket offers a cheese shoppe featuring products from 18 countries around the world, an in-store bakery, the Market Café, the Market Kitchen, and a Niji Sushi department, where every roll is crafted in store daily by sushi chefs.

Some find Market Basket rather unique in that there is no self-service in their stores, there is only one across-the-board flyer for all 85 locations, there are no membership fees and no "zone pricing"

unless government-mandated, ensuring that customers are all getting the same prices and value no matter what Market Basket they visit. The company also boasts a great deal of employee longevity – McLean himself has been employed there for some 45 years. He attributes this staying power to the family atmosphere that's been cultivated by company owner Arthur T. Demoulas, known affectionately as "Artie T." Having a sense that you're not working for someone, but with each other, makes the difference, McLean said. This sense of family also extends to the personal customer attention that's cultivated such a loyal base of consumers.

The city is very pleased that Market Basket has chosen our community, with its central location in the state and convenient highway access, as a place to do business. We wish their store associates well and welcome them to the ranks of Warwick employees.

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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