

On lookout for new stores

By CÉSAR G. RODRIGUEZ
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Mall del Norte is always on the lookout for new stores to bring to Laredo, said general manager Kenneth H. Beckmann.

"We have active discussion with at least six other stores. We will announce something as the deals are concluded," he said.

However, he did say that Aeropostale is expanding to meet the demands of the community and the Mexican shoppers.

Beckmann said Aeropostale is one of the stores where people line up outside even before doors open.

"It has a lot of brand recognition. It's popular," he added. "Pricing just can't be beat."

Aeropostale is expected to double its size to 8,000 square feet. The current store will be relocated temporarily. Customers should see signs leading them to the new location soon. The new store is expected to open some time in May.

Those who enjoy pizza, fun and games should swing by the newest restaurant located on the north side of the mall.

Chuck E. Cheese's recently opened its doors. Beckmann described the place as an outstanding place for families to have fun and just spend time together.

"It's the greatest entertainment place in Laredo right now," he added.

Mall officials are also looking forward to exhibit the dresses of the Society of Martha Washington and Pocahontas, a tradition the mall has done for more than 20 years.

"They're amazing to look at. They're amazing works of art. It's something you don't see everyday," Beckmann said. The exhibit is will stay open until February.

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Photo by Danny Zaragoza | Laredo Morning Times

Customers shop on both levels of J.C. Penney's retail store at Mall del Norte.

Start-ups can look to state for answers

Program helps small business succeed

SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Those wishing to start small businesses of their own have state resources to call on.

Several state agencies offer important resources for persons interested in starting small businesses. The Office of Small Business Assistance, for example, offers a program called the Texas Small Business Summit (TXSBS), which hosts informative forums across the state each year. The forums help Texans obtain critical information ranging from defining a market niche to starting a new business or growing an existing one.

Texas.gov, the official web portal of the State of Texas, is a wonderful resource for Texans and for anyone interested in starting a business in the state. The website provides a useful guide and poses the four key questions every potential businessperson should ask before starting a new business:

- What is my business structure?
- What taxes will I have to pay?
- What licenses and permits do I need?
- What business requirements must I meet?

Answering the questions can open a gateway to a thriving marketplace. Despite the national economic downturn, Texas

has one of the best climates in the nation for business. It is one of the few states that experienced a net increase of jobs last year — approximately 93,000 — and has weathered the recession much better than many other states. CNNMoney.com named Texas the number one state to launch a small business in 2010, and CNBC named it "America's Top State for Business." Meanwhile, Webb County was among five Texas counties that Money magazine ranked among the nation's top 10 places "Where the Jobs Are."

Texas' public institutions of higher education also offer small businesspersons access to significant resources and information. Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), for example, is home to the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), whose mission is to "work with existing and startup businesses to help them grow and compete in today's global economy."

SBDC carries out its mission by providing business owners with one-on-one counseling regarding a variety of timely topics. What's more, it offers multiple training workshops throughout the year.

Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, filed Senate Bill (SB) 63, which would authorize a program to provide savings incentives and opportunities for eligible persons to pursue home ownership, post-secondary education and business development.

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'06 FORD TAURUS SE 4-D \$9,294	'09 CHRYSLER PT CRUISER \$11,994	'08 FORD F-150 SUPER CREW 4X4 \$20,491	'08 FORD F-350 CREW CAB LARIAT 4X4 \$31,994
'06 FORD FOCUS 4-D \$9,791	'07 FORD ESCAPE XLS 4-D \$13,294	'08 FORD F-150 SUPER CREW FX4 \$21,991	'08 FORD F-350 CREW CAB LARIAT 4X4 \$31,994
'06 CHEVY IMPALA LS 4-D \$9,894	'08 JEEP LIBERTY RENEGADE \$14,994	'10 FORD F-150 SUPER CAB \$25,994	'08 FORD F-350 CREW CAB LARIAT 4X4 \$31,994
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'07 FORD 500 SEL 4-D \$11,994			'08 FORD F-350 CREW CAB LARIAT 4X4 \$31,994
'08 PONTIAC G5 2-D \$11,994			'08 FORD F-350 CREW CAB LARIAT 4X4 \$31,994
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'08 CHEVY MALIBU LT 4-D \$19,994			'08 FORD F-350 CREW CAB LARIAT 4X4 \$31,994
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