



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Fort Drum commissary now bigger, better store

*By Rick Brink,
DeCA East public affairs officer*

FORT LEE, Va. – Army spouse Patty Gordon had high praise for the Fort Drum, N.Y., commissary as one of its first customers following the June 30 grand reopening marking the completion of a \$17.7-million remodeling project.

“I’ve always loved this place, and now it’s even better,” Gordon said. “I like the prices, and they always have everything I need.”

Gordon, her husband, Bill, and their two children were among a large crowd of eager shoppers and officials from Fort Drum, the Defense Commissary Agency and the surrounding area who gathered outside the store’s new entrance for a 9 a.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The major renovation – a ceiling-to-floor makeover that included expanding the sales area some 9,000 square feet – was all done as the store continued to provide full service throughout the project. It was also paid for by commissary shoppers.

“I want you to know that this renovation was done using \$17.7 million in surcharge dollars,” DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. told the crowd. “The surcharge is the 5 percent that’s added to your commissary receipt, and sometimes we’re asked, ‘Where does the surcharge money go?’ Well, you can see it and experience it here today.”

Shoppers experienced the culmination of 18 months of construction that created a new front entrance and converted unused warehouse space into sales floor and administrative office

space. The store went from 13 aisles to 17 and tripled the space devoted to chilled and frozen items. The new, brightly lit interior and wide aisles are designed to make shopping more enjoyable.

“The deli, bakery and sushi-to-go services – in different locations in the old store – are now conveniently located together, making it easier for our customers to browse and shop,” said Christie Fairbanks, who runs the deli, bakery and sushi operations.

Commissaries are known for their high shopper volume, so keeping shelves stocked can be a challenge for store workers. Expanded shelf space gained by the renovation accommodates a larger volume of products, making it better able to meet customer demand throughout the day, said Bob Smith, the store director.

“It’s really nice what they’ve done,” said retired Sgt. Maj. Tony Losada, a longtime commissary shopper who said he didn’t much mind the disturbance the renovation work caused at times. “It was worth it. I especially like their great selection of ethnic food items that you can’t get elsewhere around here, and the great low prices.”

Smith called the reopening a festive event and said there were prizes and giveaways to mark the occasion as well as great prices on popular products.

Grand reopening day sales exceeded \$143,000, and the momentum continued the next two days with a three-day sales total surpassing \$300,000.

“We appreciate the continued patronage of our customers during the renovation period,” Smith said. “It’s been a challenge at times, but the results – as our customers are finding out – make it all worth it. It’s truly worth the trip to shop at the Fort Drum commissary.”

- DeCA-

Photo captions:

OPENING CUT. Getting ready to cut the ribbon for the Fort Drum Commissary grand reopening are Col. Kenneth Riddle, garrison commander; Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., DeCA director and CEO; Bob Smith, store director; Command Sgt. Maj. Victor M. Garcia, DeCA senior enlisted advisor; and Corey Brunsvold, BE&K. Federal Services project manager for the \$17.7-million renovation. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

WORTH THE TRIP. “The commissary, it’s worth the trip” banner overhead greets shoppers on opening day of the Fort Drum, N.Y., commissary. Opening day sales exceeded \$143,000. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

DELI-BAKERY-SUSHI. Pictured is the convenient one-stop location of the deli, bakery and sushi services. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

SUSHI TO GO. Christie Fairbanks, who runs the operations, goes over opening details with sushi chef Zaw Myint before the opening ceremony. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

AT THE CHECKOUT. Patty Gordon stands back while son, Christian, and daughter, Trinity, help her husband, Sgt. Bill Gordon, put items on the checkout manned by Michael Montgomery. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

EXPANDED FROZEN SECTION. Liana Socquet and Pat Ballard demo ice cream in the new expanded frozen section of the Fort Drum Commissary. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

PRODUCE DISPLAY. A colorful display of produce is seen before customers enter the store on opening day. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

EXTERIOR SHOT. The Fort Drum Commissary shown on the day of its reopening ceremony. (DeCA photo by Rick Brink)

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*