

# End of an era

# Save-a-Lot closes its doors

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It was the end of an era as Tompkinsville's Save-A-Lot grocery store closed its doors at the beginning of this month. The closing was preceded by a half-price sale, for which customers lined up as if for Black Friday at Wal-Mart. A lot of locals are going to miss the affordable hometown store with the generous heart and

nice produce.

"The last day was so sad," says manager Peggy Gittings. "People were just streaming in, some of them had been customers since the beginning. We knew most of our customers by name. We always did put the customer first."

The store was founded around 1980 by three friends, Charles Petett, Mike Starnes and James Ritter. "There have been a lot of owners over the years," says Gittings. "It's been divided up different times. But we'd all always strive to keep that hometown atmosphere."

Up till the very end of its existence, the store maintained credit accounts for regulars. The business is currently owned by June Gittings, James and Ana Ritter, Gerene Garmon and Mark and Robyn Bartley.

Rex Gittings, Peggy's father, began working at the store in 1994. "My daddy loved that job," says Peggy. "He was a farmer too, and a real people person. He loved the customers, loved to talk."

When Rex got ill five years ago he convinced Peggy, a retired teacher, to take over as manager.

"He said 'Go help until I get feeling better,'" says Peggy. "I always relied on his kindness and wisdom. His coat is still hanging right where he left it; he passed a year ago, but I've never wanted to take those reminders of him out of the place."

Months after his passing, Peggy found herself facing "a very heart wrenching decision. We'd been hanging on for dear life. I just hope everyone understands we didn't want to hurt anybody or cause them



Customers grabbed a few last bargains as the shelves emptied.

to lose their jobs. And I'd like to say a big giant thank you to our employees and most of all to our wonderful, loyal customers."

The neighboring businesses in the small South Main Street plaza, Trop-

ical Tan and Gifts and Red Barn BBQ, are very much open for business. And anyone who's interested in purchasing the store should reach out to Gittings on Facebook. "We've had nibbles," she says, "but no bites yet. We really hope someone

local will buy it and put a grocery in. We've always encouraged people to shop locally so that the money stays in the community."



Rex Gittings

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Gamaliel Junior Beta Club members perform for the board

Fourth grader Kaleb Stinson lifted a recitation of statistics to the level of a prose poem with the refrain "all the way down at Gamaliel." The numbers were impressive in themselves: a state writing score of 88.5, math score of 96.5, reading and social studies scores of 100, and an overall ranking of 30 out of 712 Kentucky elementary schools. One hundred and thirty seven students out of 275 are currently working

above grade level; one has graduated Reading Plus, which indicates a 12th grade reading level. Stinson concluded his speech with words of thanks to the community and board and received heartfelt applause.

Gamaliel's Beta Club, fresh from the state convention where they placed first in Living Literature, third in Song-fest, third in Technology Video, and third in Robotics, treated board

members to a performance of "Believe."

Then it was time to honor the young scholars who'd earned scores of Distinguished and Proficient on their K-Prep tests, a long list. Each child took the mic and introduced themselves to the board, sharing their goals; Gamaliel Elementary is currently nurturing eight future teachers, five future veterinarians, four aspiring doctors (two pediatricians, an eye doctor and a surgeon), four pro athletes, two aspiring military, and three future

police officers, not to mention a detective. Still others plan to go into farming, the arts, and specific sciences such as zoology, astronomy and tech, into construction and retail. One young gentleman plans to be a comedian and managed to get a laugh just by saying so.

Students presented the delighted board members with a box of homemade cupcakes and ended their presentation with a classic HeeHaw "saaaaa-LUTE!"

All in all it was an impossible act to follow,

and Superintendent Amy Thompson knew it and kept her report short and to the point, urging everyone present to "keep your eyes and ears open so you can talk to your legislature about what is good for kids. Be a voice and an advocate for education."

Thompson went on to say that Marshall County is still very much in everyone's prayers, and that the district is working with Tompkinsville police officers Channing Cain and Tyler Shaw, both of whom received advanced training on

the subject during 2017, to arrange active shooter training for the district. "We are continually updating our surveillance arrangements; we keep all doors locked, and you may get asked for identification even if we know who you are," she said. "We're not trying to be hard to get along with, just working hard to keep everyone safe every single day."

The school board will hold its next meeting at Monroe County Middle School at 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 8.

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