

Piggly Wiggly hiring; store will open soon

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Ralph Lucero drives nearly 140 miles each day from home to work.

He lives in Beloit and works as a vault main banker at Potawatomi Bingo Casino in Milwaukee. He recently applied for a cashier position at the new Piggly Wiggly store in Beloit.

The grocery store posted on its website that it was hiring in several areas of the store. Applications were available online and in the store location at 1827 Prairie Ave. Full- and part-time positions are available for cashiers, service desk clerks, scan coordinator, deli clerks, bakery clerks, grocery clerks, produce clerks, meat department and store management positions.

Gary Suokko, COO of Piggly Wiggly Midwest, said there isn't an exact open date yet, but the store is expected to be complete in mid-April.

"Construction is going good over there, and we're continuing to finish all we have to do for the opening," he said. "We are excited about it and we hope everyone in Beloit is excited."

Suokko said the store will open before the Easter holiday with a "soft open." The soft opening just lets people know that the store is open, and a grand opening with more publicity will follow that.

"That's yet to be determined because we are working every day to get it open," Suokko said.

Lucero, 30, said he applied in hope of getting a closer job to his home with his wife and two kids. He said he spends close to \$130 to \$140 a week on gas, and this job would cut down on those fuel costs.

He said Piggly Wiggly offers a good employee benefits package, and felt the store would help a lot of people in Beloit looking for work.

"With it being newly open I think my chances are good because they are going to need a lot of employees," he said. "This is a good opportunity for everyone around here."

Many were looking forward to the grocery store when Piggly Wiggly bought the property in 2012. The building sat vacant for more than 10 years after K-Mart closed its doors in 2002.

The store is expected to employ about 100 workers, and will be the 103rd Piggly Wiggly store in Wisconsin and Illinois.

It's been a long road since the company announced it had purchased the building in September 2012. The firm first anticipated opening in summer 2013, but design plans and other Piggly Wiggly stores delayed the opening.

About 50,000 square feet of the 80,000 square foot building will be used by the grocery store, and will serve as the anchor for the entire complex. The other 30,000 square feet will be used for five to eight other businesses. It's estimated that the costs for the renovations will be about \$4 million.