New Walmart breaks ground in Cascade

BY CARRIE L. WILLIAMS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ATLANTA – Walmart broke ground on a 147,000-square-foot store near Cascade Heights this week, a supercenter store expected to create about 300 new jobs, bring new tax dollars to the city and spark revived development for unincorporated south Fulton County.

Located just outside the I-285 perimeter, the supercenter will include produce grown close to home, a money center, electronics, a vision center and pharmacy services, officials say.

Karen Brewer-Edwards, Walmart’s north Georgia regional manager, said the new store—which is expected to open next summer—will bring “a new era of business growth” that will “spruce up the economic forecast” for the Cascade area.

“Last year, Walmart brought $499.4 million in sales and $92 million in state and local tax dollars to the state of Georgia,” Brewer-Edwards said. “We also added 139 suppliers to Georgia’s economy.”

Brewer-Edwards also said Wal-Mart’s charitable donations, with customer support, reached $38.9 million last year, and that nonprofit organizations in the Cascade area would benefit from such charity.

Fulton County Chairman John Eaves said the new Walmart represents a win-win for the megastore, the county and Cascade residents.

See WALMART page 12

New in-home HIV test may reduce spread of AIDS

BY KALIN THOMAS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ATLANTA – A newly approved home HIV test is hitting pharmacies here and across the nation this week, allowing consumers to learn their HIV status in private and, potentially, reducing the spread of AIDS in America.

The new OraQuick In-Home Oral HIV Test, recently approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration, is said to “empower” consumers to take the first step in learning their HIV status, allowing them to seek counseling and make more informed decisions about sexual intimacy.

The new test is an over-the-counter version of the same test that professionals have been using for years, which uses a mouth swab to test oral fluid, providing results in just 20 minutes.

“This provides an important new option for increasing the number of people who know their HIV status,

See HIV page 13
Debate continued from front page

in all the other states because what people are looking at is strength,” Bozeman added.

Co-organizer and WAOK radio talk show host Lorraine Jaques-White agreed, saying she thought Obama was “absolutely incredible.”

“I think that when there were facts that were spoken by Romney that were untrue, President Obama corrected those facts,” said Jaques-White. “He was factual tonight. He was factual tonight. He’s got my vote again.”

Many other watch party attendees praised Obama and his performance.

“I think he woke up and he learned how to have an

ally fight,” said Atlanta resident Barbara Mahone. “He pulled out everything he has done and accomplished and presented it and I think he did very well.”

College Park resident Lenar Bryant called Obama’s performance “strong and assertive.”

“It was clear that he was determined not to let Romney get away with statements that were inaccurate or untrue,” he said. “So I think that in terms of that, he impressed the public, the voters.”

The final presidential debate between Obama and Romney will be held at 9 p.m. Oct. 22.

Church digest continued from page 8

St. Paul Missionary Fellowship Group

HIV continued from front page

and is likely to be a welcome opportunity for many who are unable or unwilling to be tested in other settings,” said Dr. Jonathan Mermin, director for the division of HIV/AIDS prevention for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“It supports the CDC’s policy of making HIV testing routine and easy as a cholesterol or pregnancy test,” he added.

AIDS activists say the new in-home HIV rapid test kit also could help lower the percentage of people who are living with — and spreading the devastating disease — without knowing it.

“We hope that the new in-home test increases the number of people getting tested, and helps them to make sexual intimacy decisions based on accurate information, instead of guessing their status,” said Christopher Ervin, director of development for ANIZ Inc., an Atlanta nonprofit that provides HIV/AIDS testing.

Nearly 20 percent of the one million people living with AIDS in the U.S. don’t know they’re infected, CDC statistics show. And even though African Americans represent just 12 percent of the U.S. population, they account for nearly 44 percent of all new HIV infections, statistics show.

The new in-home test could help reduce that number, activists say.

“We constantly encounter people who are afraid to learn of their HIV status through agencies and other venues,” said Neena Smith-Bankhead, director of education and volunteer services for AIDS Atlanta, an AIDS service organization. “So if at-home testing provides the information that people need to protect themselves and others, it is welcomed.”

But what should someone do if they get a “positive” test result?

“People who receive a positive HIV result should talk to a health care professional as soon as possible to get the counseling, care, and antiretroviral therapy they need to stay healthy and reduce their risk of transmitting the virus to others,” Mermin said.

Ervin, of ANIZ Inc., said telling consumers who test positive to seek counseling may not be a thorough enough strategy.

“When we train people to do testing we also train them for how to tell someone they’re positive, as well as counseling and getting them linked to services,” he said. “Who’s going to be there for that person at home?”

The OraQuick kit provides a phone number and Web site for OraQuick’s 24-hour support center, but it’s largely referral based, some activists say.

“Even with the 24-hour hotline, who will guide that person through the process and be sure they get the care they need?” Ervin said. “The most crucial time to get someone in care is the first 60 days, and it takes a lot of hand-holding to keep them engaged for those 60 days — it takes more than a phone call.”

Some activists also believe the cost of the in-home kit — about $40 — may be too high for people who may be struggling with financial issues.

“People can get tested for free at clinics and HIV/AIDS nonprofits. So the in-home kit could be cost-prohibitive for those who need it most,” said Ervin.

Mermin says he understands some of the concerns, but thinks the benefits of in-home testing outweigh the disadvantages.

“The potential benefit of diagnosing many more people with unrecognized HIV infection is substantial,” he said. “The hope is that those who test positive would follow-up, rapidly with a health care professional.”

Smith-Bankhead added, “I think that depending on cost, concerns, and individual needs, some will still opt for doctor or agency provided testing. And AIDS Atlanta has systems in place to ensure that those who need our services can access them.”