

PRICE CHOPPER IN LEE

Closing store seeks jobs for its workers

Downtown's closest grocery store is shuttering Saturday

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LEE — Price Chopper has reached out to its major competitors to help find jobs for the outgoing employees of its Lee store shutting down

for good on Saturday. When the Schenectady, N.Y.-based supermarket chain announced the closing two weeks ago, company officials had offered 34 of the 45 displaced workers, most part-timers, jobs at Price

Chopper's three other Berkshire County stores in Great Barrington and Pittsfield. The 11 remaining workers will receive severance packages and be provided with outplacement services that has included collab-

oration with the competition, according to Price Chopper spokeswoman Mona Golub. "At our request, we coordinated with Big Y and Stop & Shop to help find them jobs," Golub told The Eagle on Tuesday. "We're a very competitive industry, but we work to keep people employed."

Golub couldn't say how many Lee store employees have landed new jobs either within Price Chopper or another employer. She noted the Massachusetts Department of Career Services Rapid Response team was called in to assist in the employment search.

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Seeing an opportunity to snap up valuable retail experience, Big Y in Lee last Saturday held a job placement session in direct response to the Price Chopper closing, according to officials with Springfield-based grocer.

"We look forward to welcoming Price Chopper employees as its an added bonus when we can get those with supermarket experience," said Laurie Hebert, Big Y's director of talent management and employee relations.

Hebert pointed out the job fair was for the benefit of all five of its Berkshire stores and that hiring is ongoing for all departments.

"We're never going to turn away a good job applicant; if we don't have an immediate job opening, we'll find one," she said.

Meanwhile, loyal Lee Price Chopper customers — many within decent walking distance of the downtown store — can expect a normal shopping experience through Saturday.

"We are working to keep the store stocked until we close and honor our weekly ad specials in Lee," Golub said.

Originally built in 1960 for the Lee Super Market chain, the building is located within walking distance



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Price Chopper in Lee will close its doors on Saturday. In meantime, the company is currently trying to get 45 workers who will be displaced by the closing jobs either with other Price Choppers in the county, or at competing stores.

of the Hyde Place, Crossway Village and Brown Memorial Court housing projects, which provide living quarters for many senior citizens.

Price Chopper began running the Lee store in 1972 before outright owning the supermarket building since 1986, according to Eagle files. The chain plans to market the store to another tenant for lease or sale after it closes and the remaining inventory is removed.

Golub wouldn't comment on whether Price Chopper would be amiable to selling or renting to another supermarket chain.

Price Chopper closing in Lee continues a corporate plan to phase out smaller stores in favor of larger

ones rebranded as Market 32.

Both the Lee and North Adams markets — the latter closed in February of 2015 — were far smaller in physical size than Price Chopper's three other Berkshire stores.

The chain eventually plans to change the markets it operates in states into its new Market brand to make them more modern and contemporary. Pittsfield's market was converted into a Market 32 in 2015, but Price Chopper officials determined the Lee and North Adams stores did not fit into the chain's conversion plans.

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