

Business

Paul's ACE Hardware expands again

Paul's ACE Hardware could be considered to be its own best customer for home improvements.

For the second time in five years, the Fountain Hills Plaza store is expanding.

Julie Buchkowski, president of Paul's ACE Hardware, said the business will add another 3,887 square feet to the existing 22,800-square-foot store.

The additional space -- formerly occupied by Spooner and Shaft Physical Therapy -- will be used for expansion of the paint, lawn and garden products and outdoor furniture and accessory departments.

"People living in Fountain Hills are very proud of their homes, and it has

become quite apparent that they are looking for new alternatives in paint products, yard and garden products and accessories, and outdoor decorative items that enhance their outdoor-oriented lifestyles.

As a result, our 'new' store is going to focus in these three areas," said Buchkowski.

Architectural plans are expected to be present to the town for its approval before building begins. Construction should be completed in early summer.

Store manager Brandon Timmers said the Fountain Hills location is one of ACE Hardware's top 25 stores in the country in the paint category.

"Our new and expanded paint department will include a larger selection of high-end paints, broader selection of colors, and new and innovative interior and exterior paint products," he said.

The expanded lawn and garden section will provide a broader line of outdoor décor products, including new outdoor lighting selections, outdoor accessories and outdoor art items, said Timmers.

Buchkowski continues to build a business model that was created by her grandfather, Paul Dauwalder, who opened the Fountain Hills store in 1973.

"His primary focus was to provide local customers

with what they needed," said Buchkowski. "And, oh yes, one of the other reasons that he opened the Fountain Hills store was because he wanted to live here."

Approximately 70 percent of the store's business is derived from local residents and 30 percent from professional contractors, said Buchkowski.

The store employs 30.

Now in its 56th year of operation, the company owns and operates four other Paul's ACE Hardware Stores in Scottsdale, Tempe and Gilbert.

The store underwent a major renovation in 2008 when it expanded from 16,800 to 22,800 square feet, providing customers

with a greater selection of hardware, garden and paint products.

Currently, Paul's ACE Hardware stocks items representing more than 200 manufacturers.

The ACE Hardware affiliation, a buying group of more than 5,000 stores, is an asset, said Buchkowski.

A Prescott Valley warehouse provides access to more than 70,000 items within a one-day delivery.

"We have worked hard with The Pederson Group -- the project's developer -- to provide residents of the trade area with a store that meets all of their hardware and household needs," she said.

"We feel the additional space will help us meet this

goal."

James R. Pederson, senior leasing agent for The Pederson Group, said, "Over the years, our company has developed a close relationship with Julie Buchkowski and her Paul's ACE Hardware team.

"This most recent expansion is indicative of their retail success and their constant efforts to respond to the marketplace."

Originally constructed in 1986, Fountain Hills Plaza at the southwest corner of Palisades Boulevard and La Montana Drive is a 124,500-square-foot center.

A \$23 million renovation project was completed in the summer of 2009. Bashas' Supermarket anchors the center.