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East End Shopping

* BONANZA *

Celebrating one year of business expansion into Acton's east end with all kinds of bargains

What a year it has been for IGA and the east end

Occasionally, IGA co-owner Mike Manes finds himself accidentally going to the wrong location when he heads to work, turning into his family's old plaza on Main Street, not the new Acton East plaza.

"I've done that a few times," Manes said last week as he talked about the first anniversary of the move to Acton East, a year that's seen a 100 per cent increase in sales and a lot of changes and challenges.

"It's totally different up here - it's like night and

day," he said from his office upstairs at the new IGA, which is no longer a Garden Market store, and by choice of the Manes family, not a Sobeys.

Manes said he was shocked by the amount of taxes, the increase in expenses and the fact that he can't recognize all 200 of his staff in the new store that, at 35,000-square-feet, with 10,000-square-feet-already approved for an expansion, is three times larger than the old one.

Manes is surprised to spend so much of his time "babysitting" staff and dealing with the five to 10 employee problems that crop up daily.

"That's a part I really didn't expect but it goes with the territory. The best part is feeling kind of proud to see what we've done in a year."

He said after a year of trial and error in a new store, the coming year will focus on new features, services and promotions to keep their customers, now including those from Georgetown, Rockwood and Milton, happy.

Acton's IGA remains very much a family business with self-described

"money man," Mike's partner and dad Dave Manes, checking in regularly. Brother John Manes is the produce manager and wife Monica Manes runs the Kids Club, over 1,200 IGA shoppers of the future.

"This new place has really blown Dad away. He comes in and walks around and jokes that it tires him to walk around the store. He thinks back to when he started 43 years ago and he can't fathom what happens here every day," Manes said, adding he's told his own pre-teen son Jeffrey to be a doctor, not a grocer, just like his father told him.

After staying open around the clock for the first year, IGA recently switched to winter hours, closing from midnight to

6 a.m. Manes said sales are minimal during those hours during the winter and the plan is to return to 24-hour operations in the spring.

Manes said a recent phone call put the past year in perspective.

"I had a call from a guy the other day who said I probably usually got calls from people who were complaining. He said the store was the best he's ever been in and the staff was the friendliest and that just made my day," he said.

The first anniversary celebration will include daily specials, prizes and draws just to show "one whole year."

"We made it and our bank manager is still smiling, and as long as he's happy, I'm happy."

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Letters

Acton great place to do business!

RE. "Ready or Not, Winter's Coming!" V5 #46, Nov. 14, 2002.

Dear Mr. O'Leary,

After having read your recent column entitled "Ready or Not, Winter's Coming!" I would like to take this opportunity to say "thank you."

After many years in my family's business, and having grown up in Acton myself, it is refreshing to hear (and read) about how great it is to do business locally. Acton is a great community, and I am thankful for all the business and support this town has provided. When you really sit down and look at it, there are a large number of goods and services available to the residents of Acton, and for the reasons you have cited, Acton is a great place to do business.

My family and our organization alike would like to acknowledge and thank you for including us in your column.

Sincerely,
Achilles Pelitis Jr.,
Achilles Mazda

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