

Grocer looks to double stores

Aldi has signed lease to develop site in Hurricane this year

By JARED HUNT
DAILY MAIL BUSINESS EDITOR

Discount grocery chain Aldi Inc. plans to open a new store in Hurricane's Liberty Square later this year as executives hope to potentially double the number of Aldi stores in the state over the next five years.

Aldi executives signed a lease Monday to develop an 18,000-square-foot section of the former Big Bear into a new Aldi store. It is slated to open sometime in December.

Russ White, regional director of real estate for Aldi, said the company hopes to open several more stores in the state in the coming years as part of an aggressive nationwide expansion.

Aldi, which was founded in Germany and began opening U.S. stores in the 1970s, currently has more than 1,300 stores in 32 states — mostly between Kansas and the East Coast. White said the company hopes to open 600 to 650 new stores nationwide in the next five years.

"As a company, we're growing at about 120 stores a year, give or take, over the next five years," White said.

The company already operates seven stores in West Virginia. Right now it only has one store in the Kanawha Valley, a Dunbar location that opened in 1997.

White said he thinks the chain could open six to eight new stores in the state — not counting the Hurricane location — as part of the five-year expansion.

"We're excited," White said. "We've got the product line, we feel like we've got a good niche and loyal customers and we feel like we're primed to grow."

In addition to the Hurricane site, he said he is also looking at securing properties in the Huntington and Charleston areas.

Aldi stores have features that

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Mostly sunny with a high near 76/3A

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Orange you excited to see what Aldi has in store?

Va. gay marriage ban tossed

Ruling could affect West Virginia, which is included in the same federal circuit

By DAVE BOUCHER and ANDREA LANNOM
DAILY MAIL STAFF

A federal appeals court has struck down Virginia's same-sex marriage ban, a ruling that could spell the end of a similar ban in West Virginia.

In a 2-1 ruling Monday, a three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit

Court of Appeals said that state constitutional and statutory provisions barring gay marriage and denying recognition of such unions performed in other states violate the U.S. Constitution.

West Virginia is one of several states included in the same federal circuit, but the ruling doesn't mean the state's ban is immediately overturned, attorney and Fairness West Virginia Chairwoman Kelly Kimble said.

"It doesn't give people the immediate right to run out and get married. It certainly doesn't in West Virginia," Kimble said Monday afternoon.

Fairness West Virginia is a non-profit organization promoting "fair

treatment and civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender West Virginians," according to its website.

A representative with the organization said late Monday Fairness didn't know of any county clerks in West Virginia citing the new federal ruling in order to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

West Virginia awaits the ruling of U.S. District Judge Robert Chambers on a similar challenge to West Virginia's ban. In June, Chambers delayed action on the case until the 4th Circuit Court ruled on the Virginia case.

A member of Chambers' staff said Monday a decision on that case isn't necessarily imminent as a direct re-

sult of the 4th Circuit Court's opinion, because the decision issued by the higher court is under further review.

The Virginia gay marriage case is one of several that could go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In February, U.S. District Judge Ardena Wright Allen ruled that Virginia's same-sex marriage ban violates equal protection and due process guarantees. Lawyers for two circuit court clerks whose duties include issuing marriage licenses appealed.

The case before Chambers is known as *McGee v. Cole*. As previously reported in the Daily Mail, Cassie Jo

■ Turn to **MARRIAGE/13A**

Residents, business owners assess damage



Drew Hetzer, 28, and his wife, Megan Hetzer, 29, stand outside The Peddler restaurant on the grand floor of the Morris Building Monday in Huntington. The couple own The Peddler and Backyard Pizza and Raw Bar, both of which suffered extensive water damage after a fire Sunday.

CRAIG CUNNINGHAM/DAILY MAIL



Water still drains out of the Backyard Pizza and Raw Bar.

Community rallies around fire victims

Many offer aid after blaze at Huntington building

By MARCUS CONSTANTINO
DAILY MAIL STAFF

HUNTINGTON — Water rained down steadily onto Fourth Avenue in Huntington Monday morning. But the water wasn't coming from the sky.

Firefighters sprayed tens of thousands of gallons of water onto the historic Morris Building Monday after a fire broke out in an abandoned elevator shaft near the top of the building. Crews contained the blaze to the roof and seventh floor, but water was still raining down from ceilings and leaking onto the street. The water rained all the way down into The Peddler and Backyard Pizza and Raw Bar, a pair of recently opened restaurants on the ground floor.

Residents and employees described the damp conditions inside. Leslie Comer-Porter, executive director of Development Therapy Center on the third floor, said water was up to her ankles when

she went to assess the damage to the nonprofit's offices. Ceiling tiles had fallen down and were floating in black muck that filled the floor.

The Developmental Therapy Center provides physical, speech and occupational therapy to Tri-State residents. Until the organization can find a new home, Comer-Porter said hundreds of patients will be without essential care, and 22 employees will be without work.

"It's going to have a huge impact on the people that rely on our services," Comer-Porter said. "We've had an outpouring of outreach from the community calling to lend a hand, so hopefully we will have a temporary home and be up and providing services again within a few days."

Wayne Williams, 31, and T.J. Witten, 46, lived in an apartment unit in the Morris Building.

■ Turn to **FIRE/13A**

Advocacy group pushing highway measure

Failure to pass road law would negatively affect Corridor H

By WHITNEY BURDETTE
DAILY MAIL CAPITOL REPORTER

The Corridor H Authority, a group that advocates for the completion of the nearly 150-mile highway through eastern West Virginia, is urging Congress to work together and pass a long-term transportation bill.

Robbie Morris, chairman of the authority, sent a resolution to Congress on Monday, calling on members to "solve the impasse regarding highway funding that is destined to cripple both national and regional economies." The resolution is in response to the dwindling Highway Trust Fund, set to dry up next month if Congress doesn't act.

For the past few years, Congress has introduced and passed stop-gap measures that don't fully address the need for a long-term transportation fix, but the resolution Morris submitted calls on Congress to cre-

ate a six-year transportation bill and work together in a way that "places the welfare of highway projects and United States workers at the forefront" regarding highway funding discussions and the allocation of those funds.

"The continuing resolution fixes, while better than nothing, kicking the can down the road so to speak, is not the solution anyone needs," Morris said. "In West Virginia, with the amount of roads we have to maintain and construction of new infrastructure that can create economic development such as Corridor H, it's

very difficult for (West Virginia Department of Transportation Secretary Paul) Maddox and the Division of Highways to plan effectively and allocate funding sources for projects when they don't know how much they'll have and for how long."

Both state and federal departments of transportation have set an Aug. 1 deadline for contractors and construction companies to decide how they'll proceed as funds begin to dry up. Mike Clowser, executive director

■ Turn to **ROADS/13A**

