

# New American Girl store at Park Meadows means boost for local economy and workers

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From the time Wisconsin-based **American Girl** signed a lease in November 2009 to open its new 8,500-plus square foot retail store in the **Vistas at Park Meadows** in Lone Tree, the company has been infusing fresh vigor and buzz into the surrounding economy.

This weekend American Girl officially takes the wraps off its newest store, the first in the region and only the eighth such outlet in the nation.

The kid friendly destination retailer expects to have a workforce of 60 to 65 employees once it settles into its regular routine.

But those numbers understate the impact that the new retailer is certain to have in generating enthusiastic new traffic to the Park Meadows mall and surrounding stores and restaurants. Indeed, the **White Chocolate Grill**, a restaurant located roughly 50 paces outside of American Girl's front door, is already promoting itself as being "*doll friendly*" in anticipation of the spillover of ravenous 9-to-13 year old girls and their families after a shopping spree at the adjacent pink 'castle'.

Since Wednesday of this week **American Girl** has been crowded with giddy children, parents in tow, enjoying a sneak peak of the store during its so-called soft opening. Veteran customer service personnel cherry-picked from other existing American Girl stores, as well as corporate executives from headquarters in Middleton, WI, were also on hand to make sure everything runs smoothly in the outlet's first week.

**Wade M. Opland**, vice president for retail of American Girl, a unit of **Mattel Inc.**, is responsible for all eight stores, the first of which opened in Chicago in 1998. While the Park Meadows store is the smallest yet in terms of square footage – lacking the in-house café and some of the elaborate displays of stores in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, the company believes delighted fans of its dolls will make the journey to Lone Tree from as far as 200 to 300 miles away.

In an interview at the store on Friday, Opland said that American Girl customarily staffs its newest stores with a blend of veterans culled from existing outlets and fresh hires. New employees often spend a couple weeks working at existing stores before taking up their permanent posts. In Lone Tree, American Girl also conducted a 3-day training course for its new hires.

**Jennifer Albright**, who had been a manager at American Girl's flagship store on

Michigan Avenue in Chicago, relocated to the Denver area to lead the Park Meadows store.

Meanwhile, with less than 24-hours remaining until the American Girl's grand opening at Lone Tree, another unsung Chicago-area resident was on hand making last-minute tweaks to his creation.

**David W. Arnolde**, director of construction for Illinois-based **Englewood Construction**, oversaw the crew of roughly 35 local subcontractors who transformed the Park Meadow store from blueprints into a bristling and bustling new retail magnet.

Arnolde said that his company, which “prides itself on only hiring local subcontractors to build its construction projects,” also is responsible for construction at American Girl's **Water Tower Place** flagship in Chicago and its store at **Mall of America** in Minnesota.

Among those area contractors responsible for the Park Meadows store are: **South Valley Drywall, Rainbow Electric, MarxAire, Colorado Windows Systems, Colorado Terrazzo Design, Western Fire Protection, H20 Plumbing, Alarm Specialists and Steel Co.**

“As a national general contractor, we are firm believers in keeping the money in the local economy,” Arnolde explained.

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