

# Local 'bargain basement' food stores save money

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Penny-pinching students with eyes for bargains can save money shopping at local "bargain basement" food stores.

Todd's IGA, located beside Stucker Chevrolet on the Benner Pike, is a warehouse grocery store offering low prices on regular supermarket items.

The basic mark-up price at Todd's is 15 percent, according to the dairy and frozen food manager, Jon Watson (5th-DUS). Some prices, such as butter, are marked up less than 15 percent, he said. As of December 16, IGA sold butter for 39 cents/lb.

Todd's has shelved merchandise and green tag specials around the perimeter of the store. These "super" buys, Watson said, are sold at a cheaper price than regular items because they are purchased by the store in large quantities.

Green tag specials are not shelved individually, but are marked with a unit price. Some good buys are: Maxwell House coffee, 16 ounces for \$2.89; a 16-ounce tub of Parkay

Margarine for 69 cents; a five-pound, four-ounce box of Tide detergent for \$2.34 and a 20-ounce box of Life cereal for \$1.08. These special buys last as long as possible, Watson said.

Todd's IGA became a warehouse in mid-1978 when the regular food market went out of business and the store supervisors wanted to try a new style to attract customers. Due to this new style, Todd's operates differently than other food stores.

Customers mark the unit price on each item they purchase, using a crayon available at the store, Watson said. Customers also must bag their own groceries.

"If they want to save some money, they (the customers) have got to work for it," according to Assistant Manager Dan Corman.

Watson said the store's business is gradually improving. The location of the store is a hindrance for people who have no transportation, but more students are shopping at Todd's than ever before, he said. The philosophy of the supervisors is not to rely upon advertising, he

said, but some advertising has been done in local newspapers and radio stations.

Todd's has all the conveniences of a regular supermarket except a fresh-cut meat department, Watson said. Todd's employs approximately 20 employees, many of them part-time, to help keep overhead low. Watson said customers can save at least 10 percent over other stores by shopping at Todd's.

"More or less everything is a bargain," he said. "We're doing everything possible to keep our prices down, and we're not trying to rip people off," he added.

Our Store, a local co-op with fresh produce, staples and dairy products provides another economical means for students to save money.

Run by volunteers, Our Store provides fresh produce in season from as many local farms as possible, according to coordinator Fred Ramsey. Most produce at this time is from Florida and California. Oranges from Florida are 14 cents each, bananas can be purchased at approximately 20 cents per pound and other fruits, and vegetables are good buys, he said. Un-

fortunately, prices on produce will rise, Ramsey said, because of frost in Southern California and Florida.

"Our Store has a full line of staples, such as flour, beans, dried fruit, nuts and some package goods, like mustard, ketchup and fruit juice," he said. Ramsey said Our Store has "the best peanut butter in the world" from Laurel Brock Farms.

The co-op receives staples from other local areas, such as Walnut Acres and Tri-Organic Farms near Lewisburg. Unfortunately, prices on dried fruits and nuts are expensive due to high wholesale prices, but beans and flour are reasonably priced, according to Ramsey.

Cheese is an exceptionally good buy, as much as 25 to 50 percent off the normal price compared to other stores, Ramsey said. Other dairy products such as yogurt and eggs are inexpensive. An eight-ounce container of plain or flavored yogurt costs only 30 cents. The co-op has fresh and organic eggs from local farms, but often supermarkets lower their prices on eggs to coax people into the store, he said.

Some items are reduced by supermarkets as "loss leaders," Ramsey said, to attract people into the store. Usually people tend to not buy items only on sale. Therefore, Ramsey said stores are willing to take a loss on one item if they know they can make a big profit on others.

Ramsey said co-ops are the most efficient way to buy food, because the middle man is eliminated. The food chain in a cooperative system goes from the farmer to the wholesaler to the store. A regular supermarket has more people vying for a profit, thus costs are higher.

Like Todd's, Our Store does not depend upon advertisements, except word of mouth, to attract customers. The co-op is predominantly student-orientated, but plans to get more townspeople involved, Ramsey said.

New members must pay a \$15 refundable deposit to join, plus work a certain amount according to the size of one's household, he said. Only people who are members may shop at the co-op, according to Ramsey.

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