

# Customers check out new Lowe's

By CARLOS GIESEKEN

For the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune

The latest piece in the Crossroads Commons puzzle was set into place Friday with the opening of Lowe's. It joins Kohl's, which opened earlier this month, as the first two big-box retailers to welcome shoppers. Best Buy is set to open next month; Wal-Mart Supercenter will open in late January.

Over the last six weeks, 130 employees and product vendors worked long hours to set up the rows of lumber, appliances, cabinetry, hardware and other home improvement supplies at Lowe's.

"There were a lot of aching bones and muscles, but everybody left happy," said Elly Thompson, the front-end department manager at the store. "It was fun seeing what we accomplished every day."

The store will hold Do-It-Yourself classes every Saturday, store manager Andrew Robinson said. "It's for those who want to do projects on their own and have questions," he said. "It kind of gives them a little base."

Topics for the classes will be seasonal, and will include instruction on weather-proofing a home or repairing drywall. Robin Hartl, a host of Hometime, a home improvement show on PBS, will teach classes on creative tile layout Saturday at noon and 2 p.m.

Stevens Point resident Ann Kulinski said she wasn't disappointed by the store, and believes she and other shoppers will benefit with the added competition for the home-improvement dollar. "I think it will force other retailers to be more selective," she said Monday, while shopping for supplies to build a dollhouse for her niece, "both in the products and service they provide.

"I had mixed feelings at first," Kulinski said. "But we need to compete because so many of our dollars are going to Wausau. I'd rather spend my money at home." While many like Kulinski had been to Lowe's locations in other states, others like Missy Heller of Neshkoro were just curious to see what the store had to offer. "I'm checking it out to see what they have here," she said, adding that she was impressed with the wide selection, particularly in bathroom furnishings.

Mae Gettendorf of Amherst said the area was due for the types of stores opening up at the Crossroads Commons. "For a community this size, I think we need to get stores this size," she said.