

# Kroger opens store at former Farm Fresh in York County

Kroger Mid-Atlantic opened a store in Grafton on the morning of Wednesday, Oct. 24, 2018. The store is situated in a former Farm Fresh store.

By **Matt Jones**

OCTOBER 24, 2018, 11:10 AM

**W**ith the snip of ceremonial scissors, the newest Kroger grocery store in Hampton Roads opened Wednesday morning in York County.

“Who’s ready to shop?” shouted Kevin Peterson, the store’s manager, after cutting the ribbon in a grand opening ceremony outside the roughly 45,500-square-foot former Farm Fresh store in Grafton.

The store is the second former Farm Fresh that Kroger Mid-Atlantic has opened in Hampton Roads after the company acquired eight of the chain’s locations earlier in the year.

Some things about the grocery store have stayed the same, including some of the employees.

The store has 93 full- and part-time employees, according to a news release from Kroger. Of those, 38 were hired from Farm Fresh after many of the chain’s employees were laid off. Peterson, a 27-year employee of Farm Fresh, was one of them.

“Kroger right off the bat knew it was important to include or try to include as many Farm Fresh employees as possible because Kroger knew they were a part of this community, including myself,” Peterson said.

Sheila Noll, chairwoman of the York County Board of Supervisors, thanked Kroger in a speech during the grand opening ceremony for taking over the vacant building and bringing some of the Farm Fresh staff on at the new store.

“People without work now have work,” Noll told Kroger employees. “And that is so very, very important, and you are a wonderful, wonderful corporate citizen.” Other things have changed a little bit. The store will be the first Kroger in Hampton Roads to offer “Scan, Bag, Go” that allows customers to avoid checkout lines. Starting on Nov. 8, according to Peterson, customers who have signed up for the Kroger Plus loyalty program can pick up scanners from a display near the front of the store that they can use to scan items as they walk through the store.

Kroger spent over \$4 million renovating the store and the fuel center, which has been open since September. Across Hampton Roads, the company is spending over \$30 million in renovating former Farm Fresh locations, according to the news release.

The general layout of the store has mostly stayed the same, Peterson said. There have been upgrades to some equipment and a general facelift, but the company has incorporated what was left from the Farm Fresh where it can.

“A lot of the stuff in here was already in great shape, so anything that was in great shape we kept,” Peterson said.

Farm Fresh’s fried chicken, which is well-known in Hampton Roads, left when the store closed.

But Kroger does sell fried chicken made with its own recipe at the location. Peterson told the crowd during the grand opening ceremony that Kroger’s fried chicken tied with Harris Teeter’s recipe in a taste-test conducted by [The Virginian Pilot](#) earlier this year.

During the grand opening, Kroger gave ceremonial checks to representatives from four groups: \$2,000 each to the York County Church Women United Food Pantry, York County Fire Station, Peninsula YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club.

Several dozen people had lined up outside the store, despite somewhat chilly weather, before the ceremony started at 7:45 a.m. The first 200 people inside the store received \$5 Kroger gift cards.

“It’s still early, but so far so good,” Peterson said. “I’m very happy with the turnout, and as word spreads, it will get even better and better.”

Jones can be reached by phone at 757-247-4729 and on Twitter at [twitter.com/jones\\_mattryan](https://twitter.com/jones_mattryan).

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