

The Columbus Dispatch

Giant Eagle set to launch new rewards program in central Ohio



By JD Malone
The Columbus Dispatch

[Follow](#)

Posted Sep 21, 2017 at 2:39 PM

Updated Sep 21, 2017 at 7:52 PM



Giant Eagle is aiming to do battle with the growing number of competitors in the central Ohio grocery market with a new loyalty program.

The new program, called fuelperks+ will be rolled out Monday in central Ohio, with Columbus being the first major market to get it.

Under the new program, customers earn points not only toward fuel discounts at Giant Eagle's GetGo stations but to also use toward grocery purchases — up to 20 percent off.

It lets customers earn points not only toward fuel discounts at Giant Eagle's GetGo stations but to also use toward grocery purchases — up to 20 percent off.

The old program was good, said Brian Ferrier, Giant Eagle's regional director of operations. Customers told the company that they really liked it, but after testing the new program in Indianapolis, Giant Eagle realized that it had something that resonated with consumers, something built on the idea "for anything and everywhere," he said.

The company saw an instant boost in business in Indianapolis after the program came out, Ferrier added.

One of the reasons is that the new program is much more flexible. Customers earn points at the pharmacy, at the fuel pump and through buying gift cards, even sandwiches at the GetGo convenience store. Every 50 perks means 2 percent off groceries or 10 cents off a gallon of gas.

A new app, available for Apple or Android phones, keeps track of perks and explains how perks can be used.

Giant Eagle first offered rewards 13 years ago, and although the program has been tweaked here and there, this is the first overhaul since then.

"Giant Eagle has always been really good with the fuel rewards," said David Livingston, an independent grocery analyst. "It is a good way to keep track of your customers. You can get a lot of data and can use that."

It is not a coincidence that the new loyalty program is coming to a market with many competitors, from Kroger to Costco to Aldi and Fresh Thyme. Another deep-pocketed German chain, Lidl, is on its way, and Amazon has a Prime Now hub here that sells some grocery items.

"It's the right place to roll it out first," Ferrier said.

Rewards programs are popular, but typically only middle-of-the-road chains like Giant Eagle and Kroger offer them, Livingston said. He noted that there are no rewards programs at Trader Joe's, Aldi or Costco, although Whole Foods is testing one in Dallas and Philadelphia.

The programs cost money, and the consumer pays for it.

Almost as in answer to that, Giant Eagle is also investing millions in cutting prices at its stores here — similar to moves made by Kroger and Whole Foods.

"These are everyday-item prices," said Dan Donovan, Giant Eagle spokesman. "We want to deliver a stronger value."

jmalone@dispatch.com

[@j_d_malone](#)



SIGN UP FOR DAILY E-MAIL

Wake up to the day's top news, delivered to your inbox
