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Jungle Jim's becoming the hot spot for Pokemon GO in Butler County

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FAIRFIELD — Pokemon Go is not only catching on with people of all ages, it's also turning the heads of business owners, who are offering special maps, deals and events to help gamers "catch 'em all" and keep them happy while doing so.

Jungle Jim's International Market in Fairfield noticed the drawing power of the new free-to-play, augmented reality game shortly after its July 7 release when it observed customers started roaming the store in search of Pokemon-related creatures.

Then approximately 300 to 400 people started showing up in the parking lot each night shortly before the store's 10 p.m. closing to capture the location-based game's nocturnal characters and have them do battle, as the grocery store also was designated by game-designers as a gym where Pokemon characters do battle.

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Gamers typically stay in the Jungle Jim's parking lot doing battle for hours at a time, with crowds peaking at midnight but many lingering until 4 or 5 a.m., store officials said.

"They're bringing generators to charge their phones," said store manager Kathy Dick. "There's 40 or 50 cars out there at 10 o'clock when we're leaving."

The business, which already jumped at a chance to help gamers by creating Pokemon Go map to help them find Pokestops to collect free items and Pokemon Gyms to train and pit their Pokemon against each other, is taking things a step further.

It has invited people to bring their smartphones to the grocery store's Snake House — a designated Pokemon Gym — between 6 and 8 p.m. next Wednesday to take part in the "Battle for the Monorail Station," named after the trains visible just outside the store.

"At the battle, we'll have sections for each team, beverages and snacks from our International Department for sale, as well as candy, cookies, and a few other treats all available while you hunt for, train, and pit your Pokemon against each other," reads the event's Facebook page.

Downloaded nearly 8 million times, the game grosses more than \$1.6 billion every 24 hours via in-app purchases.

Jungle Jim's continues to field calls from companies trying to understand how it is enjoying so much Pokemon Go-related activity and how it is marketing it, according to Phill

Adams, director of development for Jungle Jim's.

"They're trying to figure out how to jump on the bandwagon and they're not understanding it yet," Adams said. "We aren't paying for lures to put out there because the people are paying to put them out there so they can get more people to battle to build that experience at both locations."

Adams said the game takes people out of their homes and puts them together to get to know each other in a different setting.

"It's bringing people out from behind their video games out into the real world and playing a virtual game," Adams said. "It reminds me of 'Ghostbusters,' you're own personal Ghostbuster, in a sense. I want to put a backpack on with two canisters and go around and find Pokemon."

Dick added: "It's turning into a social event. They're making new friends and meeting people. They're not sitting at home in front of their video game being anti-social."

As people traverse their neighborhoods in search of rare and powerful Pokémon, they build relationships with the people around them and learn more about their surroundings and because of that people have been stumbling into your local Beef Jerky Outlet," said Scott Curkin, a spokesman for Beef Jerky Outlet, which recently opened a location in West Chester Twp. "Stories are emerging everywhere of people learning about landmarks in their communities and interacting with people they would never have met if not for the game."

Until Monday, the business plans to reward regular players of the game with a special deal: Any customer who can show that they've achieved level 5 in Pokémon Go will receive 10 percent off their Beef Jerky Outlet purchase.

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