

Target distribution center officially in business

By [Larry Clark](#) | Hickory Daily Record

Teamwork was a word used often at the grand opening of the Target regional distribution center Tuesday.

Teamwork was the primary factor in landing the huge facility that employs 500 people, and it's the key component in Target's business philosophy.

"It took a lot of work to make this happen," said Robert Mullinax, Newton mayor, citing the cooperation of local government and agencies such as the Catawba County Economic Development Corp. and Chamber of Commerce, plus help from state and local government.

Mullinax said the facility is not just a building. "Target is a source of hope ... hope for the future ... for jobs.

"Target has shown it's a group of caring individuals," the mayor said, praising Target's corporate leadership as "easy to work with."

"These jobs could not have come at a better time," he said.

The workers — Target officials call them team members — were repeatedly praised by the company.

"Why Newton?" Mitch Stover, Target senior vice president, asked rhetorically.

"Three things. Transportation costs. We look at government, local and state. The main thing is the quality of the work force."

Stover said Target has a rigorous evaluation system that rates potential employment in every area under consideration.

"Newton had the highest score I have ever seen," Stover said.

That brought the loudest round of applause from the 200-plus guests.

And Stover talked about teamwork.

"I can give our team members pay raises," he said. "Only our guests (that's what Target calls customers) can give salary increases," and that's why the team approach to service and attention to detail works, he said.

Stover said the company is glad to be in Newton and Catawba County. But he solidified Target's long-term commitment by talking about jobs.

Many jobs have been lost to overseas ventures, he said, "but you cannot outsource the end of the supply chain," and the distribution center is the end of the supply chain for Target.

"We will be here for a long, long time."

U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan and U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry mentioned economic stimulation with a hint of politics. Hagan is a Democrat and McHenry a Republican.

"Target is a great start," in turning around the economy, Hagan said, while referring to the stimulus programs initiated by The White House and the congressional majority.

The facility will add as much as \$1 billion to the local tax base, she said.

"Thanks for the investment," McHenry said to Target officials. "We need a real stimulus, and this is a real stimulus."

The project was started more than two years ago.

Hagan also praised the labor force, saying North Carolina has the nation's best workers.

"Newton should use the high marks in its brochure," she said about Target's employee assessment and how it would fit with Newton's overall marketing efforts.

McHenry said he appreciates "Minnesota (company headquarters) investing in NASCAR." One of Juan Pablo Montoya's Sprint Cup cars was at the grand opening.

The blast from the high-horsepower engine through an unmuffled exhaust system signaled the start of the festivities. It got everyone's attention.

N.C. Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco went back to the teamwork theme.

"Economic development is done one way, with teamwork," Crisco said. "Target is a great example of teamwork."