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Yesterday

Inaugural Mid-Atlantic C-store Expo Boasts Large Turnout



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By Brian Berk

RICHMOND, Va. -- The Virginia C-Store Expo became the [Mid-Atlantic C-store Expo](#) today, and organizers of the show, who granted an exclusive interview to *CSNews Online*, said they couldn't be happier with the turnout at the Richmond Raceway Complex.

"This year, we incorporated Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina," said Barry Grizzard of Little Oil Co., who served as event coordinator. "We've had additional publicity and really have expanded our market a lot."

Last year's Virginia-only convenience store show featured 84 vendors. This year, that figure grew to 101 vendors that purchased 121 booths. "A lot of vendors doubled their space size," Grizzard said. "Everyone recognized what we were doing last year with the show and came back bigger and better this year."

The [Virginia Asian American Store Owners Association \(VAASOA\)](#), which operates the tradeshow, sent out 14,000 invitations to retailers to attend the event. According to VAASOA President Minesh Patel, more than 3,000 people were expected to attend this year's tradeshow, which would double last year's attendance.

"Last year, we had 500 online advanced registrations and had a huge walk-up attendance," said Patel. "This year, we had more than 1,000 online registrations. We also expect a larger attendance because [Mid-Atlantic Convenience Stores \(MACS\)](#) announced big news yesterday [about rebranding 71 company-operated stores to Circle K by November]. And they sent out flyers to hundreds of people encouraging them to attend the show and visit their booth."

MACS was already featuring Circle K signage at its booth. Company representatives said it plans to support the Mid-Atlantic C-Store Expo for years to come. "The show is in our backyard. It's as if the show is named after us, but it's not," Derek Gaskins, MACS' senior vice president of marketing and research, joked to *CSNews Online*. "With our announcement yesterday, this show is the 'perfect storm' to engage with our retailers."

Looking ahead, Patel said the Richmond Raceway Complex, which also serves as home to NASCAR racing, will be the permanent home for the tradeshow. "Richmond is centrally located for so many retailers," he said. "And this is going to be the venue for us forever. Everybody knows this location and we have the



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potential to open up more space in the future. We have the ability to expand to accommodate 100 more vendors."

Patel added that next year's Mid-Atlantic C-Store Expo will again take place in mid-July on a Thursday. The exact date should be announced soon, he noted.

That news was music to the ears of Virginia Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling, who made a special appearance at the c-store expo. Bolling thanked convenience store operators for being great employers and added that the Virginia government would provide any assistance possible to help attendees' businesses prosper.

The Virginia Asian American Store Owners Association is so pleased with the Richmond expo that its sister group, the Asian American Store Owners Association (AASOA), told *CSNews Online* that it will host a similar tradeshow in Orlando, Fla., on Sept. 8 of this year.

According to Vipul Patel, executive director of business relations for AASOA, the event will be called the AASOA Show and be held at Orlando's Rosen Centre Hotel.



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