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# Lottery big business in Hampton Roads; Click for top-selling stores

## Quarter of sales in Virginia come from Hampton Roads

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By Tara Bozick, tbozick@dailypress.com  
8:59 a.m. EDT, October 6, 2014

During the last fiscal year, the Virginia Lottery generated a record profit of \$538.6 million with **Hampton Roads** contributing a quarter of statewide sales.

Statewide lottery sales grew by 7.2 percent to \$1.8 billion and Hampton Roads sales grew by 7.4 percent to \$446.5 million from the previous fiscal year, according to Virginia Lottery data. The fiscal year runs July 1 to June

30.

"Obviously, as we have budget issues for the state, the expectation for the lottery is to grow," Virginia Lottery Executive Director Paula Otto told Retail Alliance members in Newport News on Thursday.

The more than half-billion-dollar profit went to Virginia's public K-12 schools, including \$22.6 million to Newport News schools and \$12.6 million to Hampton schools last year, Otto explained.

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The Virginia Lottery's plan for growth is to increase the number of people who play the lottery at least once a month from 35 percent to 37 percent of adults, she said. The idea is to attract new players rather than expect existing players to buy more tickets. The agency made a concerted effort to beef up visibility in grocery stores, where people would still shop even in a down economy, using vending machines in addition to having sales at the customer service counters, she explained.

"Grocery stores had tremendous growth in fiscal year 2014," Otto said.

While convenience stores account for most, or 74 percent, of lottery ticket sales, grocery store sales increased by 12.4 percent in the last fiscal year. That compares to 6.6 percent growth at convenience stores.

And with retailers getting 5 percent from every ticket sold in addition to other bonuses, some Hampton Roads stores are raking in significant revenue.

[Click here for the Top 10 Lottery Retailers in Hampton Roads.](#)

"Lottery is a big part of the business. We have top number stores," said Rasik Patel, owner of two of the best-selling lottery ticket stores on the Peninsula.

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Top 10 Hampton Roads lottery retailers



M&T Market at 2711 Kecoughtan Road in Hampton is the No. 2 retailer of lottery tickets on the Peninsula. Owner Rasik Patel, left.

#### Lottery sales in Hampton Roads

Fiscal year 2014 lottery sales by locality.



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When he bought M & T Market in Hampton four years ago, Patel revamped it by expanding hours from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and increased the marketing of its lottery tickets. A couple years ago, he added a lottery vending machine to the two counter machines and he makes sure to keep stocked with a couple rolls of the various games. Some players want tickets from different rolls, he explained.

During prime time from 1 to 2 p.m., he makes sure to have two employees manning just the lottery machines so customers don't have to wait in line. He also adds a second employee during jackpot fever time, such as last week when **Powerball** got up to a \$225 million prize. The store pays out prizes in cash as opposed to money orders, Patel added.

All of that effort, and the fact that the store is in a neighborhood with retirees who have grown accustomed to playing the lottery, made M & T Market the No. 2 store on the Peninsula and the No. 11 store in the state for lottery ticket sales of \$1.79 million, Patel said.

He took the same lottery focus to the Newport News Denbigh Food Mart, which he acquired in 2003. That store is No. 37 in the state and No. 3 on the Peninsula for ticket sales. He used to own the No. 1 seller of lottery tickets on the Peninsula, Aberdeen Food Mart in Hampton, but sold it a couple years ago.

"People think this is the lucky store in town," said Parin Patel, who managed the Aberdeen Food Mart for Rasik Patel and now manages it for his uncle, Manu Patel.

The store even has an area where lottery players can sit and scratch their tickets, he said.

Both Patels agreed the main benefit of the lottery to their primary businesses was that it brought in customers, who then might also buy some food or drinks.

On a recent Friday, like every day, McKinley Burnette of Hampton tried his luck on multiple lottery ticket games at his neighborhood M & T Market. He's played the lottery ever since it started in Virginia in 1988 and has won several \$2,700 prizes and one \$5,000 prize.

The 72-year-old retired from the shipyard after 41 years and plays for fun. It's not his bill money. He starts his day by coming up with his numbers and tries his luck at different stores. His friends also play and swap stories about their almost-wins.

"I'm waiting for the big one," Burnette said, adding he's almost been a millionaire a few times.

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