

iWant

People wait in line for hours as iPhone finally goes on sale

By Jenni Glenn | The Journal Gazette

Shannon Mickels glanced down at his cell phone's digital clock. It read 5:56 p.m.

The 24-year-old Fort Wayne resident had four minutes left until he could replace his phone with the latest must-have gadget – an iPhone. The paper clutched in his hand gave him the right to be the ninth person inside the AT&T Wireless store at 527 Coliseum Blvd. E. on Friday night.

Mickels and about 40 others waited in line for as long as five hours to buy the iPhone, which combines the features of a cell phone, Web browser and iPod. Mickels watched every iPhone video posted on Apple Inc.'s Web site to learn about the device.

"I won't even need the instructions," Mickels said as he neared the end of his two-hour wait.

Erin Currie, 20, cheered when her mother, Joyce Vogely, exited the store with one of the first iPhones. Vogely, a Summit Middle School computer teacher, and her daughter tore open the packaging. Others in the line crowded around for a firsthand glimpse.

After learning about the iPhone, Vogely said she delayed buying an iPod for a year. She did not want to carry a cell phone and separate MP3 player.

Vogely wasn't sure she would wait outside the Coliseum Boulevard store until she snagged the second spot in line Friday. Her daughter came to keep her company and bring her refreshments.

"I called my mom to see if all the crazy people were in line at the AT&T store," Currie said, "and she said she was here."

Northwest Ohio native Craig Bowman scheduled a business trip to Europe earlier this week so he could return for the iPhone launch. The Washington, D.C. resident arrived at the Coliseum Boulevard store at 1 p.m.

His parents, who live in Williams County, Ohio, brought him an Arby's roast beef sandwich while he waited at the head of the line.

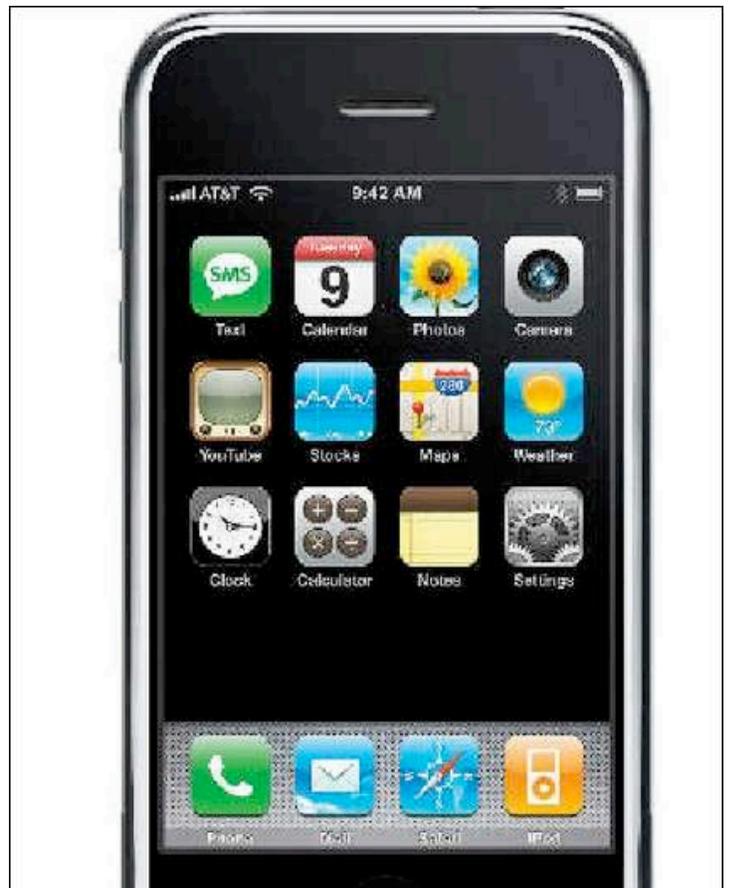
When he walked out with his iPhone, Bowman said it was worth the wait. Bowman, 39, had owned a Blackberry and an LG phone, but he said both were hard to use. Bowman expected Apple's product to be more user-friendly.

Nationwide, hundreds of people lined up Friday to be among the first to get their hands on the coveted iPhone. Those who did not wait in vain are now going to be the braggarts and guinea pigs for the latest must-have,



Cathie Rowand/The Journal Gazette

Craig Bowman, first in line for an iPhone at the AT&T Wireless Store on Coliseum Boulevard, is from Washington, D.C. He thought he would have a better chance getting a phone in Fort Wayne because there are two stores.



cutting-edge piece of techno-wizardry.

Techies, showoffs and luminaries – even the co-founder of Apple and the mayor of Philadelphia – were among the inaugural group of iPhone customers.



Will it have been worth the wait? For many, it didn't seem to matter.

Apple's newest gadget, the iPhone, which combines a cell phone, Web browser and iPod, made its long-awaited debut nationwide Friday.

"I just love getting new stuff," said retiree Len Ederly, who arrived at 3 a.m. Friday to be first in line outside an Apple store in Cambridge, Mass. "It's the best new thing that's come along in a long time. It's beautiful."

Even Steve Wozniak, the ex-partner of Apple CEO Steve Jobs, showed up at a Silicon Valley mall at 4 a.m. aboard his Segway scooter. He helped keep order in the line outside the Apple store at Santa Clara's Valley Fair Mall.

Apple is banking that its new, do-everything phone with a touch-sensitive screen will become its third core business next to its moneymaking iPod music players and Macintosh computers.

Apple's media blitz wasn't without its glitches.

On NBC's "Today" show, co-host Meredith Vieira ran into problems trying to get the iPhone to work, laughing that "this is why gadgets drive me crazy."

Apple spokeswoman Natalie Kerris declined to comment.

In Philadelphia, Mayor John F. Street was among those waiting in line at an AT&T store when he was asked by a 22-year-old passer-by, "How can you sit here with 200 murders in the city already?"

Street told the man, "I'm doing my job."

The mayor then left, telling an aide to hold his spot until he returned later in the day. Earlier, Street said he liked trying new technology and the iPhone would allow him to work outside the office.

"We don't have to be sitting in City Hall to be conducting city business," he said.

At Apple's flagship store in New York, the line snaked around the block as customers brought a dog, an inflatable couch and good spirits, despite little sleep.

The gadget, which Apple CEO Steve Jobs has touted as "revolutionary," has been the focus of endless anticipatory chatter and has been parodied on late-night TV. Since its unveiling in January, expectations that it will become yet another blockbuster product for Apple has pushed the company's stock up more than 40 percent.

Apple itself has set a target of selling 10 million units worldwide by 2008, gaining roughly a 1 percent share of the cell phone market. It's expected to go on sale in Europe later this year and in Asia in 2008.

Apple has not disclosed how many iPhones – selling for a minimum \$499 – were available at launch. But analysts expect they will sell out by early next week – between sales rung up at retail stores and online through Apple's Web site, which has been a major distribution outlet for other Apple products.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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