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Skydiving business will stay in Creswell

By
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Urban Moore, owner of Eugene Skydivers, has announced that his business has regained the right to land parachutes at Creswell Airport.

“The settlement with the city cleared all hurdles and now it’s official. We can land at the airport,” said Moore, who employs eight people, including pilots and instructors, at the company.

The decision ends years of controversy for Moore’s business, both in the Eugene area as well as the Illinois Valley.

“In August 2006, based on erroneous findings, the City of Creswell revoked permission for Eugene Skydivers to use the airport” said Moore.

When faced with the specter of not being able to run his business, Moore began looking for other airports to use. The I.V. airport looked like a real possibility since it has very little traffic.

While there are skydiving operations at over 200 airports around the country, Moore noted that there are no other skydiving operations between Eugene and Sacramento. He felt a skydiving business would attract more tourists and help create jobs in the I.V.

“We could have hired high-school kids to help pack the parachutes and drive golf carts out to pick up the divers when they landed,” Moore said.

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(Photo by Dan Mancuso, *Illinois Valley News*)

GMO Sugar Beets in a field south of Grants Pass. According to the Josephine County Sheriffs Office, calls were made last week concerning a potential protest at the property.

Effort to ban GMO’S off and running

By
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Campaigners for a “GMO Free Josephine County” turned in over 2,000 signatures to secure a spot on May’s ballot for an initiative, that if passed, will phase out and prohibit the growing of genetically engineered crops. A similar measure will also appear on Jackson County’s ballot.

“I personally believe this is the issue of our lifetime,” said Chief Petitioner Mary Middleton. “If we don’t stand up for this, we’ll lose control of our food supply. It’s up to us to protect our food, our farmers, and our children. This measure will give us that protection at a local level.”

The waters were recently tested when the Grants Pass Courier conducted a poll on the GMO issue and

85 percent of respondents supported a GMO prohibition.

If approved, the Josephine County Genetically Engineered Plant Ordinance will ban new GMO plantings and give farmers already growing GMO crops one year to transition to non-genetically engineered crops. Some GMO feed-corn is currently grown in the county and GMO Free Jo Co volunteers are reaching out to educate these farmers about the dangers.

“We want to protect all farmers,” Middleton said. “We know that GMO farming is unsustainable. It’s just a matter of time before the soil is depleted, either from the crop itself, or from the amount of herbicides required to grow the crop.”

Big bio-technology companies are showing interest in the area. One company, Syngenta, has a branch office, “Syngenta Seeds,” in Grants Pass.

“While we have not confirmed the existence of contracts with bio-tech companies, we’re fairly certain that GMO sugar beet crops have been grown experimentally by Syngenta,” said Selma resident Carol Valentine. “Part of the problem is that these companies are not required by the USDA or any regulatory agency to disclose the locations of their operations.”

The region is a primary seed-growing hub for certain crops, including beets and chard. Potential is high for cross-contamination from GMO crops planted near non-GMO or organic operations. Pollen from GMO crops, carried by insects or the wind, can contaminate neighboring crops. Many of those crops can no longer be sold and often have to be destroyed.

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Mark Gatlin tosses his hat into commissioner race

By
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Grants Pass City Councilman Mark Gatlin is running for Simon Hare’s seat on the Josephine County Board of Commissioners.

“During my city council campaign I ran under the slogan of ‘Safety First,’” Gatlin said. “And, once again, this is the driving force behind my decision to run for county commissioner.”

“We don’t have a fully functioning public safety system in either the city or the county,” Gatlin said, “But funding public safety isn’t just our problem, it’s the problem in most O&C counties in our state. The budget shortfall created largely by dwindling federal funds that had replaced our timber revenues have brought us right behind Curry County, which is now poised to be taken over by the state. When that happens, by most estimates, the state will charge \$3 to \$5 per \$1,000 of assessed property values, for 18 month increments, to bring back the level of safety that the state deems necessary.”

Also a member of Securing Our Safety, the non-profit organization seeking funding solutions to the on-going budget crises, Gatlin says Josephine County can avoid this fate if citizens “take charge of our situation and make the hard choice to pass a temporary levy that will build a bridge to a permanent and stable funding source that is not heavily based on taxes.”

The currently proposed levy would fund just the Adult Jail and Juvenile Justice Services. Gatlin says the levy is needed not only to rebuild the public safety system, but also to “send a clear and deliberate message to the criminal element that has invaded our communities that if they break the law in Josephine County, we have a place in our jail for each of them.”

Gatlin says more people are likely to vote

for this levy because they’ve been affected or know someone who has been impacted by increasing crimes rates. He also feels strongly about the need to reinstate juvenile justice programs.

“The county youth shelter is a vital part of juvenile justice,” Gatlin said. “When kids are taken out of dangerous situations they need to be housed somewhere safe. When parents get arrested or kids are victims of domestic violence, right now, they get housed at Jackson County Jail or are shipped out of the county altogether. We don’t want these kids to be tomorrow’s criminals. They don’t belong in a lock-up.”

Gatlin volunteered in the now-closed youth shelter that used to house up to 15 kids at one time. “It’s ironic, our shelter was once the model for other shelters in the state. It was dorm style and we had great staff on board to support these kids.”

Gatlin also works on a committee determined to see the Local Lottery Control Act (LLCA), a state bill proposed by co-sponsor Cliff Thomason, placed on the November ballot. This bill would require that 50 percent of state lottery proceeds come back to the counties from which they were generated for uses determined by each county’s commissioners: including public schools, parks, economic development or public safety. Last year, under this proposal, Josephine County would have seen a \$4.5 million return, roughly one-third of the public safety budget, according to Gatlin.

“I hope that by the time this levy sunsets in five years, I will be part of helping to create a plan to have a permanent funding stream in place that will drastically reduce our requirement for taxes,” Gatlin said. “We’re pursuing other ideas as well. For example, Josephine County is sitting on mineral deposits, which if mined, could offset county taxes.”

See Gatlin on A-8

Local pharmacy merges with chain

By
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Pharmacy Express closed its doors on February 6 to merge with Caves Pharmacy.

Prior to the C & K Markets Chapter 11 bankruptcy, involving the Shop Smart and Ray’s Food Place chain, C & K had sold off its pharmacies, including Pharmacy Express in Cave Junction.

A Hi-School Pharmacy Hardware Affiliates owner purchased Pharmacy Express at that time. The 40-business affiliate group also includes Rogue River Pharmacy, a general store offering everything from guns and ammunition, sporting goods and a craft and fabric department to passport photos, film processing and helium balloons. Caves Pharmacy will not be adopting this general store model, but will retain the same services it currently offers.

Recently, the Pharmacy Express / Hi-School Affiliates owner Jack Holt approached Caves Pharmacy owner Ladena James about merging the competing businesses and the independent pharmacy owner agreed. All the current employees at Pharmacy Express

were offered positions at Caves Pharmacy.

In a recent interview, James discussed the merger, and explained the reasons prescription filling for former Pharmacy Express customers has often involved unusually long waits.

“The Pharmacy Express computer files were compromised, so we couldn’t transfer the information electronically between the two companies,” James stated. “Our staff is working from 7 or 8 in the morning to 8 or 9 at night to manually input all the files into our computer system.”

“Once we get all the records in house we’ll be able to fill prescriptions as quickly as before. We’re trying to accommodate everybody during the transition, but there will be lines for about 30 days until it gets smoothed out,” James continued. “We understand it’s very frustrating, but it has to be 100 percent correct; so getting a prescription filled will take a little longer because it has to be done right. It’s getting better every day.”

The Hi-School Pharmacy chain began as a classic corner drug store in 1925, so named due to its location near the main high school in Vancouver, Washington.

In 1939, brothers Ken and Matt Zapp doubled the size of the original store and increased the variety of merchandise offered. In 1948, Val and Dorothy Mowan purchased the store and further expanded the pharmacy and variety store.

In 1967, pharmacist Steven Oliva bought the Hi-School chain. In addition to filling prescriptions, he learned all aspects of the retail business; further expanding its offerings.

In the 1970’s, Hi-School Pharmacy built new stores, and acquired drug stores previously operated by other companies. The chain found its niche by locating in small towns. Store locations in the chain stretch from Northern California to multiple locations in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

The 1980’s brought the addition of Ace Hardware into many Hi-School Pharmacy stores. This helped achieve the goal of offering one-stop shopping. Hi-School Pharmacy/Hardware remains an independently owned and operated company.

Caves Pharmacy hours will remain 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays.