

Air ... Continued from A-1

Others share Hoke’s concerns.

“Increasingly, we are witnessing more and more services becoming privatized, from libraries, parks and jails to military and medical services,” said Valley resident Norma Chapman. “Once that happens, the primary driver often becomes profit and I believe most public services, especially those dealing with life and death situations should not be operating with profit in the equation.”

Hoke also worries that those holding subscription memberships with Mercy Flights might potentially end up “responsible for a \$20,000 bill that would have been covered” if Oregon Lifeguard is utilized instead of Mercy.

“The Fire District Board and I are in touch with our attorneys and the State Medical Board about this,” he said, adding, “if I violate the ordered issued by Dr. Hill, I could lose my paramedics license, and according to both Dr. Hill and Commissioner Walker, he will remove sponsorship of our agency. I cannot risk losing our sponsorship and not be able to provide medical services to the Illinois Valley.”

To comply with Hill’s recent edict Hoke said the IVFD’s board may have to change its current policy that supports calling Mercy

Flights first.

1300 county residents currently have Mercy Flights subscriptions that cost from \$70 to \$95 per-year per-household, and these memberships do not require patients to have other medical insurance. However in order to qualify for Oregon Lifeguard’s subscription membership, costing \$60 annually per family, patients must have medical insurance.

Insurance companies typically cover only portions of air ambulance service, which prompts some people to buy the relatively inexpensive memberships. Both companies say they’ll honor all insurance policies.

Doug Stewart, CEO of Mercy Flights, said, “We’ve grown over the years to serve the needs of our growing communities, and we don’t answer to shareholders. But with for-profit air ambulance services, it’s all about statistics.”

“Mercy Flights doesn’t have to make a profit. While our helicopter service lost about \$200,000 annually in recent years, our comprehensive program also includes ground ambulance and fixed-wing ambulance services. Between all three services, combined with donations and our membership programs, we

make it work. Plus, any profits go right back into the service itself.”

Stewart added while located farther away, that Mercy Flights can get in the air faster. “It’s not just about point A to point B. You have to consider all the variables, like mountains and weather and where crews are stationed. Ours are living on-site, so when we’re put on standby, it only takes us four to five minutes before taking off.”

Oregon Lifeguard’s CEO, Kai McSwain, said with an air ambulance stationed at the Grants Pass Airport, his service can shave “20 nautical miles, as the crow flies” from distances Mercy Flights must cover to reach Cave Junction, Selma, O’Brien, Wolf Creek and Glendale.

“We can get airborne in about six minutes, and once flying, Oregon Lifeguard can arrive in the Valley in just 11 minutes,” McSwain said. “Mercy, coming from Medford, has an approximate air time of 18 minutes to the Illinois Valley, plus whatever time it takes them to get in the air.”

McSwain says that Josephine County, federally designated as a medically underserved area, “was one of the only

counties in the nation with over 80,000 residents that didn’t have their own helicopter, until we set up our operation. I’m from the Rogue Valley and really feel that Josephine County deserves its own helicopter.”

McSwain encourages people to buy an Oregon Lifeguard subscription.

“Our hope is that people will sign up. At \$60 per year, and that’s just five dollars a month, it removes any concern about financial burden for the household. And if a patient we transport has a Mercy subscription, that policy will be considered under our charity-care policy, in other words, depending on patient need, we may write off the transportation bill. At the end of the day, we’re not going to put patients in the middle of a political dispute.”

McSwain disagrees with many assumptions being tossed around regarding for-profit medical services.

“Many for-profit businesses add a lot of value to the county. Most physician offices and most private physician groups are for-profit, and obviously, their main focus is still patient care,” he said.

Dollar ... Continued from A-1

“It’s amazing how much product we fit into our space. Our stores are very well laid out and everything is easy to find,” MacDonald said. “It’s all about price and convenience. Our average customer is in and out in 10 minutes.”

Over 75 years, Dollar General Corporation grew from a single wholesale store to 11,715 stores nationwide. In 2014, Dollar General built 700 new stores; and plan to construct 700 more in 2015.

“75 percent of our locations are in communities of 20,000 people or less, so we understand small communities,” MacDonald said. “We make shopping

for everyday needs simpler and hassle-free by offering a carefully edited assortment of the most popular brands at low everyday prices in small, convenient locations.”

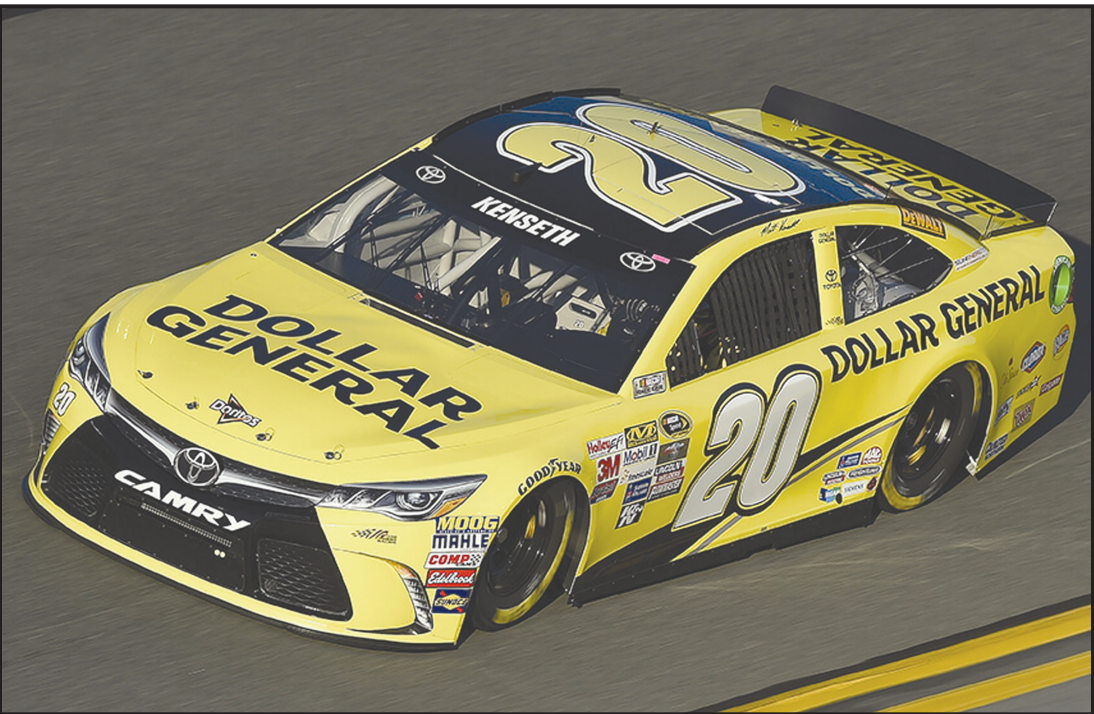
Dollar General stores also have a popular digital couponing program designed to make shopping convenient and help customers save money.

The land slated for the new store is currently owned by Illinois Valley Development, which bought the property in the 1970s. The lot, on the corner of Highway 199 and Hanby Lane, is directly across from A+ Mini Storage. Right now, access to the lot is from Green

Valley drive, but if the store moves forward, it’s likely at least two additional driveways will be added. Plans also include development of side walk on Hanby Lane and 199, and bicycle accommodations, including a bike rack, would be constructed.

MacDonald said local residents would be hired for the store; and he expects jobs will become available for six to 10 people.

“We also have a ‘Dollar General Literacy Foundation’ and we give away millions every year in grants. And once you have a store in your area that location becomes eligible for these grants,” he said.



Many NASCAR fans are familiar with Dollar General through their sponsorship of the No. 20 of the Joe Gibbs Racing team, driven by Matt Kenseth.



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