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BLOG

Jerry Cornfield
 Allegiant Air responds to opponents' e-mail



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JULIE MUHLSTEIN
 Columnist Julie Muhlstein's take on life in Snohomish County.



•**Latest:** Heroin death raises questions on education

KRISTI O'HARRAN
 Columnist Kristi O'Harran writes about people in Snohomish County.



•**Latest:** Cama Beach cabins a quiet, cozy delight

LATEST GALLERY



Lakewood Elementary Fire
 July 24, 2008 (8 photos)
 [More Herald photos]

WEEK IN REVIEW


- FRIDAY**
- Arlington private school fires principal charge...
 - War of words being waged online over Paine Field
 - Principal accused of child rape was investigate...

- THURSDAY**
- Past sexual allegations surface against Arlingt...
 - Light-rail measure headed to voters
 - Grandmother burnt while making pancakes



- Friends plan auction, hope to save woman's home
- Man blackmailed ex-girlfriend with nude picture...
- Traffic deaths decline in Washington

TUESDAY

LOCAL NEWS 

Published: Saturday, July 26, 2008

E-mail intensifies fight over commercial service at Paine Field

Allegiant Air and opponents trade barbs about the carrier's history at other airports.

By *Jerry Cornfield, Herald Writer*

MUKILTEO -- The battle for air travel from Paine Field is taking off online.

On Friday, the airline carrier looking to offer low-cost flights from the county-owned airport to Las Vegas responded to allegations that it has started and abruptly ended service at several airports around the country.

Allegiant Air of Las Vegas sought to rebut charges made in an e-mail distributed Wednesday by Strategies 360, the Seattle firm hired by the city of Mukilteo to lead its fight against commercial jet service at Paine Field.

"We take issue when inaccurate information is shared about us. We want the community to have an accurate reflection of us," Allegiant Air spokeswoman Tyri Squyres said.

The e-mail from Strategies 360 alleges that the company eliminated flights at 10 airports less than a year after initiating them. It cited newspaper stories as the source of its information.

"Don't let Allegiant Airlines exploit Everett and south Snohomish County the way they do other communities!" blares a line in the e-mail sent to hundreds of residents, civic leaders and elected officials. "Time and again, Allegiant Airlines deserts small communities after short notice and short stays."

In its eight-page response, Allegiant acknowledged withdrawing from four of the 10 airports -- Columbia, S.C.; Champaign, Ill.; Abilene, Texas; and Kinston, N.C.

At Columbia, the firm cut service to Tampa, Fla., flight after one month of unprofitable operation.

In the case of Kinston, the carrier operated there for 16 months, then moved operations to Wilmington, N.C.

"It's never our intention to pull out," Squyres said.

Rising fuel and operating costs and fees imposed by an airport can lead to decisions intended to keep the airline profitable. The firm has recorded a profit for 22 consecutive quarters.

The company's letter acknowledges opposition to its plan and pleads for a discussion that is "careful, respectful and fact-based."

"Unfortunately, the e-mail to Snohomish residents, apparently from Mr. Ron Dotzauer of Strategies 360, presumably on behalf of the city of Mukilteo, is neither careful nor respectful and is wrong on a material number of facts," it concludes.

Charla Neuman, vice president of communications for Strategies 360, said the letter didn't disprove anything they put in the e-mail.

"We want to thank Allegiant Air for validating our concerns that it has a history of abandoning communities around the country," she said.

This week's exchange signals debate is further intensifying as Allegiant Air and Snohomish County continue negotiating a possible contract for the start-up of service.

The city of Mukilteo is taking point in the opposition effort having hired Strategies 360 for \$97,000 and explored retaining a lawyer to mount a legal challenge. They are backed in their cause by a majority of the County Council and leaders in the cities of Edmonds, Lynnwood and Mountlake Terrace.

The city of Everett is emerging as the loudest civic voice pushing for commercial service. A new study done for the city concluded the economic benefits of flights to and from Las Vegas and other destinations exceeds potential costs to the quality of life of those living closest to the airport.

Squyres said none of this is curbing the company's interest.

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ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- Allegiant Air statement (PDF)
- Paine Field e-mail (Microsoft Word Document)

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"We wouldn't make this great of an effort if we didn't think there was an opportunity there," she said. "We still would like to bring the service there."

Reporter Jerry Cornfield: 360-352-8623 or jcornfield@heraldnet.com.

- Sauk River will run its course again
- Heroin blamed in Mukilteo teen's death
- Monroe motorcyclist dies in U.S. 2 crash

MONDAY



- Suspects in Monroe burglary found sleeping on b...
- Sounder fills up with new riders
- Look for Camano Island actress, 16, on Broadway

SUNDAY



- A life interrupted
- Everett composting company ordered to track dow...
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SATURDAY



- Marysville teen to race as Olympian for the Mar...
- Teen burglar can't run forever, police say
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- MOST READ**
1. Principal accused of child rape was investigated in the past
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 4. Monroe couple fights off armed intruder
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 6. Photo proves Camano Island fugitive is back
 7. George Thorogood: Thoroughly good blues at Tulalip
 8. Qantas finds gaping hole 747 fuselage – photos, video
 9. Boeing shares tumble 6 percent
 10. Allegiant Air responds to opponents' e-mail



- ENTERPRISE NEWSPAPER SC BUSINESS JOURNAL**
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 - Racing to help the helpless
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