



The WOODSTOCK Independent

The weekly newspaper connecting our community for 20 years.

Our View

Funding Air-One is a necessity

December 5, 2007

Editorial by MIKE NEUMANN, *News Editor*

What happens when local law enforcement needs assistance searching for missing persons or catching a fleeing suspect?

Most major metropolitan police forces call on their helicopter units for assistance. As we all know, however, Woodstock is not a major metropolitan area, and it does not have its own helicopter unit. But believe it or not, Chicago doesn't either. People in the northern Illinois region must look elsewhere for help.



Thankfully, what the area does have is Air-One, a not-for-profit charitable organization that provides helicopter support to law enforcement agencies in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The organization is staffed completely by volunteers, from local pilots to police officers, who are available for assistance when they are not working their regular jobs.

Manpower is only a fraction of what it takes to make the program a success. Funding is an issue, as Air-One's shoestring budget means not all requests for assistance can be granted, even when the crisis happens in the best of weather conditions. The lack of dollars also prevents many of Air-One's pilots from conducting training missions, according

Talking Points

- Air-One is a not-for-profit organization that provides helicopter support to law enforcement agencies in northern Illinois
- It is staffed completely by volunteers, from local pilots to police officers, who are available for assistance when they are not working their regular jobs.

to Mike Bitton, Director of Operations. He said that fuel alone costs about \$350 for about an hour of air time. Fuel, supplies and maintenance cost about \$850,000 per year. Much of that money comes from donations by local and county governments.

Currently, the city of Woodstock and McHenry County do not include funding for Air-One in their budgets. While any local law enforcement agency can call Air-One's 24-hour dispatch service to request help, it is up to those same agencies to help cover the costs. We at ***The Independent*** encourage both Woodstock and McHenry County to include Air-One in future budgets.

Providing financial support for the organization would be beneficial, should our law enforcement officers ever need to call on Air-One for its services. Deciding whether to request services from an organization becomes an easier call when your agency actively and financially supports it.

Air-One fills an important niche in the northern Illinois region.

This editorial was published in the December 5, 2007 edition of *The Woodstock Independent*.