

Comanche airport greatly benefits county's economy

By Blake Munroe / Brownwood Bulletin

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The Comanche County-City Airport first opened in 1967 and has slowly grown from being a small airstrip that was an afterthought to now being an important part of the county's commerce.



Located just two miles north of Comanche's downtown square, the airport has undergone major renovations over the years and now affects anything from the county's livestock market to just simply shopping. There's no doubt that it has provided countless new opportunities to the citizens of Comanche County, especially in recent years, as interest in aircraft and air travel continue to rise.

Ask anyone in the county who utilizes the airport and they'll be happy to bend your ear on the impact an airport can have on small communities such as the towns of Comanche and De Leon, who sit just 16 miles apart.

One person who sees those impacts is Dr. Duane Miller, a physician at Comanche County Medical Center, which is located halfway between the two small towns. His interest in flying started years ago, at age 6, when he first flew with his father who was an entrepreneur.

"I could go on for hours on what an airport can do for a community," said Miller. "There are many influential individuals and business personnel that have access to airplanes, which allows them to come and go quickly and easily to both large communities and small communities, like ours. Comanche airport is close to downtown and inside the city limits, unlike many other surrounding communities. These make it easy to access our goods."

Because of this, Miller says, the county's economy benefits greatly.

"We have corporate jets and smaller planes frequently bringing cattle buyers, pecan orchard owners, wine buyers, and other business personnel to Comanche County. Many of our taxpayers live elsewhere and own real estate here due solely to our airport making us accessible to their property. If you look at the increasing number of private cars parked at our airport, it confirms my comments."

Being a physician at the county's only hospital, Miller has seen the airport play a large role in providing better quality healthcare for the area's citizens as well. "Many visitors use the courtesy car at the airport to buzz in and do their business, then fly back home. We at Comanche County Medical Center have many physicians who fly in and work in our hospital from outside communities," he said.

According to Miller, much of the airport's present success can be contributed to the vision of pilots from the past.

"I am so proud of what De Leon and Comanche have done toward beautification efforts," said Miller. "All the entrepreneurs who have vested money in our communities have played a big role. Comanche County was very fortunate to have some of past airport board members like Bill Hill, Joe Gore and others that arranged for our runway to be lengthened."

"The federal government supplied majority and substantial funds and our local contractor who built this runway that now supports jet aircrafts," he added. "A larger hangar was built that housed many aircrafts such as Fleming Foods twin-engine airplane. This hangar now allows opportunities for others such as Alex Webb to start a commercial helicopter business in Comanche County."

One thing is for certain: However overlooked they may be by those who don't utilize them; small town airports do play an important role in the towns and counties that host them.

"We are very fortunate to have all that we do to make our county viable, and I have no doubt that our airport is helping us support our growth," Miller said.