

Achieving Harmony

Pharmacy/convenience store chain in talks with several airports

BY ANDREW TELLIJOHN

Ken Corroon so wants his new airport concept, **Harmony Pharmacy & Health Center**, (Harmony Pharmacy) to succeed that he's waking up at 3:45 a.m., driving to Newark, NJ, opening the doors himself, and often working the counter until closing.

This allows him to hear from travelers and employees at **Newark-Liberty International** (EWR) who visit the store, to find out what they like and what they would like to see added to the company's product mix.

Such conversations, including one with a Continental Airlines flight attendant seeking black pantyhose, already have allowed the Purchase, NY based company to begin tweaking its offerings in order to best serve EWR passenger needs.

"We're going to make sure we get the right thing in there," says Corroon, founder and CEO Harmony Pharmacy. "We believe there is a lot we can still learn and improve upon."

Harmony Pharmacy opened its first location at EWR's Terminal C in March. The 1,400-square-foot store has an on site medical center where people can get flu vaccinations, blood pressure and cholesterol readings, and prescriptions written and filled. Staff is seeing as many as a dozen patients daily.

Harmony Pharmacy also carries sundries such as Sudafed and toothpaste, gifts, perfumes, diffusers and cosmetics. The company has partnerships with brands such as Lollia, Caldrea and Crabtree & Evelyn, among others. So far business has been good, Corroon says, and improves as airline and airport employees, and passengers discover the service/store combo.

"It's a whole city there," Corroon says of EWR. He cited more than 24 million passengers that traverse Terminal C and 25,000 airport employees as a main reason the airport was attractive.



Harmony Pharmacy & Health Center could be blazing a trail in specialty retail at its first location at Newark-Liberty International (EWR). Westfield Concessions Management LLC has been enthusiastic about adding the concept to its concessions program. The combination concept is part drug store with 1,000 products, part pharmacy, and has a clinical component offering vital statistics readings, and flu vaccinations.

AMBITIOUS EXPANSION

Noting the lack of a dominant pharmacy brand as well as the longer dwell times prominent in US airports since 9/11, Harmony Pharmacy officials say they would like to have 100 stores both in airports and in high-end suburban and urban areas within five years. The

company will open a free-standing store in Greenwich, CT soon, then shift its focus back to airports. Corroon declined to specify locations but says Harmony is deep in negotiations with at least five airports and hopes to open locations in five to seven next year.

"There really is a great opportunity," says Corroon, adding that he realizes the

challenges of acquiring space in the airport arena. "In order to get to 100 stores we have to be in and outside the airports...We certainly could never capture all of them. It's up to the airport at the end of the day whether they decide to accept us."

While the company's goals are realistic, Corroon and his partners, who include Dr. Howard M. Hertz, owner and operator of one of the largest privately-held medical centers in Long Island, NY, are willing to take it slowly. They currently are focusing on perfecting the mix of products the store will offer.

Hertz and Corroon spent two years researching and fine-tuning the concept, including closely studying several models already successful in Europe, before opening at EWR.

"Our goal this year is to secure a few more airport locations hopefully, and we want to make sure Newark is doing extremely well," Corroon adds.

Harmony's association with **Westfield Concessions Management LLC**, a company that prides itself on uncovering gems, will be value going forward, he notes. "The Harmony store not only has a pharmacy, along with someone who can write prescriptions, but also carries more than 1,000 items typically found in drug stores," says Darren Shepherd, General Manager, Westfield.

That kind of mix is new to the airport industry, but Westfield has a reputation for uncovering such concepts and successfully determining whether they will play well, he says.

"We have a history of identifying companies we think would do well in an airport and bringing them aboard," says Shepherd. "We're very confident they are going to do well for us."

While the company's ultimate level of success has yet to be determined the concept has received attention from media heavyweights such as the *New York Times*, the *International Herald Tribune* and *CNBC* among others, Corroon says.

"We've been very fortunate," he says. "Each airport is its own entity and we just hope to get an opportunity to show them what we have."

We'd like to hear your opinion about this article. Please direct all correspondence to Andrew Tellijohn at tellijohn@yahoo.com