Pace employees detail grievances

Workers at airline and maintenance company bemoan uncertainties, late paychecks

By Richard Craner

Jeff Cadin says he loves his job at Pace Airlines and considers his fellow employees family.

But yesterday, after a month without getting a regular paycheck from the struggling company, Cadin said, he's ready to be laid off.

"It's so sad in this day and age when economic times to actually beg for employment to pay my bills and put food on my table," said Cadin, who works in Pace's parts department.

Cadin was one of more than 25 employees who spent their lunch hour yesterday across the street from Pace's operations at 6001 St. Liberty St., to discuss their and the company's plight with the media. Other employees held a silent protest outside management's office.

Pace, a charter airline and third-party maintenance company, has maintenance and training operations at South Reynolds Airport. Pace also has operations in Atlantic City, N.J., and Dallas.

The company is estimated to have more than 400 full- and part-time employees, including about 300 locally.

The employees said they are due one or more two-week paychecks, and they have grown weary of management's statements and excuses for not making payroll.

The financial turbulence has grown stiffer for Pace in the past two weeks:

The A.C. Department of Labor said Aug. 21 that it had opened an investigation of Pace related to at least four employee complaints about not being paid this month.

On Friday, Continental ended its business agreement with Pace, a lucrative piece of maintenance and modification business that began in late 2007 and was supposed to run through at least 2010.

The employees said they realize that speaking with the media could cost them their jobs. But they are worried that their jobs may be going away any way, potentially as soon as this week.

The employees directed most of their complaints at William Rodgers Sr., who bought the company in June and pitched a 120-day program aimed at putting the company in a better financial status.

Rodgers said yesterday in a brief telephone conversation that Pace continues to do its day-to-day business. "We know what the employees are concerned about, and that's all the comment I'm going to make to you," he said.

Cadin said that it is frustrating to go home each day without a paycheck to share with his family.

"Most of us live paycheck to paycheck, so when the paychecks stopped coming, we've had to drain whatever savings we had," he said. "I feel like I can't walk (from Pace) because I'm afraid I won't get paid what I'm owed and I'll have to start getting unemployment.'"

The employees offered assurance that they said show Rodgers' misrepresentation of the company's plight.

Rodgers said in a July 1 memo that one reason for Pace's financial struggles was that Continental owed Pace money, but later corrected himself in writing that the airline was owed money.

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By Richard Craver
JOURNAL REPORTER

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Pace, a charter airline and third-party maintenance company, has maintenance and training operations at Smith Reynolds Airport. Pace also has operations in Atlantic City, N.J., and Dallas. The company is estimated to have more than 400 full- and part-time employees, including about 300 locally.

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