



AirportConnections

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Historic Aircraft Touches Down at Rapid Air

The roar of the engines proudly announced that a piece of history was flying over Grand Rapids.

From August 12 to 16, GFIA's Rapid Air Service was pleased to host a B-17 Flying Fortress, traveling the country as part of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Salute to Veterans Tour.



The B-17, nicknamed "The Fuddy Duddy," was built in 1944. While it did not see combat in World War II, it was used as VIP transport for General Eisenhower during his tour of the South Pacific. Recently, the EAA restored the aircraft to flying condition and repainted it with the markings of a plane that was lost over Mannheim, Germany, in 1945.

During the aircraft's stay, Rapid Air provided parking space, help with security, fuel, staging and other key details.

The EAA offered flights on the B-17 with proceeds going to keep the aircraft in flyable condition. The public was also invited to free ground tours, or a peek inside the B-17 for a small donation.

According to Mike Krzciol, Line Service Manager at Rapid Air, the B-17 made 10 flights over the weekend. "Most of those who came were World War II veterans,

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Hail to the Chief: 25 Years at GFIA

August 20, 1979, is a day Airport Police Chief David Stricklen will never forget. It was his first day protecting the Airport, and 25 years later, he's still going strong.

"I was hired in as an officer," he said. "In those days, everyone here was a jack-of-all-trades, so I did police work, operations and was certified as a firefighter and an EMT."

Stricklen was the lead officer on his shift until his promotion to Chief in 1987. Among his most memorable assignments are his many opportunities to serve visiting heads of state. "During my career," says Chief Stricklen, "I've protected or met every president since Jimmy Carter. I've also had the privilege of being among the very few people at the Airport who have been allowed on Air Force One."

In fact, the United States Secret Service recently awarded certificates of appreciation to Chief Stricklen and the Airport Law Enforcement section in recognition of the Airport's role in VIP operations.

When asked to recall highlights of his career, Chief Stricklen remembered, "Many years ago, Sergeant Quakkelaar and I pulled in front of a private jet sitting on the runway preparing



After 25 years of service at GFIA, Police Chief Dave Stricklen continues to lead department improvements.

to take off after learning there was a kidnapped girl inside. In the end, the girl was released and the suspects were apprehended."

"During my career, I've protected or met every president since Jimmy Carter."

-Chief David Stricklen

Drawing on his EMT skills, the Chief has also been involved in countless medical responses — from minor bumps and bruises to major lifesaving resuscitations at the Airport. And, thanks to West Michigan winters, he's closed and opened runways numerous times during blizzards and whiteouts.

Of course, Chief Stricklen has also proven his ability to get things done behind a desk.

"When I became Chief," he says, "I oversaw the initial development of a law enforcement procedure manual. I also updated the Airport rules and regulations manual, expanding it from six to 32 pages to cover everything we do. Over the years, I've also written Airport security programs, certification programs and contingency programs."

Looking forward, Chief Stricklen says, "Plenty has changed since the early days of my career. The Airport's bigger and busier, and these days, no one's expected to be a jack-of-all-trades. But all of the specialization just means you get better at what you do, and that's exactly where this department is headed." ✈

Giving from the Heart

On October 8, over two dozen people at GFIA offered something precious to the community — their blood.

The semi-annual blood drive drew donors, including eight first-timers, from the Department of Aeronautics, airline tenants, concessions, area businesses and even travelers passing through the Airport. According to Anne Lowery, Mobile Recruiter for the Michigan Community Blood Centers (MCBC), 24 pints were collected. Since September 1993, a grand total of 571 pints have been donated at GFIA blood drives.

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New Landscape Makes a Grand Entrance

Picture an airport, and you'll naturally think of bare, wide open spaces. But pass through the new landscape at the gates of GFIA, and you'll instantly be transported to the grassy fields, forests and dunes of West Michigan instead.

The new entrance, created by nationally recognized landscape architecture firm JJR in Ann Arbor, was based on input from a steering committee made up of local citizens, businesses and surrounding municipalities. According to Paul Evanoff, Landscape Architect at JJR, "The committee took a hands-on approach to the workshops and were very involved in the design process."

Evanoff explains, "The design focuses on features that are unique to or common in West Michigan. We also picked up on many of the forms, colors and design themes in the remodeled terminal."

Highlights of the new design include:

- **Road enhancements**

Ingress/egress lanes were added and intersections eliminated to help improve traffic circulation and safety. The Airport also installed traffic calming pavers to remind motorists to control their speed.

- **Signage and lighting**

"The materials, colors and forms in the terminal remind you of the shore, sand dunes and water," says Evanoff. "We picked up this 'organic' feeling for the new signs and lighting."



Oostema Boulevard is enhanced by new signage and over 650 deciduous, evergreen and flowering trees, 3,500 evergreen and deciduous shrubs and 10,000 perennials.

- **Concrete signs and walls**

Curving white retaining walls along the boulevard echo West Michigan's famous sand dunes. "To reinforce the sand dune theme," says Evanoff, "we planted over 8,000 containers of native grasses including little bluestem and prairie dropseed."

- **Landscape**

JJR used native trees and grasses to create a rolling Michigan-style Oak Savanna in the fields along inbound and outbound roads. The north and south sides of Oostema Boulevard feature a wave-like planting that screens parking areas, offers four seasons of interest and helps focus attention on the road.

- **Entrance/exit enhancements**

Flagpoles, special paving, and tulip and begonia beds meet travelers at the Airport entrance, while a "Welcome to Michigan's West Coast" sign greets travelers arriving in our community. Cherry trees, tulips, begonia beds and special paving draw attention to the east end of the boulevard near the passenger terminal.

"The contractors (Katerberg Verhage Inc. and Windemuller Electric Inc.)," Evanoff notes, "have demonstrated the highest levels of workmanship and cooperation during construction."

The landscaping is expected to be completed in early November 2004. ←



See What Develops in Michigan's West Coast Photo Contest

How do you see West Michigan? The Airport invites you to share your vision in Michigan's West Coast Photo Contest.

Entrants, who need not be Michigan residents, are encouraged to submit photos showing "life on Michigan's West Coast" from their own unique perspective. The winning photos will be eligible to be included in the 2005 photo/video production on the Welcome Wall in the baggage claim area, where they will offer visitors a glimpse of the beauty and entertainment opportunities available throughout West Michigan.

Judges will include members of the Kent County Aeronautics Board, and staff members from the Kent County Department of Aeronautics. First prize is a three-piece luggage set, second prize is a 35mm point-and-shoot camera and third prize is a deluxe photo backpack.

Entries are due December 31, 2004, and winners will be announced on the GFIA web site and in an upcoming issue of *Airport Connections*. For contest rules and detailed submission instructions, please visit www.flygrandrapids.org. ←

Express Shuttle Lot Expands

More visitors than ever are using GFIA's Express Shuttle Lot. The lot, on the north side of Oostema Blvd./44th Street, just east of the Airport entrance, offers economical parking rates along with a convenient shuttle to the terminal.

To meet the increased demand for parking, the Airport is adding 75% more capacity, for a grand total of 1,750 spaces. Work is expected to be complete in November 2004. ←

'Tis the Season for Songs

Local students will soon be serenading travelers again in the 2004 Airport Holiday Music Festival. Choral groups from area junior and senior high schools will perform in the terminal's Grand Hall from December 13 to 17. The annual concerts are a favorite with Airport staff, visitors and choral groups alike.

According to Mark Webb, Director of Choral Activities for East Grand Rapids High School, "We've performed at the Festival for two years, and my students really look forward to this. The response from the passengers and people waiting has been really positive. It's a unique environment to perform in and we think it's great fun."

If you're traveling through the Airport this holiday season, we hope you'll enjoy this year's Festival. ←



historic aircraft

Enthusiasts of all ages admire the 60-year-old B-17.

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families of those who served on a B-17 or history buffs," he said. "Some of the veterans came out, took a look at the plane and stood there getting misty-eyed.

"We heard many great stories that weekend, and it was a lot of fun for us. We were proud to host this magnificent aircraft that represents such an important period in our nation's history." ←

Trading Tricks of the Trade: An Open House for Airport Maintenance

While taking part in a snow symposium a few years ago, GFIA Field Maintenance Supervisor Eric Vander Stel realized he had something to share – his experience.

So in 2001, he organized an open house where GFIA staff could share ideas on snow removal and other topics with maintenance teams from other Michigan airports. “We wanted to give smaller airports the chance to see some demonstrations and learn how we do things here,” said Vander Stel, who leads GFIA’s FAA award-winning airfield maintenance staff.

Maintenance supervisors met separately during the day to discuss commercial driver’s license (CDL) and truck certification regulations with Ken Hull, Kent County Road Commission Weighmaster.

After lunch, GFIA’s maintenance team offered a special session on snow plowing procedures and ramp snow removal, followed by demonstrations of various equipment: runway de-icer truck, snow eliminator and Glycol vacuum truck. One of the Airport’s air traffic control tower supervisors spoke on snow removal communications,



The Glycol vacuum truck demonstrates its capabilities to maintenance staff.

The idea was such a hit that GFIA hosted another workshop this year. Held on August 12, the event drew around 100 participants.

The day began with a tour of the airfield maintenance facility and a presentation by Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Rob Stacey on the top 10 MIOSHA violations. “After that,” says Vander Stel, “we divided into groups and rotated people through 10-minute time slots at different stations. My staff shared their expertise on pavement crack sealing, groundhog trapping, fence repairs, paint line striping, mowing equipment, snow removal equipment and airfield lighting repairs.”

and the afternoon wrapped up with a question and answer session.

“The event went over very well,” says Vander Stel. “We’ve received very positive feedback from MIOSHA and the airports that took part in the open house.”

“What a great way to provide hands-on training to airport employees,” commented Robert Stacy, MIOSHA Occupational Safety Consultant.

Participant Jeff Thornton, Managing Director of Owosso Community Airport, adds, “For years, there’s been a need for exchanging information and ideas. GFIA has a facility and staff that would be the envy of any community.”

M-6: Fast Track to the Airport

Getting to the Airport is about to get easier for many West Michigan residents. As State Road M-6 (commonly referred to as the South Beltline) nears completion, travelers can look forward to a faster route that shaves miles and valuable minutes from every trip to and from GFIA.

The new highway conveniently skirts busy urban streets, offering easy access to the Airport and the growing business district on the southern side of Grand Rapids.

M-6, from Patterson Avenue to I-196, is scheduled to open by the end of 2004, although the westbound I-196 interchange will remain under construction into 2005.

The Fast New Routes:

From I-96, you may now take exit 46 to M-6 and proceed west to exit 15 (M-37). Drive north on M-37 to northbound Patterson Avenue and take Patterson north to the Airport entrance at 44th Street.

From northbound U.S. 131, you may take exit 77 to M-6 and proceed east to exit 15. Drive north on M-37 to northbound Patterson Avenue and take Patterson north to the Airport entrance at 44th Street.

From I-196, take exit 64 when open and proceed east on M-6 to exit 15. Drive north on M-37 to northbound Patterson Avenue and take Patterson north to the Airport entrance at 44th Street.

All previous routes to the Airport also remain open. ↩



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“That’s right on track with our projections,” says Lowery, “and we’re very pleased. Once again, the staff at the Airport did a great job getting the word out and making the blood drive a success.”

Each pint of blood can be separated into different components to help several people, including cancer patients, accident victims and those undergoing surgery. Because blood can be stored only for a limited time, it must be collected continually to meet the community’s needs.

If you’d like to serve your community in this way, please join us for our next scheduled blood drive in May 2005. Lowery adds, “We always get an excellent turnout here, and we look forward to working with the Airport every year.”

- The American Association of Airport Executives Chair Bill Barkhauer, A.A.E., recently announced that Jim Koslosky, A.A.E., Aeronautics Director of Gerald R. Ford International Airport, has been named to receive the association's Distinguished Service Award for 2004.
- Susan Sherman has joined the Department of Aeronautics as Community Relations Coordinator. Susan is a graduate of Spring Arbor University and most recently served as Director of Communications for Life Guidance Services, a local social services organization.
- Phil Johnson, A.A.E., Deputy Aeronautics Director, was elected as the Michigan representative for the Great Lakes Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives.
- GFIA's Aircraft Rescue Firefighting unit was awarded the FAA's "Good Friend Award" for providing first aid/medical response training to FAA employees.
- The Airport recently passed its annual FAA certification/safety inspection with zero discrepancies.
- The next two meetings of the Kent County Aeronautics Board will take place on Wednesday, November 24, and Wednesday, December 22. Both meetings begin at 8:30 a.m. in the International Room located in the terminal building at the Airport.
- The GFIA Aircraft Rescue Firefighting (ARFF) unit is a designated collection point for the 2004 Toys for Tots campaign. Donations may be dropped off at the ARFF building between November 16 and December 18, 2004. For more information or directions, call 616-233-6079 or 616-233-6055.
- Civic groups or service organizations interested in having a speaker from the Airport may contact Bruce Schedlbauer, APR, Marketing and Communications Manager at 616-233-6053 or via email at bschedlbauer@grr.org to schedule a presentation.

Wings of Mercy Fundraiser Takes Off

Local support soared for Wings of Mercy during its recent fundraiser at GFIA. The organization provides free air transportation for people with limited financial means who need medical treatment at distant facilities.

The Wings of Mercy CareAffaire, sponsored by Huntington Bank, was held in the Northern Jet Management hangar on September 11. For a \$5 donation, guests were treated to a pancake and sausage breakfast provided by the Lions Club and a ground display featuring an Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter (developed by Sikorsky), an Army UH-1 Iroquois (better known as a "Huey"), a Cessna Citation Bravo from Northern Jet's The Company Jet program and a Fire/Rescue vehicle from the Aircraft Rescue Firefighting unit. For additional donations ranging from \$25 to \$1,000, guests could also take a flight in a small plane, helicopter or L-39 Russian jet trainer.

According to Rob Becker, Wings of Mercy Board

Member, "The day went really, really well. We had eight planes and three helicopters flying all morning and the response was unbelievable. We sold twenty \$1,000 rides, and at the end of the day, we still had people waiting who gave us their names and phone numbers for next time.

"Even with many other festivals, parades and happenings competing for attention on the same day, we still served about 450 people at breakfast and raised approximately \$45,000."

Those funds will be used to reimburse Wings of Mercy's volunteer pilots for fuel, which costs an average of \$500 per mission (pilots donate their time and planes). A small portion will also go to pay the salary of the organization's flight director.

Becker adds, "We really appreciate all the support from the community and the Airport. The guys in the control tower had so much fun that they asked us to come back next year. And that's exactly what we love to hear." ✈



Airport Connections, the newsletter of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA), is published quarterly by the Kent County Department of Aeronautics. We encourage GFIA tenants and all of our readers to contact us with your comments, suggestions and submissions. Also, if you are not already receiving *Airport Connections* by mail and wish to be added to the mailing list, please call the Kent County Department of Aeronautics at 616-233-6000. For additional information, be sure to visit us on the web at www.flygrandrapids.org.

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*County Commissioner

Aeronautics Director | James Koslosky, A.A.E.

Editor | Bruce Schedlbauer, APR, Marketing and Communications Manager

Associate Editor | Susan Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator, ssherman@grr.org

Kent County Department of Aeronautics

GERALD R. FORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
5500 44TH STREET S.E.
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49512-4055

phone | 616-233-6000

fax | 616-233-6025

on the web | www.flygrandrapids.org

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