



INSIDE THIS EDITION

- 2 | *Tenant Profile: Kent Career/Technical Center Aviation Maintenance Technology Program*
- 2 | *Reaching A New Altitude*
- 3 | *Dreams Take Flight*
- 3 | *Airport Fire Station Holds Open House For Charity*
- 4 | *News In Brief*
- 4 | *Airport Smoking Policy Changes*
- 4 | *Giving From The Heart*



Going Up!

Airport Construction Project Moves To The Next Level

On September 26, the Gerald R. Ford International Airport officially marked the start of the largest capital development project in its history. First identified as a result of the 1992 Master Plan Update, the Terminal Area & Parking Improvement Program will provide 4,900 parking spaces – which increases capacity to a level that exceeds the projected need for the year 2023. In addition, the program will address a number of customer concerns including: more close-in parking, covered parking, protection from the elements, and improved rental car facilities.

Fifteen years ago, in a continuing effort to provide West Michigan with expandable, state-of-the-art air transportation facilities, the Kent County Aeronautics Board embarked on a 20-year airport redevelopment plan that has resulted in essentially rebuilding the Gerald R. Ford International Airport on site. Other projects of this plan have included land acquisitions, newly constructed and reconstructed runways, the new Air Cargo and Trade Center, the passenger terminal building expansion and renovation, general aviation facilities redevelopment, reconstructed taxiways and perimeter road system, three parking lot expansions, and the new rental car service facility construction. The airport's Master Plan provided a long-term vision in which GFIA would continue to serve as a foundation for economic development throughout the 13-county airport service area known as Michigan's West Coast.

In her remarks at the September 26 groundbreaking ceremony, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce president Jeanne Englehart stated, "Grand Rapids is the hub of business in West Michigan, and our airport is the gateway to our business community. The groundbreaking on this project reflects the area's success and growth, as well as an investment in the future."

Manning the shovels below are (from left) Jim Koslosky, aeronautics director; Ted Vonk, aeronautics board member and county commissioner; Tom O'Hare, aeronautics board vice chair; Dick Vander Molen, aeronautics board member and county commissioner; John Van Laar, aeronautics board chair; and Dean Agee, aeronautics board member and county commissioner.



Jeanne Englehart, president of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, offers remarks at the ceremony.

"Gerald R. Ford International Airport is the second busiest airport in the state and among the top 15 percent most active airports in the country," said aeronautics director Jim Koslosky. "We are the first and last impression many people have of Grand Rapids and Michigan's West Coast, and we work hard to make sure that impression is a good one."

During construction on the Terminal Area and Parking Improvement Program, long-term parking continues to be available in the north lot and the east end of the east lot, in addition to the Express



ramp up
continued on page 3



Tenant Profile: Kent Career / Technical Center Aviation Maintenance Technology Program

Educating The Next Generation

In fall 2000, the Kent Career Technical Center (KC/TC) began offering the Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT) program at GFIA, and in summer 2004 they moved to their current facility on the airport campus to accommodate the growing demand for this program. The two-year program, available to juniors and seniors attending any school within the Kent Intermediate School District, introduces students to the knowledge and skills required in the field of aviation maintenance technology. The program also explores the careers of pilots, avionics technicians, and myriad other aviation-related career opportunities.

In October 2006, the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth included Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians in their “Michigan’s Hot 50” jobs forecast, predicting a 12.4 percent job growth through 2012 and 60 projected annual job openings.

The KC/TC’s AMT program enrolls nearly 100 students per year. Many of their graduates go on to colleges, military aviation, and local and regional airports. And the instructors are never surprised when a former student drops by for a visit. Program graduates come back to share their successes with the current students and to encourage them to work hard and master the skills they are being taught.

One of the keys to success for this program is the partnerships that have been built with other airport tenants along the way. The Department of Aeronautics, along with several airlines, corporate flight departments, and fixed base operators is utilized for training, tours, job shadowing, internships, and employment opportunities. This hands-on program incorporates the traditional textbook and classroom learning style with computer labs and laboratory assignments. In addition to job skills, the program also prepares the students for future



employment by relating school experience to real-life expectations. Work habits and attendance play an important role in the grading policy, and grades are related to employment review expectations (e.g., an “A” grade might be worthy of a promotion in most companies, a “B” grade might be deserving of a raise, a “C” grade might mean keeping your job, etc.).

The mission of the KC/TC is to ensure the opportunity for all students to possess *the marketable skills necessary to support success, adaptability and lifelong learning in the changing workplace*. So, what does *their* report card look like? Straight A’s.

Reaching A New Altitude

On August 22, the airport reached yet another milestone in its history when it surpassed the 50 million total passengers served mark. With steady growth throughout its 43 years on the current site, GFIA has reliably served the air travel needs of the West Michigan community.

In its 21st year, the airport reached the milestone of serving more than one million passengers in a single calendar year. Twenty years later, that number was doubled as more than two million passengers traveled via GFIA in 2005. Year-to-date, 2007 passenger numbers are similar to those in 2005 and 2006, which is considered quite an accomplishment in light of the turbulence experienced throughout the airline industry.

“We are delighted to be recognizing such a major milestone in our history,” commented aeronautics director James Koslosky. “The West Michigan region has been a strong supporter of Gerald R. Ford International throughout our nearly 45 years, and we eagerly look forward to serving our next 50 million passengers in the years ahead.”

In addition to 50 million commercial airline passengers, GFIA has also accommodated countless corporate and general aviation aircraft and passengers, military aircraft and personnel, and more than 1.5 billion pounds of air cargo.



Dreams Take Flight

Saturday, September 8, was a day like any other for most of us. But for nearly 50 young people dealing with a variety of disabilities, it was a day they will never forget. The day's sunshine paled in comparison to their bright, warm smiles as these young people came to the airport for a very special event. On this day, wheelchairs and crutches were left behind as volunteer pilots, many of whom are wheelchair aviators themselves, took the children flying 1,500 feet above.

For most of these kids, it was their first time in an airplane. For some, it was a rare respite from the wheelchair that has become a part of their very existence. For all, it was a joyous occasion where they could leave their physical challenges behind – if only for a short while – and experience the freedom of flight.

A Dreams and Wings Young Eagle Fly Day includes a short ground school where the children learn about airplanes and how they fly, along with refreshments and a host of fun and educational activities. In addition to the 20-minute airplane ride, each special needs child receives a Dreams and Wings T-shirt, a set of gold aviator wings, a flight certificate commemorating his or her achievement, and a membership into the prestigious Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) Young Eagles Program, where their name will be entered into the EAA's "World's Largest Log Book."

So, what's it like to fly "right seat" and experience the thrill of that first airplane ride? "It was really fun," said eleven-year-old Caleb



Eleven-year-old Caleb VanderWeide (second from left) took younger brother Kyle (age 8) and dad along on his airplane ride. Dan and Tammy VanderWeide brought the boys from Baroda, Michigan for the Fly Day event. Wheelchair aviator Capt. Jack Lewis (seated in plane) was their pilot.

VanderWeide. "The best part was flying over the baseball stadium (Fifth Third Ballpark). It looks cool from way up there." And did he learn anything new about airplanes? "There's so many things to do before take off, I don't know how Capt. Jack remembers it all." This was Caleb's first flight in a small aircraft, but he says he'd love to do it again.

This was the tenth annual Fly Day event at GFIA for Dreams and Wings for Kids, a nonprofit organization that provides physically, mentally, or emotionally challenged and seriously ill children and young adults the opportunity to fly in small airplanes. Partnering with Dreams and Wings for the 2007 Fly Day were Northern Air, Inc., Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, and ten general aviation pilots who donated their time, aircraft, fuel, and all other related expenses. Dreams and Wings for Kids is fully supported by private and corporate donations. To learn more about this nonprofit organization, you may visit their website at www.dreamsandwings.us.



ramp up *continued from page 1*

Shuttle lot. Passengers are encouraged to use the complimentary shuttles to and from the passenger terminal building. Limited short-term parking is available at the far east end of the passenger terminal building (overnight parking is prohibited). The rental car ready lots have moved into a portion of the east long-term lot. Valet parking continues to be available at the curb front.

Throughout the two-year project, updates will be available on the airport's website at www.flygrandrapids.org (just click on the Ramp Up! logo), by telephone (via recorded messages) by calling (616) 233-RAMP (7267), and by listening to GFIA's traveler information station on 1610 AM.

Airport Fire Station Holds Open House For Charity

Saturday, November 17, the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Firefighters will once again be holding an open house to benefit Toys for Tots. This great family-friendly event will include tours of the fire station, fire truck demonstrations (weather permitting), refreshments, and other fun activities. The open house will run from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The airport firefighters will be collecting donated toys, puzzles, dolls, and games from November 1 through December 7. Can't make it to the open house? No problem! You may drop off your donation at the fire station any day. The fire station is located just beyond the passenger terminal building.

The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve created Toys for Tots as a nationwide community service program in 1947. This program collects and distributes new, unwrapped toys. Today, the national program has some 300 cities participating, collecting and distributing over 10 million toys annually.

For more information about the Toys for Tots program or to see if your family qualifies, call the Holiday Hotline at (616) 459-2625.



News In Brief

- » Jim Koslosky A.A.E., aeronautics director for GFIA, has been named “Airport Manager of the Year” for 2007 by the Michigan Association of Airport Executives (M.A.A.E.). M.A.A.E. is a professional association of airport managers and administrators representing airports throughout the state of Michigan.
- » Phil Johnson, A.A.E., deputy aeronautics director for GFIA, has been elected first vice president of the Great Lakes Chapter — American Association of Airport Executives. The Great Lakes Chapter includes more than 400 airport administrators and representatives of service and professional firms serving airports from twelve Midwestern states and the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Ontario.
- » Brian Picardat, A.A.E., finance and administration director for GFIA, has been elected second vice president of the Michigan Association of Airport Executives.
- » Bruce Schedlbauer, APR, marketing and communications manager for GFIA, has been elected vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the West Michigan Tourist Association (WMTA). With a membership base of nearly 800 travel and tourism operators, WMTA is responsible for promoting and supporting the travel and tourism industry throughout the western half of Michigan’s lower peninsula.
- » In August, the Federal Aviation Administration performed its annual FAR Part 139 Airport Certification Inspection. For the fifth consecutive year, GFIA received “zero discrepancies,” meaning there were no issues that required corrective action.
- » The next two meetings of the Kent County Aeronautics Board will be held on November 28 and December 19, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. All meetings take place in the International Room in the passenger terminal building and are open to the public.
- » The twelfth annual Airport Holiday Music Festival will be held December 3–7. At various times throughout the day, area middle- and high-school choral groups will be performing in the Grand Hall. Stop by and enjoy a bit of holiday spirit.
- » GFIA will host a community blood drive on Friday, May 16, 2008, in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. You may preregister for a time on our website at www.flygrandrapids.org/BloodDrive.php or by contacting Donna Thomas, Office Administrator, at (616) 233-6046. Walk-ins are welcome.
- » Sign up online for e-lets related to the Ramp Up! construction activities at www.flygrandrapids.org/RampUp.php.

Airport Smoking Policy Changes

Effective Monday, October 1, 2007, a revised smoking policy went into effect at GFIA. Since July 1, 1998, the passenger terminal building has been a smoke-free facility. Now, in compliance with City of Grand Rapids Clean Indoor Air Ordinance, No. 2006-71, smoking is also prohibited within ten (10) feet of any entrance, window, and ventilation system of the terminal building. Airport patrons and employees should take note of new “No Smoking” signs located near windows and doorways to ensure they are in compliance with the regulation.

Giving From The Heart

Twice each year, GFIA partners with Michigan Community Blood Centers (MCBC) to host a blood drive at the airport. The most recent drive was held Friday, September 28.

Previous Total	678 pints
Given 9/28/07	19 pints
Total donated at airport drives	697 pints

GFIA and MCBC would like to thank all who participated in the blood drive.

Airport Connections is the quarterly newsletter of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. We encourage our readers to contact us with comments, suggestions, and submissions. If you wish to be added to the mailing list for *Airport Connections*, please contact the Kent County Department of Aeronautics:

Phone: 616.233.6000

Fax: 616.233.6025

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