



volume 20 | no. 4
Fall 2012

INSIDE THIS EDITION

- 2 | *Refill, Reuse and Refresh at GFIA's New Hydration Stations*
- 2 | *On The Rise — Customer Care*
- 3 | *Did You Vote?*
- 3 | *Airport Starbucks Wins Gold!*
- 3 | *Departing*
- 3 | *Ramp Expansion Nears Completion*
- 4 | *News In Brief*
- 4 | *Connected*

Lifting Spirits

Saturday, September 8 was a very special day at the Grand Rapids Air Center. It was on that beautiful late summer day that the organizers from Dreams and Wings landed at GFIA and, partnering with Grand Rapids Air Center and Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, gave more than 50 special needs children and young adults an experience they won't soon forget.

Dreams and Wings is a nonprofit organization organized by wheelchair aviator Jack Lewis, his wife Barb Wilson, and a team of volunteer pilots. The Fly Day program is offered free of charge to all participants and is underwritten by corporate, philanthropic and individual donations. "Encouraging and inspiring children and parents is exactly what we envision Dreams and Wings doing," says Lewis.



CJ Blackwell and his guests await their flight.

Each Dreams and Wings Fly Day includes a short ground school where the participants learn about airplanes and how they fly. Refreshments and a host of fun and educational activities and displays are designed to introduce the children and their families to new and unique equipment, services, opportunities and experiences.

Then, seated beside an experienced pilot in a light airplane, each child and a family member or friend took to the air and soared with the clouds to get a bird's eye view of the greater Grand Rapids area. At a cruising altitude of 1,500 feet, an otherwise routine flight becomes a once in a lifetime opportunity that aims to provide participants the thrill of breaking free of barriers that exist in everyday life.

Heidi Pamerleau expressed gratitude for how Dreams and Wings has benefited her daughter Sonia, 17, who has cerebral palsy, and her sons Nate, 15, and Noah, 12, who both have autism. "They love it," she says. "They're so excited to be in a small plane and get that perception of how big the world really is. They can't get that from a book or an explanation."

This was the 13th annual Fly Day event in Grand Rapids.

You can learn more about Dreams and Wings at their website at www.DreamsandWings.us.

Farewell...

It has been my great pleasure to serve as GFIA's Marketing and Communications Manager, and editor of *Airport Connections*, for the past 19 years. What a tremendous privilege and honor!

It is with much gratitude for what lies behind, and with great eagerness for what lies ahead, that I am resigning my position with the airport, effective November 7, 2012. Soon thereafter, my wife Kris and I will be going to the mission field as members of the resident missionary staff at Camp Barakel, a year-round Christian camping ministry located near Fairview, Michigan.

Warm regards, safe travels and, as always, thank you for reading.

Bruce Schedlbauer

Editor



Refill, Reuse and Refresh at GFIA's New Hydration Stations



The amenity has popped up at other major airports, such as San Francisco, Atlanta and Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports, and is designed to encourage passengers to reuse bottles and reduce waste at airports.

The hydration stations encourage the conservation of our natural resources and preservation of our environment by helping reduce the solid waste created from single-use plastic water bottles. A user simply places a reusable water bottle beneath the tap to garner a chilled stream of filtered tap water.

These hydration stations are one of many sustainability initiatives at the airport to help us achieve our mission *to provide safe, efficient, **environmentally sensitive**, economically self-sustaining and globally infused air transportation facilities responsive to regional needs.*

A reminder to our travelers: your reusable water bottle still must be empty when passing through the passenger security screening checkpoint; but not to worry! At GFIA, these newly installed units are available pre-security at the drinking fountains near the Kids Port off the Grand Hall, as well as post-security along the main corridor on each concourse.

On The Rise — Customer Care

This year, in partnership with Experience Grand Rapids, the airport expanded customer service by introducing “Roving Airport Ambassadors.”

Armed with a tablet computer, these Ambassadors stroll through the terminal ready to answer questions, provide directions, or simply offer a warm West Michigan greeting.

This means passengers exiting the concourses have assistance navigating to baggage claim or their airline's ticket counter. Questions such as: Where is my hotel? Where can I pick up my rental car; or questions about getting to a nearby city, are answered with the help of a friendly Ambassador.



Airport Ambassador Molly McGinnis, above, and her fellow Ambassadors are always willing to provide helpful information about flights, area hotels, restaurants and events happening around West Michigan.



They provide everything from hotel information, restaurant suggestions, or even what's happening at the local theaters or symphony. If you need to have someone paged or require brochures, maps or printed materials about the West Michigan region, a quick stop at the Visitor Information Desk is all you need.

Ambassadors say airport patrons appreciate receiving prompt assistance. Among the most commonly asked questions are inquiries regarding the status of an inbound plane. Ambassadors are able to access a variety of applications to show exactly where a flight is at that moment and to disseminate information quickly and efficiently.

Sometimes the information they provide means more than an Ambassador realizes. Rhonda VanEerden says, “Little kids love it when I show them the planes on my screen. I repeatedly hear, ‘Daddy, we watched your plane on that lady’s computer!’”

And according to Molly McGinnis, “With technology as broadly available as it is today, most passengers and greeters are connected and already know the status of the flight. But there are patrons who arrive not knowing of a flight delay or other important information. Not only do I let them know of the flight status, I can also let them know where they can grab a cup of coffee, or relax while they wait.”

So remember to look up an Airport Ambassador the next time you fly through Gerald R. Ford International Airport.

Did You Vote?

On Friday September 14, Allegiant Travel rolled into town on their very own campaign bus, for a stop on their “Vote for Vacation” campaign tour. Over 150 people stopped by to vote for their favorite Allegiant destination. Each vote cast was entered in a local prize drawing for two round-trip tickets to any of

Allegiant’s five destinations from GFIA, as well as a grand prize drawing for round-trip tickets for two on Allegiant for the next four years.



Tony Gates and Michelle McKormick from WLAV broadcast their morning show live from the location at D&W Fresh Market on the East Beltline. Thanks to Spartan Foods and D&W stores for providing breakfast treats. To top off the campaign, voters also received giveaway items from Allegiant and GFIA.

Congratulations to our local winner Sharey Goerke! In all, Allegiant gave away 154 vacations in 77 cities in 20 days. Grand prize winners were Robert and Karen Babler of Illinois.

From GFIA, Allegiant offers non-stop service to the popular vacation destinations of Orlando, Tampa/St. Pete, Fort Lauderdale, Phoenix and Las Vegas.

Start your vacation today at www.Allegiantair.com.



Airport Starbucks Wins Gold!

While this gold wasn’t Olympic, it was still a very special occasion – especially for an airport Starbucks.

The Starbucks Gold Cup Award recognizes excellence in both customer service and efficient store operations. This performance incentive program requires a store to average 95% or above in its survey review scores for the quarter. The survey covers a wide variety of variables, including overall satisfaction, friendliness, speed, cleanliness, and accuracy of preparation.

In addition to the recognition, there is a monetary award for the baristas. As an incentive to achieve great scores, stores with lower scores fund the reward. Starbucks has been in operation at GFIA since 2004 and is managed by the airport’s food and beverage concessionaire HMSHost.



Please join us as we congratulate this stellar Starbucks team!

Departing

December 19 marked the final Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board meeting for citizen member and Board chairman Joe Tomaselli.

Mr. Tomaselli recently announced his retirement from the Amway Hotel Corporation. He plans to join Patty, his wife of 42 years, at their home in suburban St. Louis.

Airport Board vice chairman Dick Vander Molen states, “Joe has been a strong community leader in Grand Rapids for more than 25 years. During his tenure with the Airport Board, he has used his inclusive leadership style to ensure a shared vision for the future of the airport. Joe brought his passion for customer service from the hotel industry to the airport industry, where it became an elevated focus for us all.”

The Airport Board comprises three Kent County commissioners, three Kent County citizen members, and one citizen member from a county other than Kent in the West Michigan combined statistical area, each serving staggered three-year terms. Mr. Tomaselli will serve out the remainder of his term on the Airport Board. The Kent County Board of Commissioners will appoint a new citizen member to a new three-year term in January.



Ramp Expansion Nears Completion

Over the past several months, there has been plenty of construction activity happening off the east end of the passenger terminal building. Fences were relocated, earth was moved, and concrete was poured...lots of concrete.

This aircraft ramp expansion project is being completed in advance of the Concourse B expansion project, which will result in the addition of two

expansion
continued on page 4

News In Brief

- » The next two meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board will take place on November 28 and December 19, 2012, at 8:30 am. All meetings are held in the International Room of the passenger terminal building unless otherwise noted on our website at www.FlyFord.org/AeroBoard.php. Meetings are open to the public.
- » We will once again be hosting area middle and high school choral groups for our annual Airport Holiday Music Festival the week of December 3 – 7, 2012. Even if you aren't flying in or out that week, we welcome you to stop out and support our local schools.

Connected

How can you stay connected with what's happening at your airport?

On Facebook:

[GeraldRFordInternationalAirport](https://www.facebook.com/GeraldRFordInternationalAirport)

On the web:

www.FlyFord.org

Subscribe to *Airport Connections*:

Send an email to gfiainfo@grr.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line.

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

Email: gfiainfo@grr.org

Airport Board | Joe Tomaselli, chair; Dick Vander Molen*, vice chair; Terri Lynn Land; Roger Morgan*; David Slikkers; Ted Vonk*; Floyd Wilson, Jr.
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expansion

continued from page 3

new gates, slated to begin in 2013. The expanded pavement surface will allow larger aircraft to access all the gates on the north side of Concourse B. It also creates a bypass lane to improve aircraft flow in and out of this area.

In addition to the surface work, this project included relocation of a portion of the security fence, installation of a new pre-cast concrete blast wall along Gateway Drive, relocation of an existing metal blast wall, various water system upgrades, and the installation of new lighting fixtures.

In all, 22,000 sq. ft. of new pavement was added to the Aircraft Operating Area, bringing it to a total 14,831,842 sq. ft. of pavement. This is equivalent to 258 football fields with end zones, or 340 acres of land.



The new Concourse B ramp project as seen from the east end of the parking garage.

Kent County Department of Aeronautics

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