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## New Service and New Destinations Mean More Options for West Michigan Flyers

Something wonderful was in the air at GFIA on September 3...and then it landed! It was the inaugural inbound flight from Charlotte, NC and it was a moment worthy of celebration. Greeted on the taxiway by a water cannon salute presented by the GFIA Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighters, the plane continued on to the gate. As passengers deplaned in Grand Rapids they received gift bags and were invited to enjoy a light buffet featuring Carolina BBQ and Philly Cheesesteak sandwiches. Delicious cupcakes from the famous Grand Rapids bakery, The Cakabakery, sweetened the reception even more.



The celebration wasn't just for Charlotte though. The recent merger of American Airlines and US Airways has resulted in expanded air service to two new destinations to choose from as service was launched to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport (CLT) and Philadelphia International Airport (PHL).

With twice daily service to each location, West Michigan travelers have connection opportunities to nearly 150 domestic and international destinations. "We are thrilled to have American, in its merger with US Airways, expand our air service market in Grand Rapids and offer more choices for our travelers," said Brian Ryks, GFIA Executive Director. "This new service will provide nonstop flights to two more large thriving cities and convenient connections to many other domestic and international destinations.

"As we work to fully integrate our two networks, we remain committed to expanding our domestic service to better serve our customers in small- and medium-sized markets," said Vice President of Network and Schedule Planning Chuck Shubert. "By building our network presence in Grand Rapids, we are providing more

people in more places access to our global network covering more than 220 destinations in more than 50 countries around the world." In addition to these two new routes, American also connects GFIA travelers via its hubs at Chicago O'Hare (ORD) and Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW).

West Michigan is now connected via nonstop flights with Atlanta, Baltimore/Washington, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, Detroit, Ft. Myers, Houston, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, St. Louis, St. Pete/Clearwater, Tampa, and Washington DC.



# Grand Rapids TSA Officer Helps Launch National ASL Program

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers encounter travelers with a range of needs, and one local officer's passion is helping to draw national attention for American Sign Language (ASL). Grand Rapids based Transportation Security Officer Kenneth Bornert, who is fluent in sign language, assists travelers with hearing disabilities. Bornert has worked for the TSA since November 2002.

Bornert's wife was born partially deaf, and later in life she lost all of her hearing due to an illness. "We had to learn to communicate and so we started learning sign language," said Bornert, who has signed for 16 years.

Combining his passion for sign language and his enthusiasm for his work with the TSA came a few years ago when Bornert was put on light duty due to an injury. He contacted the publishers of the ASL dictionary to obtain permission to create a manual based on encounters TSA officers have with deaf passengers. The manual covers everything from dropping off checked baggage at the security checkpoint to communicating the process of taking out liquids, removing shoes, and walking through the screening equipment. Bornert then began offering a two-hour class to teach local interested officers the 70+ signs that are in the manual. From there, a video featuring Bornert was distributed to TSA training programs around the country. So far, more than a dozen airports have contacted Federal Security Director Max Harnish to receive the video, and TSA Headquarters in Washington is planning to incorporate Bornert's program at the national level.

"It gives me a great sense of satisfaction to know there's a group of people I can help," said Bornert "Hopefully I am providing an opportunity for other TSA staff to communicate with travelers with hearing disabilities to help them feel more comfortable with what is usually a scary and confusing process," said Kenneth Bornert.



Ken Bornert helps a passenger through the security screening process.

Most recently, Bornert assisted in airport screening during the 2014 World Deaf Golf Championships from July 12-18, 2014 in Traverse City. During screening, Bornert was using sign language to communicate with hearing impaired athletes from several foreign countries. He aided in screening operations, locating passengers and explaining the process of unlocking bags to be screened.



Transportation  
Security  
Administration

## Reducing Our Environmental Footprint

At Gerald R. Ford International Airport, we view environmental sustainability efforts as an integral part of our mission and we are committed to reducing the airport's impact on the natural environment. Our mission is to provide safe, secure, efficient, **environmentally sensitive**, economically self-sustaining and globally infused air transportation facilities responsive to regional needs.

This year, in collaboration with our airport tenants and the great folks at Comprenew, the airport recycled 7,800 lbs. of computers, tools, phones, printers, monitors, TVs and other



recycle  
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## GFIA Receives ACI-NA Environmental Achievement Award

Gerald R. Ford International Airport's *Deicing 101 - Educating West Michigan* project was selected as the winner of the 2014 ACI-NA Environmental Achievement Award for the Outreach, Education and Community Involvement category. The award was presented at the September 8 ACI-NA Annual Conference and Exhibition in Atlanta.

In presenting the award, ACI-NA President and CEO Kevin Burke states, "The judges applaud the innovative communication tactics utilized in order to overcome the hurdles presented regarding deicing education and the airport's practices."

The airport's stormwater deicing improvement project is scheduled for completion in September 2015.



# Celebrating One Year of *Gentle Fur in Action* with West Michigan Therapy Dogs!

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport has become furrrier and friendlier over the last year, thanks to *GFIA: Gentle Fur in Action*, our therapy dog program!

The program started in October 2013 with two teams. Because of their popularity, we now have seven trainers and nine dogs roaming the concourses and other public areas and greeting passengers with a shake of a paw or a furry hug. The therapy dogs and their owners are trained through the West Michigan Therapy Dogs (WMTD), and are at the airport five to six days a week at various peak travel hours. The dogs are so popular; many airport employees know them by name and await their weekly visits.

The therapy dog program was created to help passengers who experience stress or anxiety when traveling, but the dogs have also assisted in numerous other platforms. Over the last year the dogs have helped a woman who had a fear of flying, assisted a young boy with autism who was nervous about travel, and offered comfort to a tearful mother who had put her son on a plane to Afghanistan.

Easy to identify, the therapy dogs wear blue vests that read, "Ask to pet me. I am friendly." Unlike a service animal that is to be left alone, the therapy dogs' job is to be petted and engaged by the public. Another difference is that, when they are at home they are the family pet - off duty and free to have fun and relax.

Thank you to our therapy dogs and their owners who volunteer their time and energy to welcome West Michigan travelers with a smile, a hug and a paw!

GFIA therapy dogs are also available by request to greet you or assist with travel. For more information, please contact Tara Hernandez – [THernandez@grr.org](mailto:THernandez@grr.org) or 616-233-6053.



Amy & Gurner



Jan & Chamois



Phyllis & Brody



Amy & Hans



Haley & Toby



Terrilynne & Dexter



Lissa & Pavlov



Heather & Fiona



Clarence Ebenezer  
(also with Heather)

*The Gentle Fur In Action has received local and national media attention, including:*

- ~ USA Today
- ~ NBC Nightly News
- ~ The Grand Rapids Press
- ~ FOX-17
- ~ WWMT - Channel 3
- ~ WOOD TV8



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## News In Brief

- » The next two meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board will be held Wednesday, November 26, and December 17 beginning at 8:30 am in the International Room at the passenger terminal building. The meetings are open to the public.

### recycle

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electronics. Staff gathered, stacked and loaded 18 pallets into a trailer for recycling thus helping nearly four tons of electronics to bypass the landfill.

If you would like to know more about the airport's environmental sustainability efforts, visit our website at [www.FlyFord.org/Enviro.php](http://www.FlyFord.org/Enviro.php) where you can view our 2013 report.

## Airport Employee Information Corner

Safe wintertime operations depend upon aircraft and airfield pavement deicing activities, which are strictly regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The GFIA Deicing Management Program provides for the control of deicing materials at the airport through the use of best management practices (BMPs), recycling, and other mechanisms designed to protect the environment. GFIA's program relies on organization, teamwork, and the implementation of specific structural controls, practices, and procedures to achieve its goals. Through constant refinement to its Deicing Management Program, the cooperation of airport tenants, and the hard work of its employees, GFIA works hard to ensure the safety of the traveling public while also taking steps to protect the local environment.

To facilitate the recycling of deicing chemicals, GFIA restricts airport users to propylene glycol-based aircraft deicing products. Also to protect the environment, GFIA has banned the use of nitrogen-based deicing products (e.g. urea) and tenants are reminded that materials containing urea are not allowed for use anywhere at GFIA. Any tenant needing information on approved deicing products should contact Roy Hawkins at (616) 233-6000 or via email at [RHawkins@grr.org](mailto:RHawkins@grr.org).

GFIA reminds everyone that the active participation of all employees is a critical part of the overall stormwater management program at the airport. If you observe any practices or situations that may potentially impact the quality of stormwater at the airport, call Airport Communications at 233-6055 and report your observation(s).

**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

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

**Twitter:** @FlyGRFord

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