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## Luv Is In The Air...The Airport, Too!

Southwest Airlines officially landed at GFIA on Sunday, August 11, 2013. The first canyon blue Boeing 737 touched down at 11:56 am and taxied to the terminal beneath a water cannon salute from the Aircraft Rescue Firefighters. At the gate, inbound passengers from Baltimore were welcomed to Grand Rapids as excited travelers waited to board their flight to depart for St. Louis.

The celebration included speeches from Airport Executive Director Brian Ryks, Southwest Airlines Senior Director Pete Houghton, Airport Board Chairman and Kent County Commissioner Roger Morgan, Regional Air Alliance of West Michigan Founder & Chairman Dick DeVos, and Experience Grand Rapids President Doug Small.



The first arrival was celebrated with a water cannon salute by the Aircraft Rescue Firefighters.



The celebration's keynote address was given by Dick DeVos.

Houghton shared his enthusiasm for the new service. "Southwest Airlines is excited to offer nonstop routes from Gerald R. Ford International to Baltimore/Washington, Orlando, St. Louis, Denver, and soon to be Ft. Myers and Tampa, connecting them to more than 70 cities across the nation," Houghton stated. "Not only are we giving Michigan customers more options, we're providing our more than 100 million customers annually access to Grand Rapids Michigan."

As it enters the market, Southwest Airlines is more than doubling the number of available seats. This significant increase comes from the addition of flights to Denver and St. Louis and as a result of the larger all-737 fleet they fly (AirTran flew 717 aircraft). During seasonal service to Tampa and Ft. Myers, that gain will be even more dramatic.

us."

"We appreciate Southwest embracing our community by bringing the very best in air service," Airport Executive Director Brian Ryks said. "We are eager to expand our partnership as we promote LUV throughout West Michigan."

The event continued as arriving passengers received a warm West Michigan welcome and goodie bag when entering the terminal. Not to be forgotten, those heading out to St. Louis and beyond were treated to a hearty send-off and bag of swag.

So, before you plan your next vacation or business trip, be sure check out Southwest Airline's fares only available at Southwest.com.

In his keynote address, DeVos stated, "This is a great day for West Michigan. Now, we have to start flying from Ford International, start flying on Southwest and we'll validate this decision. We earn it by the fact that we pay attention, and that we reward those who serve



LUV doesn't get any sweeter than this beautiful and delicious cake created by the Cakabakery!



## Airport Board Recognizes Military Honor

Tom Edson would say he is no more deserving of recognition than the other soldiers he served with in Afghanistan, but his extraordinary efforts were acknowledged at the June 26, 2013 meeting of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport board.

Edson, a 16-year military veteran, received a roaring round of applause from airport board members, staff and the public for his dedication to our country. The 41-year-old returned to work at the airport on May 1, 2013 after his most recent nine months of service in the Michigan Army National Guard.

Edson received the Meritorious Service Medal upon returning from Afghanistan. He was one of three people in his unit that were bestowed with the medal, and joins other recipients like Corporal Pat Tillman and Senator John McCain. "I was with 188 others in my unit serving our country," Edson said. "Any one of them could be honored. We all had dangerous jobs and went through some rough firefights."

In the National Guard, Edson serves as a combat engineer. His special skill set involved leading a unit responsible for searching for and destroying IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) and patrolling dangerous Taliban-occupied areas.

The father of four is re-adjusting to life back in the United States and is catching up on time with his daughters and wife, Heather. Edson credits airport staff for looking out for his family while he was at war. "My airport family was there for my family while I was gone," said Edson. "The guys at the shop were always checking in. They were wonderful."

Edson has worked in the Kent County Department of Aeronautics Field Maintenance Division since October 2000.



## Airport Passes FAA Inspection With Flying Colors

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) recently passed its annual Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certification and safety inspection with zero discrepancies. Commercial air carrier airports such as GFIA are regulated by the FAA. Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 139 sets rules for the certification and operation of airports. This includes strict standards for governing airfield and pavement conditions, airfield lighting, snow and ice control, aircraft rescue and firefighting, personnel training, and handling and storage of hazardous materials. In addition, emergency planning and wildlife hazard management are reviewed.

The following divisions are involved with the operation and maintenance of the airfield; Airfield Maintenance, Building Maintenance, Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF), and Operations. This annual three-day comprehensive inspection revealed that GFIA is being operated in full compliance with FAR Part 139 rules. The FAA applauded the Kent County Department of Aeronautics, owner and operator of GFIA, on its procedures and noted their effectiveness.

"We commend you for the procedures you are using in the day-to-day operation of the airport," said Alberto Rodriguez, FAA Lead Airport Certification & Safety Inspector.

2013 marks the fourth consecutive year the Gerald R. Ford International Airport has not had a single discrepancy.

"I am very pleased with the recent inspection results from the FAA verifying our airfield is in excellent condition," said GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks. "This is a testament to the professional staff we have working at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport and the dedication they exhibit each and every day to ensure our facilities are safe and secure for the traveling public."



Fire chief Todd Szakacs, captain Joe Dancz, firefighter Kirk Smith, equipment operator Jeff Phillips, field maintenance supervisor Jeff McNally, mechanic Craig Senna, airport maintenance worker Mike Gatens, building maintenance supervisor Robert Wilson, electrician Brian Kamp, communications specialist Kelly Felker and operations supervisor Bruce Applebach (L to R above) represent the 60+ employees directly responsible for the safe and secure operation of the airfield.

## A Centennial Birthday Celebration

President Gerald R. Ford would have observed his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday on Sunday, July 14, 2013 and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport held a Centennial Celebration in President Ford's honor.

On the afternoon of Friday, July 12, the airport hosted a "Birthday Party" to honor President Ford. As with all good birthday parties, the festivities included red, white and blue cupcakes along with various giveaways and games.

**"He was affable. Just so kind and so sweet...he made us feel like family."**

*~ Barbara VanGenderen  
about President Ford*

Hundreds of passengers flying in and out of GFIA participated in the event. Staff members, the public and even some that knew President Ford were also on hand. Larry and Barbara VanGenderen were visiting

from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Mrs. VanGenderen worked for President Ford and said that he was a kind man who always took the time to stop, say hello and cared for his staff.

"He was very affable. Just so kind and so sweet," said Mrs. VanGenderen. "He kept to himself, but was never demanding and made us feel like family."



**Barbara and Larry VanGenderen**



**Who could help but smile at these sweet faces?**

It was our smallest travelers who seemed to have the most fun at the party with balloons and cupcakes as a part of the celebration. Needless to say, the blue cupcakes were the most popular and left the best frosting faces!

We'd like to offer a big thank you to Meijer, Inc. for donating the cupcakes and cake!

## Giving Our Youngest Travelers A Lift

You know the saying – we've all heard it – "It's the little things that count." And busy parents of toddlers and young children know that better than anyone. At GFIA, we are always interested to find ways to make traveling with your kids easier and more enjoyable. So, when an airport traveler sent us an email about this new amenity, we were instantly intrigued.



Step-and-wash stools are now installed in a number of restrooms both pre- and post-security screening.

They can give our young travelers a bit of freedom – and free up mom or dad's hands in the meantime – as they wash up. Paired with our motion activated sinks, soap and towel dispensers, kids can be more independent and parents have one less thing to lift when preparing for air travel.

Special thanks to Tracey S. for contacting us with her suggestion! Do you have a suggestion for an airport amenity you would like to see at GFIA? If so, feel free to contact us at [gfiainfo@grr.org](mailto:gfiainfo@grr.org). We love hearing from our patrons!

## Airport Employee Information Corner

An important and unique feature of GFIA's stormwater/deicing improvements project is a Natural Treatment System (NTS) that will remove deicing materials from stormwater. Deicing materials are used during the winter season to ensure flight safety. The NTS will significantly improve the quality of stormwater leaving the airport before it is discharged into local waterways. The NTS design includes a detention basin that is used to control the flow of stormwater into six treatment cells, after which it flows into a second set of six treatment cells. Gravity will be used to move the stormwater from the detention basin through the cells with no mechanical pumping required. Layers of gravel and sand in the treatment cells provide habitat for communities of microbes that feed on organic matter, including the deicing materials.

This technology has been used for over 50 years to provide reliable and natural water treatment. While this is the first such system used at an airport in Michigan, similar NTS facilities have been successfully installed at airports in North America and

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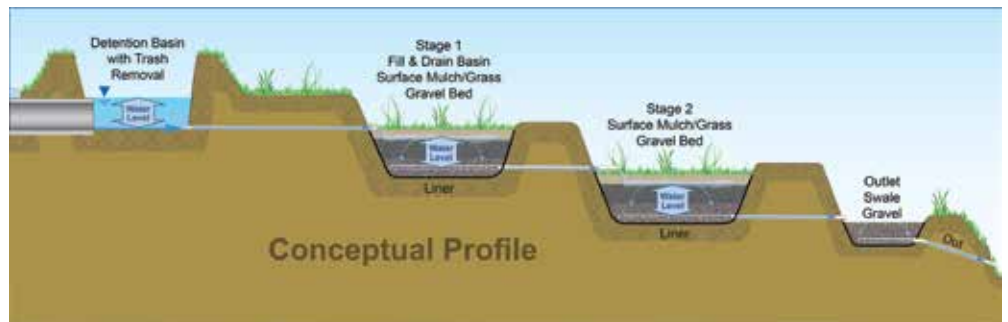
## News In Brief

- » The next three meetings of the GFIA Board will be held on August 28, September 25, and October 30, 2013 at 8:30 am in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. Public is welcome.
- » Air Canada has announced that it will no longer serve the Grand Rapids market effective September 3, 2013.
- » Frontier Airlines has announced that it will no longer serve the Grand Rapids market effective September 8, 2013. Denver-bound travelers will still be able to choose from three daily nonstop flights offered by United Airlines and Southwest Airlines.

## information

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around the world. The NTS is expected to remove 80% of the deicers from stormwater on an annual basis which will provide a level of environmental protection that exceeds state and federal requirements.



GFIA also reminds everyone that the active participation of staff and tenants is a critical part of the overall stormwater management program at the airport. If you observe any practices or situations that appear to have the potential to impact the quality of stormwater at the Airport, call Airport Communications at (616) 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:

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