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## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Airport Day & Plane Pull®

Over 250,000 pounds of a FedEx A310, more than 1,200 people and countless smiles and laughs were all part of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Airport Day & Plane Pull® on Saturday, July 19.



The celebration, held to commemorate fifty years of aviation at our current location, was open to the public and featured numerous activities, aircraft displays, 50-cent food, a skydiving exhibition, and a Law Enforcement Torch Run Plane Pull Challenge® to benefit Special Olympics Michigan.

The day started with last season's American Idol Top 10 Finalist Maurice Townsend singing "God Bless America" as a team of skydivers from Central Michigan Skydivers descended onto airport grounds with the American flag. NHL veteran and East Kentwood native Mike Knuble also spoke to the athletes, giving them words of advice for the Plane Pull, and telling emcee Tim Doty from FOX 17 about his experiences flying in and out of GRR over the last 17 years as a professional hockey player. Then, Plane Pull participants began their quest to tackle pulling the FedEx A310 twelve feet in the fastest time. Twenty-five person teams raised over \$8,000 for Special Olympics at the event!



In addition to the Plane Pull, face painting, balloon animals and an inflatable obstacle course were available to entertain the kids. For the adults, there was a prize drawing for which the Grand Prize was a \$200 Southwest Airlines gift card. All ages were eligible to spin a prize wheel to win one of a variety of giveaway items. 50-cent food including hot dogs, ice cream, chips and fruit were a hit as many families ate for under five dollars! Grand Rapids Griffins' mascot, Griff, even stopped by to shake hands and greet our guests.

"We have been celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary throughout the year, but this celebration was a way to thank the West Michigan community for supporting our local airport and local jobs," said GFIA Executive

Director Brian Ryks. "Not only were we thrilled to celebrate our anniversary, but we are proud to support Special Olympics and its efforts across Michigan."

Static aircraft displays were also a huge hit for kids and adults alike as many got to see inside planes, snow removal equipment and airport fire trucks for the first time. A special thank you goes out to all of the tenants and those who participated in the event! We appreciate you taking time to speak with the public and show off your aircraft and equipment.

Participants included: Amway Aviation, Cascade Fire Department, Civil Air Patrol, Grand Rapids Police Department, Hillsdale County Sheriff Department, Kent County Department of Aeronautics' Field Maintenance, Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting & Police, Life EMS, Metro Cab, Michigan State Police - Lakeview Post, the West Michigan Aviation Academy, and Western Michigan University Aviation.

Thank you to all who participated and made our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Airport Day a success!!



## Safety Is A Top Priority At GFIA

When travelers arrive at an airport, airfield safety isn't likely one of their top concerns. On the contrary, it's more of an unconscious expectation. At GFIA, we like to keep it that way. We work hard to maintain the infrastructure at or above standards every day. While the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) performs an inspection once each year, GFIA staff performs frequent internal inspections and takes immediate action to ensure safe operations on our airfield.



The FAA inspection goes beyond just looking at airfield conditions. They review our records to ensure that appropriate training occurs, internal inspections are being done, and that best practice standards are being used. Although each annual inspection lasts just two to three days, the process of ensuring a safe airfield is a 365-day per year job.

The divisions most impacted by and responsible for airfield safety include Field Maintenance, Building Maintenance, Operations, and Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting. For the men and women in these departments it's not just about what they do, but about how they do it. They work together as a team to inspect, repair (if needed) and maintain the runways, taxiways, aircraft ramps, lighting, perimeter fences, and fields. They keep detailed records on the work they do, their daily findings, training and more.

Our 2014 inspection was completed in July with excellent results. So, next time you fly through GFIA just remember, we've done all we can and more to make your trip as safe as possible.

## Presenting...

Is your group looking for a speaker for an upcoming meeting? Would your organization like to learn more about the airport? The GFIA Marketing and Communications division would welcome the opportunity to come to your next meeting and provide an overview of the airport, updates on ongoing airport development projects and the state of the aviation industry. Presentations can be timed to fit nicely into a breakfast or lunchtime meeting.

For more information, or to request a speaker for your next meeting, please call the Marketing and Communications division at (616) 233-6031 or visit the website at [www.FlyFord.org](http://www.FlyFord.org) for more information located under About Us, Newsroom.



## Weekend in St. Louis

On June 20, six lucky people were able to take part in a spur of the moment all-inclusive weekend travel opportunity to St. Louis thanks to the partnership between GFIA, Cumulus media and the Lambert St. Louis Airport.

The unique "Pack Your Bags" event invited interested travelers to show up at the airport with a travel companion and bags packed to register to win. At 7:30, three pairs of names were drawn and those lucky winners boarded the Southwest Airlines 9:10 a.m. flight. As part of HOT 105.3's "105 Hot Days of Summer" on-air personality Gravy traveled with the winners, reporting back via social media to share updates throughout the weekend.

In addition to air travel, the package included hotel accommodations, transportation to/from the St. Louis Airport, restaurant gift cards, suite tickets for a St. Louis Cardinals game and a tour of the famous St. Louis Arch.

Follow GFIA on Facebook and Twitter for more fun happenings!

## Winners Announced!

The GFIA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Airport Day offered many opportunities for winning. From the Special Olympics Plane Pull® to the prize wheel to a variety of drawings, there were numerous prizes to be won by all.

### Grand-Prize Drawing Winner

» Holli Dykema

### Other Drawing Winners

- » Jerry Clark
- » Elmer Derks
- » Michael Dorsey
- » Bradley Geers
- » David Reiffer
- » Pete Stirn
- » Dave VanderKlok
- » Anthony VanKlompberg

### Metro Cab Whitecaps Prize Pack Winner

» Yoe Aguilera

### Special Olympics Plane Pull Winners

- » **Fastest Pull** - GRISH of Grand Rapids
- » **Most money raised** - Kent County Parole & Probation team (\$2,800)
- » **Slowest Pull** - Gun Lake Casino

Of course everyone who spun the prize wheel walked away a winner!



# GFIA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Airport Day in Pictures



Maurice Townsend performs "God Bless America" during the skydive exhibition.



Griff stopped by to check out some of our wings.



Plane Pull team hard at work.



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## News In Brief

- » The next three meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board will be held Wednesday, August 27, September 24, and October 29, 2014 beginning at 8:30 am. All meetings will be held in the International Room at the passenger terminal building unless otherwise posted on our website at [www.FlyFord.org](http://www.FlyFord.org). The meetings are open to the public.

## 50 Years Ago...

Flying a single engine Cessna 180, Geraldine "Jerrie" Fredritz Mock was the first woman to fly solo around the world. The flight took 29 days, 21 stopovers and almost 22,860 miles.

## Expanding Our Horizons

Beginning Wednesday, September 3, 2014 West Michigan travelers will have even more choices for air travel as two new nonstop destinations are added. As a result of the merger between American Airlines and US Airways, GFIA partons will soon be able to fly to - or connect through - the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) and the Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT). Each new route will begin with twice daily service.

Via Charlotte Douglas International, travelers can connect to nearly 100 domestic and more than 30 international destinations around the globe. Or, you may want to make North Carolina your final destination. With professional basketball, hockey, and football teams, plus the NASCAR Hall of Fame, sports fans can find plenty to do right in the state!

Via Philadelphia International, more than 125 nonstop domestic and international destinations are available. History buffs may prefer to stay in Philadelphia and explore the architecture, museums and more. (And who doesn't crave an authentic Philly Cheesesteak?)

The addition of these two new cities means that West Michigan travelers can choose from a total of 24 nonstop routes to and from GFIA.



U-S AIRWAYS®

*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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