

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Santa & Mrs. Claus to Visit Airport during Holiday Open House



Grand Rapids, MI – The Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) is getting into the holiday spirit with an open house, and a visit from Santa & Mrs. Claus.

On **Saturday, December 16 from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**, GFIA is opening its doors for a unique experience where guests can pre-register for an open house and enjoy the new amenities and offerings post-security as a part of the airport's new Gateway Transformation. Anyone is open to attend, but must register on the airport's website at: <http://www.grr.org/public-notice2.php>. After receiving a checkpoint pass, guests will go through security, and have a chance to shop at the new retail stores, grab a bite to eat at one of the new restaurants, and explore the new business centers, kids play areas, and more.



“We’ve heard so many wonderful compliments about our new space from our regular travelers, but we know there are many who haven’t seen the new renovations and want to. This will give them the opportunity to check out the offerings, even if they aren’t flying,” said GFIA President & CEO Jim Gill.

In addition to the open house, Santa will be listening to children’s requests, and passing out treats with Mrs. Claus in the Airport’s Grand Hall in the pre-security area, and carolers will be putting travelers in the holiday spirit.

The event is free and the public is welcome to attend. Visitors are encouraged to bring a camera to snap a photo with Santa Claus. Photos with Santa are free of charge, but the airport is asking guests to bring in two non-perishable food items per person.

“Our airport is extremely busy around the holidays, but it is important for us to reflect upon what this season is all about,” said Gill. “We are hoping we can put some smiles on children’s faces as they sit on Santa’s lap and listen to carols, and at the same time we are asking West Michigan to give back to the community by donating non-perishable food items to those in need.”

The donated food items will go to Mel Trotter Ministries – a Grand Rapids non-profit that serves anyone experiencing hunger and homelessness, and helps individuals and families find sustainable income and housing through rescue and restoration programs and services.

“It takes a community of partnerships to address hunger and homelessness in West Michigan and we are filled with gratitude that the Gerald R. Ford International Airport is supporting the holiday food drive again this year,” said Dennis Van Kampen, CEO of Mel Trotter Ministries. “The food collected will supplement our pantry through the holidays and the surplus will support Feeding America West Michigan and other area food pantries.”

In addition to Santa’s appearance, GFIA’s traditional Holiday Music Festival is running the week of December 4-8. The 23rd Annual Holiday Music Festival brings in middle and high school choirs from around West Michigan singing a variety of Christmas carols. Daily performances run from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., but a full schedule is available on the Airport’s Facebook page: www.facebook.com/GeraldRFordInternationalAirport.

A total of 12 local choirs representing public, charter and private schools sing 20 minute song sets throughout the day, putting passengers and guests at GFIA in the holiday spirit.

For interview or photo requests, please contact Tara Hernandez.

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