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Gerald R. Ford International Airport Plans Holiday Celebration with Santa, Troops' Homecomings & Giving Back to West Michigan

Grand Rapids, Mich. – Santa has to get back to the North Pole by Christmas Eve, and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport plans to send him off with a holiday event featuring the jolly ole' fella.

Kris Kringle will be in the airport's Grand Hall from 1-3pm on Monday, December 23rd before trekking off to the North Pole. The public is welcome to attend the event and 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 photo with Santa. The donated items will go to Loaves & Fishes – a food pantry operated by the Catholic Charities West Michigan.

In addition to Santa's appearance, the Patriot Guard Riders will also be at the airport from 11am-7pm on December 23rd to welcome home members of the military who are flying home for the holidays.

"Our airport is extremely busy around the holidays, but it is important for us to remember what this season is all about," said GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks. "We are hoping we can put some smiles on childrens' faces as they sit on Santa's lap, 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."

Last year Catholic Charities West Michigan had over 7,800 visits to their Loaves & Fishes food pantry located at 1095 Third Street, in downtown Muskegon. The people served come from all religions, socioeconomic backgrounds and walks of life.

"Our food pantry continues to be an important service in the Muskegon community," said Terry Walsh, President and CEO of Catholic Charities West Michigan, "Without the support we receive from our generous community members we would not be able to do the work we do. We thank everyone who takes a moment during this busy time to share with those who are in need."

For interview or photo requests with Santa or airport officials, please contact Tara Hernandez.

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