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GFIA: Gentle Fur In Action is Newest Therapy Dog Program

Sometimes traveling can be “ruff” and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport is hoping to ease emotions associated with travel by launching a therapy dog program. The program, known as *GFIA: Gentle Fur in Action* began on Thursday, October 3.



Gunner offers a photo op after visiting with a group of Army Cadets awaiting their deployment flight.

The airport is working with West Michigan Therapy Dogs, Inc. (WMTD). The volunteer program places therapy dogs and their owner/trainer in airport areas such as the Grand Hall waiting area, baggage claim, concourses and gates where passengers are arriving and departing. Unlike service dogs, therapy dogs are meant to be approached, and offer passengers the chance to rub a belly or shake a paw. The dogs are intended to take the stress and anxiety out of travel.

“We want all of our passengers to have a positive experience when flying,” said Gerald R. Ford International Airport executive director Brian Ryks. “Having therapy dogs in terminal areas will help ease our passenger’s

tensions, stress and create a warm and welcoming travel experience in our airport with these newest ambassadors.”

fur

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Transportation Security Administration Brings TSA Pre✓™ Program to GFIA

Frequent fliers traveling through Gerald R. Ford International Airport may now have the opportunity to fly through passenger screening prior to boarding their aircraft. Those who may be eligible to participate are described as, “Select frequent flyers of participating airlines and members of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Trusted Traveler programs who are flying on participating airlines.” At the present time, participating airlines include Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Hawaiian Airlines, United Airlines, US Airways, and Virgin America.



Transportation
Security
Administration

The expedited screening benefits include, “dedicated screening lanes for screening benefits which include leaving on shoes, light outerwear and belts, as well as leaving laptops and 3-1-1 compliant liquids in carry-on bags.”

The application will be a two-step process:

1. Fill out an online application.
2. Verify identity and provide fingerprints at a TSA Pre✓™ enrollment center.

Applicants may pay the anticipated \$85 enrollment fee online, or at an enrollment center. There is a five-year term of eligibility, after which members will need to re-apply. TSA expects the vetting process to take approximately 2-3 weeks. A U.S. passport is not required to enroll. The first two enrollment locations, Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) and Indianapolis International Airport (IND), will open in fall 2013 with plans to expand to additional enrollment sites nationwide.

You can find out more information about the TSA Pre✓™ program online at www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck.

Pardon Our Dust: Concourse and Concession Expansion Work Continues

Construction is underway on expansion of both concourses at GFIA that will result in increased passenger convenience and amenities. The project will add an additional 19,723 square feet of space, including lower level storage and mechanical space. The majority of work is on Concourse B with two new holdrooms, additional restrooms and expanded concession space. The new holdrooms include new passenger loading bridges, and will provide increased flexibility for new airlines to enter our market. In addition, it will give our existing airlines an opportunity to add new destinations or increase the number of flights to existing destinations.

Work on Concourse A includes expanded concession space and the expansion of two existing holdrooms. The expanded holdrooms will provide an increase in passenger seating and reduce the need for passengers to stand in the hallway while waiting to board flights.

The work on Concourse B also includes the introduction of a “new look” for GFIA. Passengers will see wood paneling instead of the concrete columns that now parallel the central hallway, new carpeting in the holdrooms, wall murals to add some color, and the introduction of terrazzo flooring. The new and remodeled restrooms will provide a brighter and more comforting atmosphere.

Expanded concession space will include both retail and food/beverage improvements. Concourse A will see expanded retail space with a “new look” storefront. Concourse B will also include expanded retail, along with a new food and beverage area designed to accommodate both sit-down service and the “grab-it-on-the-run” customer.

The contractor on the project is Grand Rapids based The Christman Company. Completion is scheduled for the summer of 2014.



Architectural rendering of the new Grand Rapids Magazine Travel Storefront.



Architectural rendering of the new Food Court proposed for Concourse B.

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The therapy dogs are roaming at the airport once a week and are clearly labeled with a vest that says, "Pet Me." The dogs have worked in other environments such as hospitals and nursing homes where they lend comfort and support and put a smile on people's faces.

"I was at the airport last week and my dog Gunner approached a woman," said West Michigan Therapy Dogs, Inc. Director of Programs Amy Meinecke. "Gunner went up and nudged her hand. She saw him and immediately started sobbing and wrapped her arms around him. She had a family member in the military that was leaving and my dog offered some support. We are so excited to have this program at the airport, and stories like that are why we do our job."



Chamois enjoys making new friends while she works, and belly rubs are a great bonus!

For more on the WMTD therapy dogs visit: www.wmtd.org.

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GFIA Gets Into the ArtPrize Spirit!

ArtPrize was a success in Grand Rapids once again, and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport celebrated the popular art event by hosting its own colorful contest.

Kids ages 4-12 were invited to "Be Their Own Artist," and create a piece of art. The art is displayed on the Concourse B wall along the area that is currently under construction. The art will remain there until the construction wall comes down.

The "Top Ten" entries, as judged by members of the KCDA staff, were awarded an ArtPrize/GFIA goodie bag full of prizes. Congratulations to our budding young artists!

Dreams & Wings

September 14 was a beautiful day for flying - and that's just what more than 40 families did at GFIA! Dreams & Wings hosted their annual Fly Day event where seven volunteer pilots donated their time and aircraft to offer flights over Grand Rapids to children and adults who live daily with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities.

"It was a phenomenal experience that we will remember forever," said one grateful parent. "Our pilot was totally awesome and made the experience so terrific for our 6-year-old."

For more information visit their website at www.dreamsandwings.us.



Captain Paul helps Mason get buckled in for take-off.

New Food, Beverage, and Retail Options Available

HMS Host, the company that provides the food and beverage concessions at GFIA has been very busy lately. Updated concession spaces are now home to Bell's Brew Pub and Greens, both offering great locally-sourced meal and snack options.

Bell's Brew Pub, located between the Grand Hall food court and the entrance to Concourse A, brings great local flavor to airport patrons. The restaurant features six of Bell's most popular beers on tap as well as dozens of bottled, locally brewed and national brands. In addition to the standard bar food, Bell's offer many specialty items including seafood bisque and their "Third Coast Burger," a vegan option built on a black bean burger. They also offer breakfast items and a few kid-friendly favorites.



A fresh salad bar and panini deli, Greens offers the nutrition and health conscious traveler a healthful dining option. With a wide variety of fresh choices, you can create your own personalized sandwich and salad creations. Or, if you're on the move, you may prefer one of their grab-and-go entree-sized salads. Greens also offers a variety of breakfast selections including assorted pastries or panini.



That local flair continues as you visit the Grand Rapids Magazine Travel Store operated by World Duty Free Group for your snacks, reading material, or souvenir, featuring many local and regional areas and events.



So, next time you're traveling, stop by and check out what's new! Oh, and don't worry. The Great American Bagel, Quiznos, and Starbucks are still here serving up your favorites.

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News in Brief

- » The next two meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board will be held on November 27 and December 18, 2013 at 8:30 am in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. The meetings are open to the public.

Celebrating 50 Years at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport!

On November 23, 1963 our airport began operating at its current location under the name "Kent County Airport." On Monday, November 25, 2013 the Kent County Department of Aeronautics will kick off a year's worth of activities to celebrate! We will be hosting a special party on that day, but we will continue to celebrate our 50 year milestone throughout 2014. Stay tuned to our Facebook page and Twitter (@FlyGRFord) for updates on events, giveaways, special contests and other fun surprises!



Did You Know?

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is financially self-supporting and requires no funding from property taxes, general funds, or special taxes. Airport operations and improvements generate local net airport revenue, rather than spend valuable tax dollars.

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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