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Visitor Information On The Move

For some, arriving in a new city and a new airport is old hat; it's what they do multiple times each year and they never raise an eyebrow. However, for others, exiting an airplane in unfamiliar surroundings may result in confusion and questions. Not only do they not know how to get to their hotel, they may not even know where to go to claim their checked luggage.

Beginning June 1, GFIA will have the services of roving Airport Ambassadors who will be looking for these travelers. Equipped with a tablet computer and a smile, these Experience Grand Rapids staff will be visible throughout the passenger terminal building, ready to provide assistance on the spot.



Programs like this are being implemented at many airports both large and small around the world. Airport Ambassadors provide a vital community service by promoting a positive community image and providing information and assistance to passengers, visitors, and members of the public.

The Ambassador program at GFIA will be in addition to Experience Grand Rapids' visitor information desk already at the airport. Said EGR president Doug Small, "Right now, we're pretty much planted firmly behind an information desk providing services — it's very reactive. Our organization is a very *proactive* organization." Visitors may still find personal assistance at the information desk, located across from baggage claim, as well as brochures, maps, and other literature highlighting area attractions.

The Airport Ambassador program is just one more customer service amenity aimed at bringing first-class service to the West Michigan community and our airport users and visitors.



Make A Clean Get-Away After Your Next Trip



Haven't we all wished we could squeeze just a few more hours into our day, or finish more tasks in the time we do have? Perhaps the solution is to let someone else complete a few of those tasks for you. For instance, as you prepare for your next trip out of GFIA, you may want to consider having your vehicle cleaned and detailed while you're gone.

Thanks to a new partnership between the airport's valet parking service provider and Crystal Clean Auto Detailing (CCAD), services can be performed while you are away on your trip. Simply request the "Fly and Shine" detailing service when you drop off your vehicle. While you are gone, a CCAD representative will come to the airport and pick up your vehicle, take it to their nearby facility, and complete the requested services. When your flight lands, your freshly detailed vehicle will be waiting.

Now, that's what we call a clean get-away!



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Kent Career Tech Center's Avionics Program Continues Gaining Altitude

On February 28, the Kent Career Tech Center's (KCTC) Avionics Program became the first high school-only course to earn accreditation from the National Center for Aerospace & Transportation Technologies (NCATT). This designation will allow students to take the certification exam at the end of the one-year program to become an Aircraft Electronics Technician (AET), a credential which local employers say will qualify program graduates for immediate employment. Students also earn both high school and college credit for their coursework.

William Trampler, a supervisor at L3 Avionics, who also serves as the Avionics Advisory Committee chairman for KCTC, helped the avionics program earn the national accreditation. "Students in this program get a real jump-start on their aviation careers," he said. "With AET certification, they are prepared to enter the workforce and college. They can easily get into military aviation or further their education at aviation colleges or trade schools."

The program – now in its fourth year – boasts a rate of 89% of its students going on to college and 75% securing jobs in aviation.



The program educates students in how to install and repair the electronic instruments pilots use during flight.

KCTC is one of many

programs offered through the Kent Intermediate School District, which provides regional educational services. It serves approximately 2,000 high school juniors and seniors from all across Kent and Barry counties. Students come from more than 60 high schools.

Special Events For WMAA

Students, faculty and staff at the West Michigan Aviation Academy (WMAA) have had a lot to celebrate recently. On February 29, former astronaut Mark Kelly visited the Academy and spoke to the students about his aviation career, telling them that many of the Academy's students are already ahead of where he was at their age.

Kelly's appearance came on the same day the GFIA Board approved a \$4-5 million expansion of the Academy, which is needed to make room for additional students. The expansion will allow the school to accommodate 600 students. Plans call for the current 25,000-square-foot building to connect to a new, two-story, 46,000-square-foot building that will include a gym, additional classrooms and commons area.



The school has multiple partners, including industry manufacturer GE Aviation. The company assists through mentoring, robotics coursework and providing aviation speakers. "The continued growth of WMAA will provide a needed boost in the areas of aviation and technical education, with a growth path for future engineering students," said George Kiefer, vice president and general manager, Avionics North America for GE Aviation. "Our desire is to share our passion and expertise in aviation with the students, with the hope it becomes contagious."

The school currently draws students from more than 30 school districts, with about half coming from Grand Rapids, Caledonia and Kentwood. For more information about the Academy, visit their website at WestMichiganAviation.org.

Airport Construction Activities Continue

Construction is scheduled to begin mid-June to expand the aircraft ramp on the north side of Concourse B in anticipation of adding two new hold rooms to that side of the passenger terminal facility. This ramp project will add 20,000 sq. ft. of pavement that will add ramp space for aircraft operations at the two new hold rooms (scheduled to be constructed later), and will increase the size of the pavement area at existing gates on the north side of Concourse B to accommodate larger aircraft. Ramp construction is scheduled to be completed by mid-October 2012.

Beginning in the second half of 2012, design and engineering work will occur for the two new hold rooms. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2013 and is expected to take 12-18 months to complete.

None of these 2012 construction activities will have an impact on airport travelers and visitors. This was achieved through the careful planning and phasing of construction projects that saw Gateway Drive relocated closer to the parking garage in 2011, thereby eliminating the intersection of passenger vehicle and construction vehicle traffic.

Stay tuned for further updates on improvements coming at GFIA.

Passenger Appreciation Days...Like An Oasis Before You Travel

You may be surprised to learn that the busiest travel holiday at GFIA is Spring Break. That's why, each year, the Kent County Department of Aeronautics (KCDA) chooses three days at the start of Spring Break to thank all our airport patrons. The 2012 Passenger Appreciation Days celebration was held March 29-31.

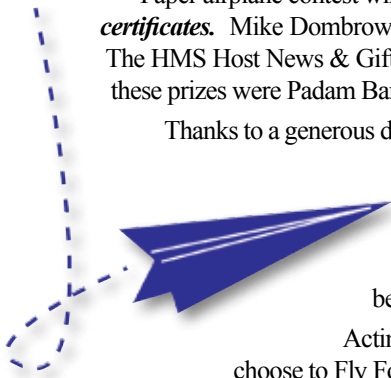
In a setting where cool tunes filled the air and tropical decorations set the stage, the hospitality station in the Grand Hall was the place to be for refreshments, drawings, games, and give-aways. Behind the hospitality station, the perennial favorite paper airplane flying contest saw participants of all ages flying their aircraft in hopes of landing in the drawing for a \$100 mall gift certificate (one drawing was held each day). For those less-daring travelers, there was also a daily drawing for a \$150 travel voucher compliments of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board.

Paper airplane contest winners Madi Saagman of Jenison, Olivia Weller of Ada, and Meghan Lloyd of Holland each received **mall gift certificates**. Mike Dombrowski of Grand Rapids, Shelley Gibbons of Caledonia, and Sam Roth of Ada each won **\$150 travel vouchers**. The HMS Host News & Gift Shop generously donated three pair of Coloud Colors headphone sets w/ microphone & remote. Winners of these prizes were Padam Bansal of Copley, OH, G.M. Minnhaar-Tomatis of Grand Rapids, and Gerardo Ruiz of Lawton.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, we were able to draw an extra name from our three days of entry forms for an overnight stay. The winner of the Amway stay was Daniel Anderson of Grand Rapids!

Additionally, KCDA would like to thank airport business partners Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Amway Aviation, DHL, L-3 Communications, Metro Cab, Northern Air, and Experience Grand Rapids for their generous donations of give-away items. We also want to offer a huge thank you to food and beverage concessionaire HMS Host for their coordination of refreshments.

Acting Executive Director Phil Johnson states, "We are grateful each and every time West Michigan travelers choose to Fly Ford. This is just our small way to say 'Thank you' for their loyalty."



Civil Air Patrol Returns To GFIA

GFIA is excited to welcome back to the airport the Grand Rapids Senior Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). After a devastating weather event on June 21, 2011 (believed to be a microburst) destroyed the hangar that housed the unit's aircraft, the CAP has found a new home with Grand Rapids Air Center, which welcomed its newest tenant with strong support of the various missions CAP performs. The leadership team of the GR Senior Squadron comments that, "the Grand Rapids Air Center offers the CAP a wonderful, first-class facility with unmatched service and support. The facility is also extremely secure and the staff at Grand Rapids Air Center extends the utmost respect for what we do."

Although the CAP has been serving America for over 70-years, this 'quiet' organization is not as well known as one might assume. The Civil Air Patrol is a Congressionally-chartered, national community service organization made up of over 31,000 professionally trained volunteers. CAP represents a locally available talent and asset pool for municipal, state and federal government entities to utilize as a cost effective aerial and ground support resource.

When performing missions for any agency of the federal government, CAP is deemed to be an auxiliary of the United States Air Force. CAP, in its USAF auxiliary role, performs 90-percent of the continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members also play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the more than 30,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. The cadets are instructed in the customs and courtesies of the USAF and are trained in numerous fun and challenging disciplines.

Late last summer, the Grand Rapids squadron served in a crucial role in the successful search and rescue mission of two missing hikers in the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The grid search tactics which the CAP employed are precise and practiced regularly by aircrews. However, turbulent weather conditions and extremely rugged and densely forested terrain made the task very difficult. The aircrew that finally spotted a signal fire from the missing hikers included members from the GR Senior Squadron, and the plane used for this particular mission was the since-repaired aircraft damaged in the June 21 weather event.

Here in West Michigan, the CAP has numerous senior, cadet, and composite squadrons. To learn more, view the Civil Air Patrol website at www.gocivilairpatrol.com



News In Brief

- » The next three meetings of the Airport Board will take place on May 30, June 27, and July 25, 2012 at 8:30 am. All meetings are held in the International Room of the passenger terminal building. Meetings are open to the public.
- » GFIA will be partnering with Michigan Community Blood Centers to host a community blood drive on Friday, May 18, in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. You may pre-register for a time on our website at www.FlyFord.org/BloodDrive.php or by contacting Donna Thomas, office administrator, at (616) 233-6046. Walk-ins are also welcome.
- » Looking to expand or relocate your business? GFIA currently has developed and undeveloped properties available for lease. For more information about available properties, land use restrictions, or the airport's aeronautical minimum standards, contact Joel Burgess, properties administrator, at (616) 233-6054 or via email at JBurgess@grr.org. For a sampling of available properties visit www.FlyFord.org/Property.php.

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, as well as 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) 233-6053 or visit the website at www.FlyFord.org for more information located under About Us, Newsroom.



Report To The Community Now Available

The 2012 *Report to the Community* is hot off the press. The *Report* is an annual publication of the Kent County Department of Aeronautics that recaps the previous year's activities and shares information about the coming year's projects and goals.

This year's *Report*, titled "Fly Smart. Fly Ford.", will bring you up to speed on what's new at the airport and give you a sense of how we are working to continually improve our service to West Michigan. Read about some exciting customer service amenities that were added throughout 2011.



The *Report to the Community* is available on the airport website at www.FlyFord.org. If you would like to receive a printed copy of the *Report*, please contact the Department of Aeronautics offices at (616) 233-6000.

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:

Phone: 616.233.6000

Email: gfiainfo@grr.org

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