



# AirportConnections

## Air Service Marketing: Bringing You The Best

Have you heard the term "Air Service Marketing"? Some have; many have not. So, what exactly is air service marketing? In its simplest form, air service marketing is the group of activities that airports engage in to retain and enhance passenger air service. And airports cannot do it alone. Air service marketing takes the commitment of the community, and results are rarely immediate. While the primary goal of airlines may be summarized as finding markets and routes that provide profitable air service, what is the goal of the airport and the surrounding community regarding air service?

Through their air service marketing efforts, airports and the communities they serve are seeking realistic, sustainable air service at competitive fares that will promote economic development, business partnerships and community investment, while providing important linkages to the national – and international – air transportation system. The environment in the airline industry today offers new service a very narrow window to prove its financial sustainability. If it cannot, a carrier will discontinue the service and relocate it elsewhere in hopes of finding a niche where passenger loads and fares can strike a profitable balance.

How has the airport's role changed over the past two decades? Many airports have historically been able to operate under a model based on the now-famous movie quote, "If you build it, they will come." (Lee Garlington as "The Voice" in *Field of Dreams*). And while airports were able to focus primarily on providing the "bricks and mortar," the airlines were able to focus on service expansion; and they could afford to invest in "developmental" flying for greater periods of time in order for the route(s) to become self-sustaining. But in today's airline climate, carriers have to be far more selective in starting or expanding services.

A key component of air service marketing is the building of relationships, involving ongoing dialogue between individual airlines and the airport over time. These relationships may also, on occasion, involve financial partnerships (risk sharing), taking the form of financial incentives offered by the airport. Such incentives are designed to assist the

**air service marketing**  
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## GFIA Celebrates 2 Million Passengers in a Calendar Year

On Wednesday, December 15, 2004, the Kent County Aeronautics Board hosted a celebration event in recognition of a major airport milestone: In 2004, GFIA served – for the first time in its history – more than **2 million passengers** in a single calendar year (to be exact, **2,150,125** passengers used the airport last year, an 8.77% increase over 2003). The ceremonial 2 millionth passenger, Tari Wright of Plainwell, Michigan, flew into GFIA on Northwest Airlines' flight 1256 shortly after 9:00 am.

Ms. Wright was welcomed at the gate by Phil Johnson, Deputy Airport Director, and Dan Conner, Station Manager of Northwest Airlines in Grand Rapids. She was informed of being selected as the ceremonial 2 millionth passenger and invited to join Kent County Aeronautics Board Chairman John Van Laar and a contingent of airport representatives gathered in the Grand Hall.

During the ceremony, Ms. Wright was presented with a gift package valued at over \$850. Included in the package were a \$500 travel voucher, compliments of the Kent County Aeronautics Board; a \$100 Starbucks® gift card and collection of gift items from the Airport Gift Shop, compliments of HMSHost; two gift certificates from Standard Parking for a week each of Express Shuttle and Valet Parking services at GFIA; and a roll-on luggage unit, compliments of Northwest Airlines.

Ms. Wright states that she does not consider herself to be a frequent flyer and was surprised to be named the 2 millionth passenger. She and

**2 millionth passenger**  
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**Kent County Aeronautics Board Chairman John Van Laar and ceremonial 2 millionth passenger Tari Wright.**

**"As the two millionth passenger, you represent a major milestone in the Airport's history."**

**-John Van Laar**

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# Aeronautics Board Welcomes New Member; Elects Chair, Vice Chair



Dick Vander Molen

The Kent County Aeronautics Board is pleased to welcome its newest member. Joining the Board as of January 2005 is Kent County Commissioner Richard Vander Molen.

Aeronautics Board members are appointed by the Kent County Board of Commissioners, and are responsible for setting policy and providing general oversight of Gerald R. Ford International Airport. Three Kent County commissioners and three citizen members each serve staggered three-year terms on the Aeronautics Board.

Mr. Vander Molen was originally elected to the Kent County Board of Commissioners in 1987 and served until

1997. After a six-year hiatus, he returned to the Board of Commissioners in 2003. Mr. Vander Molen, a lifetime resident of the Grand Rapids area, has served on a number of County committees, and he was Commission Chairman in 1996. A retired plumbing contractor, Mr. Vander Molen currently works part-time as the Church Administrator for Princeton Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood.

In other Aeronautics Board news, the Board re-elected John Van Laar as Chairman, and elected Tom O'Hare as Vice Chairman, for 2005. The remaining members of the Board include County Commissioners Dan Koorndyk and Dean Agee, and citizen member Joseph Jones.

Additionally, the Aeronautics Board and the GFIA community wish to extend their heartfelt appreciation to Ken Kuipers, who recently completed an eight-year term of service to the Board. Mr. Kuipers served most recently as Vice Chairman. →

## air service marketing *continued from page one*

airline in offsetting some of the financial exposure involved in starting new service.

At GFIA, air service marketing has recently taken on a much larger role. Policies and procedures have been developed, and resources budgeted to support this increasingly critical function. GFIA has partnered with community organizations including The Right Place, Chamber(s) of Commerce, and the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention and Visitors Bureau to assemble data, garner community support, and formulate strategies for approaching airlines. "A successful partnership between the airlines, the airport and the community is necessary for the overall economic health of our region," says Bruce Schedlbauer, Marketing and Communications Manager at GFIA. "New or enhanced airline services won't necessarily happen overnight, but if we continue to build these relationships, we increase our chances of being at the top of the list when they look at service opportunities." →

# International Aid / FedEx Ship Medical Clinics to Tsunami Victims

On December 29, 2004, precious cargo was shipped out of GRR via FedEx to the victims of the tsunami in Southeast Asia. The first of many portable medical clinics, each capable of providing basic medical services to a population of 50,000, left GRR's air cargo facility. Its destination: Banda Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia, one of the hardest hit cities.

"This is a disaster of epic proportions," said Myles Fish, president and CEO of International Aid of Spring Lake. "The scars left behind by these

tidal waves will be evident for many years to come - certainly in the poorer countries. We are committed to helping these folks rebuild their lives and their homes. We are meeting the long-term physical and spiritual needs of some of the poorest people in some of the most neglected corners of the world. We're changing the health and hearts of people in need and demonstrating Christ's love as a global leader in Community Based Healthcare." International Aid provides medical and related life-support supplies to disaster areas around the world.



International Aid is a nonprofit Christian relief and development agency that responds to Biblical mandates by providing and supporting solutions in healthcare.  
- International Aid Mission

### Tsunami Victims

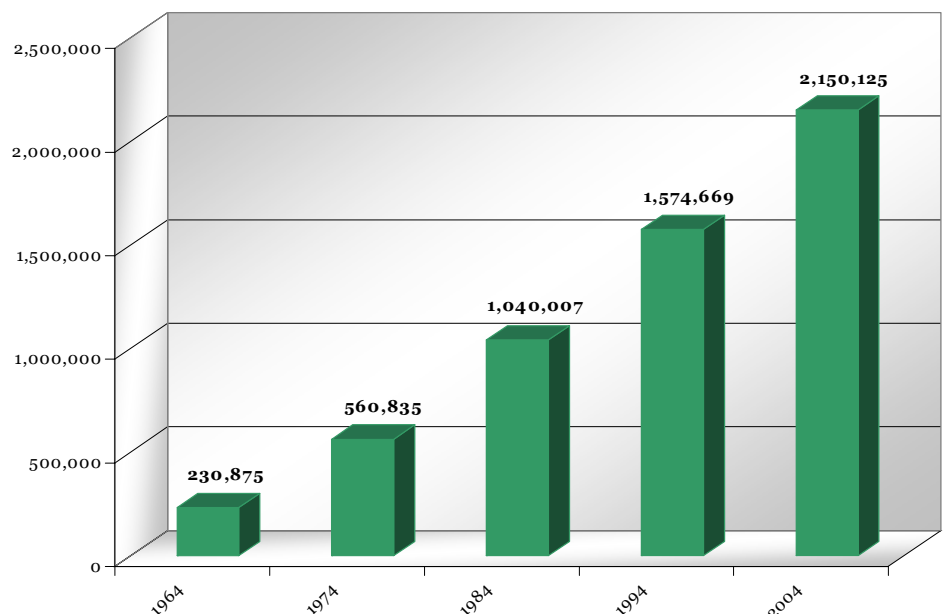
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## 2 millionth passenger *continued from page one*

her fiancé, Kevin Christensen, were returning from a vacation in Hawaii.

Gerald R. Ford International Airport has, for many years, experienced passenger growth rates that are higher than industry averages, and 2004 was no exception. As shown in the graph to the right, GFIA has reached a new million passenger milestone every 20 years since 1964, its first full year of operation at the current location. Cargo volumes also set a new record, with a total of 79,536,540 pounds carried in 2004, or approximately 217,908 pounds per day, a 7.75% increase over the previous year. →

## GFIA passenger activity growth shown at 10 year increments beginning in 1964 (the Airport's first full year of operation at the current site).





## GFIA Tenant Profile: Aero Med



**Aero Med is always given priority clearance from the control tower to take off for an emergency. Other air traffic is asked to hold in position until the helicopter is in the air.**

We watch as they fly overhead. We wonder where they are going or where they have been. We are glad to know they are there if we need them. Who are they?

They are the emergency medical response team known as Aero Med. Most of us have heard the name. Some of us can recognize their aircraft by sight or sound. But few people know what goes on behind the scenes.

Aero Med is a nationally recognized, accredited Air Medical Transport and Critical Care response system. The staff consists of doctors, nurses, pilots, mechanics, communications specialists, and myriad support personnel who keep operations flowing smoothly. For nurses and pilots, a 12-hour shift is the norm; for the doctors, twelve hours is common but 24-hour shifts aren't unheard of.

This elite team of medical professionals, pilots, and communications specialists provides the specialized attention that each medical emergency requires. During daylight hours, the helicopter is in the air within eight minutes of the request for services; a couple of extra minutes are needed after darkness falls. Ever wonder what you can accomplish in eight minutes? At Aero

Med they receive the initial call and get basic information (where they are flying to, if it is a medical emergency or trauma incident, etc.). The communications specialist notifies the crew. The pilot checks the weather conditions at the airport and at the location where they will be landing. The nurse retrieves six units of packed red blood cells and places them in the helicopter. The communications specialist receives information on the patient and landing zone and notifies hospital security and emergency room staff of the incident and any details that are known. The helicopter is moved out of the hangar. The control tower gives clearance and the flight is airborne. Barely eight minutes have passed.

Once in flight the pilot works with the landing zone crew on the ground to verify that the landing zone has ample room, no obstructions, and is a safe distance from the patient. Once on the ground, the medical staff begins treating the patient, providing whatever services are necessary to prepare for the flight to the hospital. Many times the pilot assists with the equipment or loading of the patient.

Back at the hangar, the communications specialist is in constant

contact with the flight crew, tracking the flight at each stage. The specialist is once again in contact with the hospital, notifying them of estimated landing times, additional needs, and conveying detailed medical information to the hospital staff so they can prepare for the patient.

Now, you may wonder who makes up the Aero Med response team. All of the physicians are either senior residents or board certified in emergency medicine. The nurses are registered nurses and paramedics with hundreds of additional training hours. The pilots are licensed commercial pilots with an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) rating and at least 3000 flight hours in a helicopter. This team is the best at what they do; and they train others to assist them. For instance, they provide training to local fire departments on how to set up a landing zone. They also participate in community service and awareness opportunities, going to events and educating people whenever possible.

Have you ever wondered how the decision is made whether or not to respond to a request for a medical flight? When the call comes in, the pilot begins checking weather and flying conditions. His decision is based on nothing more so that he can objectively weigh the safety of his crew against the elements. Only after the decision to fly has been made does the pilot learn of the type of emergency or information about the patient. As Captain Jeff Cobb states, "It's always hard to turn down a flight, but if we can't fly safely we can't help the patient anyway." "There is an inherent risk any time you get in the air," added Patricia Russell, Chief Flight Nurse, "and we don't want to unnecessarily add to that risk."

So how do they keep it all in perspective? Well, for the folks at Aero Med, they have a reunion. Once every five years they host a gathering of the patients and family members of those they have helped. Russell says, "One of the first families that we assisted has come back for every reunion. It's a very emotional time for everyone." →

## Sounds of the Season



**Creston High School Choir**

From December 13-17 there was something special in the air at the airport: holiday music. Fourteen area middle school and high school choral groups performed for Gerald R. Ford International patrons and employees.

Bob Oster, choral director at Jenison High School, said, "This is the first year we have participated in the Music Festival. We were very excited to be invited and plan to return for many years to come." At GFIA, we also look forward to the Festival each year and would like to thank our 2004 participants:

**Burton Elementary Honors Choir** – Michael York for Carol Bronson, Director

**Ottawa Hills High School** – Vanessa Allen, Director

**Grand Rapids Christian Chamber Chorale** – Don Scott, Director

**Caledonia Middle School Choir** – Nancy TenElshof, Director

**East Grand Rapids Madrigals** – Mark Webb, Director

**Caledonia Women's Choir** – Carol Gess, Director

**East Grand Rapids Jazz Choir** – Mark Webb, Director

**Caledonia Chorales** – Carol Gess, Director

**East Kentwood High School Varsity Voices** – Carrie Hoeksema, Director

**Cutlerville Christian Middle School Choir** – Dave Haagsma, Director

**Jenison Public School** – Bob Oster, Les Rowsey, and Steven Waters, Directors

**Wyoming Park High School Sound System** – Peggy Patrick, Director

**Creston High School Choir** – Darla Jewell, Director

**South Christian High School Choir** – Doug Rosema, Director →



## News In Brief

- Bruce Schedlbauer, APR, Marketing and Communications Manager for GFIA, has been named Vice Chair of the Marketing and Communications Steering Group of Airports Council International - North America (ACI-NA). This Steering Group is responsible for supporting ACI-NA's mission of developing and advancing policies and programs for the enhancement and promotion of airports and their managements. ACI-NA represents airports that carry 98% of all passenger traffic - and virtually all cargo traffic - in North America.
- The next three meetings of the Kent County Aeronautics Board will take place February 23 and March 30 at 8:30 am, and April 27 at 7:00 pm. All meetings are held in the International Room in the Airport terminal building.
- The GFIA "Michigan's West Coast" Photo Contest received over 150 photo entries. Information about contest winners will be included in the Spring 2005 edition of *Airport Connections*.
- GFIA's 2004 Annual Profile has been named a Gold Award winner in the Adrian Awards 2004 Competition sponsored by Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International.

## ARFF Assists Local Charity Drive

The Airport Rescue Fire Fighting unit participated as a designated drop-off site for the 2004 Toys For Tots Campaign. Toys were collected from November 16 through December 18. On December 9, airport firefighter Joe Dancz and community relations coordinator Susan Sherman presented a full collection box of toys on the weather deck at WZZM TV-13, the charity's media sponsor.



Airport employees generously donated items that included board games, dolls, stuffed animals, puzzles, jewelry-making kits, and a mountain bike. The Grand Rapids Santa Claus Girls coordinated the distribution of toys to needy families throughout Kent County. For 2004, Toys for Tots estimates that more than 20,000 toys were distributed to nearly 7,400 children. →

## Parking Rate Changes for 2005

Effective January 1, 2005, parking rates at Gerald R. Ford International Airport are:

### Short-term Parking:

\$2.<sup>00</sup> first hour  
\$24.<sup>00</sup> daily maximum

### Long-term Parking:

\$1.<sup>00</sup> per hour  
\$7.<sup>00</sup> daily maximum  
\$42.<sup>00</sup> weekly maximum

### Express Shuttle Parking:

\$1.<sup>00</sup> per hour  
\$6.<sup>00</sup> daily maximum  
\$36.<sup>00</sup> weekly maximum

### Valet Parking:

\$14.<sup>00</sup> per day  
\$10.<sup>00</sup> for five hours or less

## Tsunami Victims

*continued from page two*

This supply flight is one of many that has been made by FedEx since the December 26 disaster. During the first week, FedEx estimates that, nationwide, they shipped over 200,000 pounds of medical supplies. "We're proud to be involved and happy to make a contribution at the local level that will help these people halfway around the world," says Ken Kranz, Senior Manager with FedEx in Grand Rapids. "It's part of our mission, to make an impact in our community."

Anyone interested in disaster relief support may visit [www.internationalaid.org](http://www.internationalaid.org) or call 800.251.2502. →

*Airport Connections*, the newsletter of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA), is published quarterly by the Kent County Department of Aeronautics. We encourage GFIA tenants and all of our readers to contact us with your comments, suggestions and submissions. Also, if you are not already receiving *Airport Connections* by mail and wish to be added to the mailing list, please call the Kent County Department of Aeronautics at 616.233.6000. For additional information, be sure to visit us on the web at [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org).

**Kent County Aeronautics Board** | John Van Laar, chair; Tom O'Hare, vice chair; Dean Agee\*; Joe Jones; Dan Koorndyk\*; Richard Vander Molen\*

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