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## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Activities Continue

On November 23, 2013 the Gerald R. Ford International Airport celebrated 50 years at its current location! A kickoff reception that was open to the public featured cupcakes, giveaways and a 'flashback' of the history of the airport featuring old photos and new renovations that are currently underway. The airport will continue to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout 2014. Save the dates for the following 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events:

- ▶ February 14<sup>th</sup> – Valentine's Day "Love At First Flight" Passenger Giveaway
- ▶ April 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> – Passenger Appreciation Days
- ▶ May 9<sup>th</sup> – Mother's Day Giveaway
- ▶ June 13<sup>th</sup> – Father's Day Giveaway
- ▶ July 19<sup>th</sup> – Special Olympics/FedEx "Plane Pull"

We also have other projects and events in the works. Visit our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter (@FlyGRFord) for more updates.



## Celebrating Local Flare at GFIA

Local beer, fresh and healthy food and a face lift at Starbucks were all celebrated on December 18, 2013 as global restaurateur HMSHost and the Gerald R. Ford International Airport officially welcomed the recent opening of the airport's new restaurant lineup with a ribbon cutting ceremony and reception.

The event was held inside the brand new Bell's Brew Pub, a West Michigan favorite. The celebration also included the opening of HMSHost's restaurant, Greens, which features healthy, fresh dishes, and the refurbishing of the existing Starbucks.

"I am very pleased with the additions and changes to Gerald R. Ford International Airport's concessions," said Kent County Department of Aeronautics Executive Director Brian Ryks, A.A.E. "We are proud to say that airport guests now have access to dining and retail options that capture the essence of West Michigan, and this incorporation of area businesses into our airport could not have been made possible without our committed partner, HMSHost."

Bell's Brew Pub, located in the airport's pre-security Grand Hall, serves award-winning craft beers alongside a modified version of Bell's own Eccentric Café menu. Dishes like the pork tacos or the popular Zingerman's soft pretzels served with mustard made with Bell's beer go great with Bell's famous Kalamazoo beers. Also in the adjacent food court in the Grand Hall, travelers will find Greens, a restaurant that is focused on personalization and offers healthy and nutritious food any time of day. A variety of crisp greens, vegetables, cheeses, and savory meats can be found in the delicious entrée sized salads and flat bread pizzas. Only the freshest regional ingredients are used in the recipes in these restaurants.

"We are thrilled at how these restaurants look, as well as the amazing food and drinks that they serve," said HMSHost Senior Director of Business Development Bryan Loden. "The airport has been a superb partner and we look forward to continuing to serve Michigan's travelers for many years."



From left: Kent County Commissioner Ted Vonk, Steve Jenkins, Bryan Loden, Laura Bell, Airport Board Chairman Roger Morgan, and Executive Director Brian Ryks.

## Sounds of the Season

From December 9 through 13, the airport's Grand Hall was transformed into a holiday concert venue for 16 area junior and senior high school vocal groups, including two new choirs. The Airport Holiday Music Festival is an annual tradition that has become a favorite of airport employees and patrons alike.

From a 6-voice ensemble to the 100-voice choirs, these student groups filled the air with a wide variety of musical stylings from Latin arias to classic carols to some new twists on old seasonal favorites. And, the holiday spirit couldn't have come at a better time as weather across the nation created delays for a number of flights on several days. One traveler whose flight was delayed for five hours said, "It was so wonderful to have the distraction of these kids. Their energy and smiles were so engaging, and the music was so warm and joyous that I found myself enjoying my delay."

The audience wasn't the only one having fun either. The students and directors love coming to the airport to perform. A graduating senior commented, "This has always been one of my favorite performances. We do big concerts at school, we go carolling, we attend festivals every year, but some of my best choir memories are from coming out here to the airport. The people out here aren't expecting a concert so it's cool to see their faces when we start to sing."

The Department of Aeronautics would like to thank the following schools for sharing their talented students with us this year:

- Alger Middle School\*
- Cross Creek Charter School
- City High School
- East Kentwood High School
- Grandville High School
- Innovation Central High School\*
- Jenison Elementary Schools
- Legacy Christian School
- Moline Christian School
- Northpointe Christian Middle and High Schools
- Ottawa Hills High School
- The Potter's House Middle and High Schools

\* indicates a new choir for the 2013 Festival



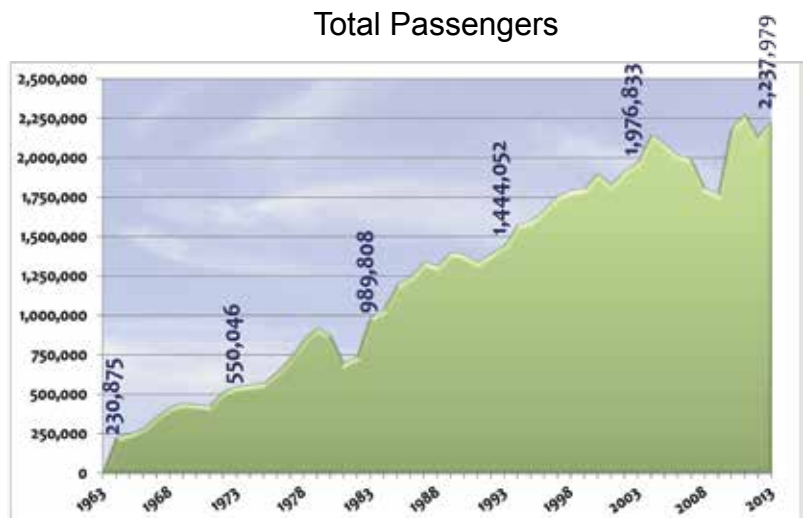
Students from Rosewood Elementary in Jenison perform under the direction of Karen Ambs.

## Passenger Activity Continues to Soar!

2013 brought some exciting events to the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. In the spring, we held our tenth annual Passenger Appreciation Days celebration as West Michigan travelers packed up and headed out for spring break. We also welcomed a new nonstop destination as United Airlines began service to Washington—Dulles. In the summer, we celebrated what would have been President Gerald Ford's 100th birthday. Additionally, we welcomed Southwest Airlines to West Michigan launching service to six destinations, including the addition of St. Louis to the line-up! Fall saw us welcoming our furry friends (and their human counterparts) to the fold as we partnered with West Michigan Therapy Dogs in launching our Gentle Fur In Action program.

Now we have one more reason to celebrate as the year ended with passenger numbers up almost 5% over 2012. The largest year-over-year increases came in the months after the arrival of Southwest Airlines. A near-record 2,237,979 passengers flew through GFIA last year!

While we aren't able to shake each and every hand, please know that we appreciate your support and look forward to serving your travel needs throughout 2014 and beyond!



## Airport Board's Arrivals and Departures

Policy and general oversight of GFIA are the responsibility of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board, a seven-member body appointed by the Kent County Board of Commissioners. The Airport Board comprises three Kent County commissioners, three Kent County citizen members, and one citizen member from a county other than Kent in the West Michigan combined statistical area, each serving staggered three-year terms.



**Terri Lynn Land**

At its December 2013 meeting, the Board said farewell to citizen member Terri Lynn Land. Chairman Roger Morgan stated, "We are grateful to Terri for her service and wish her the best of luck in her upcoming campaign."

On January 9, the Kent County Board of Commissioners appointed Steve Heacock, senior vice president of public affairs at Spectrum Health, to a three-year term on the Airport Board. A former County Commissioner, Steve has served on many are boards, including the Greater Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Grand Action, and the Michigan Make-A-Wish Foundation.

At its January 2014 organizational meeting, the GFIA Board reappointed Roger Morgan as chairman and Dick VanderMolen as vice chairman. Rounding out the rest of the Board are County Commissioner Ted Vonk and citizen members Floyd Wilson, Jr., David Slikkers, and Birgit Klohs.

The Gerald R. Ford International Board meets monthly (visit the Airport's website at [www.FlyFord.org](http://www.FlyFord.org) for the upcoming meeting schedule). All meetings are open to the public.



**Steven Heacock**

## Christmas Visitors

The airport was extremely busy in the days before Christmas, but everyone stayed in the Christmas spirit thanks to Santa and the Patriot Riders.

Santa Claus visited the airport on Monday, December 23rd before trekking off to the North Pole. Travelers, guests and the public attended the event, which was free of charge. The airport asked guests to bring in two non-perishable food items per photo with Santa. Over sixty pounds of goods were collected and donated to Loaves & Fishes – a food pantry operated by the Catholic Charities West Michigan.

In addition to Santa's appearance, the Patriot Guard Riders were at the airport to welcome home members of the military who were 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 hoped to put some smiles



on children's faces and we did that while at the same time giving back to the West Michigan community."

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 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 took a moment during this busy time to share with those who are in need."

GFIA also offers our thanks to all who participated in supporting this important charity. Special thanks go out to Santa Claus for taking time out of his busy schedule to stop by and say "Hi!" to kids in West Michigan!



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## News In Brief

- » The next three meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board will be held on February 26, March 26, and April 30. Meetings begin at 8:30 am and are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. Meetings are open to the public.
- » Public Safety & Ops Director Rob Benstein has been appointed to the National Safe Skies Alliance Oversight Committee which provides policy guidance and sets priorities for the Program for Applied Research in Airport Security.
- » Fire Chief Todd Szakacs has been appointed to the Western Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs Board.

## Airport Employee Information Corner

Safe wintertime air travel operations depend upon aircraft and airfield pavement deicing activities, which are strictly regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). GFIA and its tenants control and manage deicing materials through the use of best management practices (BMPs), recycling, and other mechanisms designed to help protect the environment. GFIA's program requires organization, teamwork, and implementation of specific structural controls, practices, and procedures to manage deicing materials.

GFIA has started construction activities associated with the Long-Term Stormwater/Deicing Runoff Management Program including a natural treatment system (NTS) to promote the on-site biodegradation of deicers. Day-to-day deicer removal rates will vary with weather conditions and deicer usage rates, but the NTS is expected to remove about 80% of the deicers from GFIA's stormwater on an annual basis. This will provide environmental protection that exceeds state and federal requirements.

Tenants are reminded that use of nitrogen-based products (e.g. urea) are not allowed anywhere at the airport. If you need information on approved deicing products may contact Roy Hawkins, planning engineer, at (616) 233-6000 or via email at [RHawkins@grr.org](mailto:RHawkins@grr.org).

GFIA also reminds everyone that active participation by staff and tenants is a critical part of the overall stormwater management program. If you observe any situations that appear to have potential impact on the quality of stormwater at the Airport, call Airport Communications at 233-6055 and report your observation.

*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](mailto:gfiainfo@grr.org)

**Facebook:** [GeraldRFordInternationalAirport](https://www.facebook.com/GeraldRFordInternationalAirport)

**Airport Board** | Roger Morgan\*, chair; Dick Vander Molen\*, vice chair; Steve Heacock; Birgit Klohs; David Slikkers; Ted Vonk\*; Floyd Wilson, Jr. (\* County Commissioner)

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