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## Passenger Appreciation Days...Like Tailgating Before Your Spring Break Flight

Food, fun, and excitement are all you really need for any tailgater. On April 3, 4, & 5, all that and more were happening at Gerald R. Ford International Airport as the Kent County Department of Aeronautics (KCDA) held its sixth annual Passenger Appreciation Days event. During this three days (historically the busiest of the spring break travel season, and among the busiest of the entire year), airport patrons were treated to complimentary refreshments, games, prize drawings, and give-aways.

The hospitality station, set up in the Grand Hall, was the site for a variety of treats including coffee, lemonade, bottled water, cookies, bagels, muffins, and fresh fruit. Patrons could also pick up give-aways like stress relievers, luggage tags, CD holders, and printed materials that included Airport Activity Books, Airport Visitor Guides, and a brochure providing information about the construction activities related to the new parking ramp. The festive mood was set with warm-weather decorations and great beach tunes

Always a favorite of the young and young-at-heart, the paper airplane flying contest saw designs of all types taking off and landing on the indoor "runway." (Some of our pilots even opted for some very creative maneuvers.) Winners of this year's contest are Alayna Zuidema of Rockford, Jake Collins of Lowell, and Eric Vetter of Caledonia. Each winner received a \$100 gift card to Rivertown Crossings Mall in Grandville. Winners of the daily prize drawing are Mark Jacobs of Holland, Anita Hall of Holland, and Dave Randolph of Jenison. Daily drawing winners each received a \$150 travel voucher. Congratulations to all our winners!

Special guests this year included Tommy and Brook from Star 105.7 (WOOD-FM radio). They joined us for a couple of hours on Friday afternoon and enjoyed mingling with and interviewing travelers as they prepared to head out to their spring break destinations.

KCDA would like to thank airport tenants Aero Med, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention and Visitors Bureau, National Car Rental and U.S. Customs & Border Protection for their generous donations of some of this year's give-away items, as well as food and beverage concessionaire HMS Host for its coordination of refreshments again this year.

We also offer our sincere thanks to all our passengers who include Gerald R. Ford International Airport in their travel plans throughout the year.



**Stephanie Voetberg of Kentwood tries some creative flying maneuvers with her paper airplane during Passenger Appreciation Days before heading to Cancun.**

## Construction Update!

From mid-April through July 2008, the east half of the east long-term lot will be closed. This closure is necessary to allow for construction to continue on the Terminal Area and Parking Improvement Program. Ample long-term parking will still be available. While minimal impact to airport users is expected, travelers are encouraged to allow adequate time to wayfind. During the construction period, visitors should look for directional signage located throughout airport roadways.

Another change you'll see as you approach the terminal building is the tall columns jutting out of

**construction update**  
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## Tenant Profile: Cyndee's Shoe Shine Helping You Put Your Best Foot Forward

For many business travelers, it's as much a part of their airport experience as checking in with their airline or passing through security. For some non-travelers, they make a special trip to the airport just to have it done. So what is it that these two groups have in common? Cyndee's Shoe Shine.

Many can remember a time when shoe shine stands were in abundance; on the street corner, in the barbershops, at the hotel, even in some pubs and bars. Today, try to remember the last time you passed by one or stopped to have your shoes shined by a professional. Fact is, shoe shine stands seem to have gone the way of full-service gas stations, home milk delivery, and VHS tapes. But at GFIA, you can stop by Cyndee's Shoe Shine any weekday from 5:00 am to 4:00 pm and treat yourself to a good old-fashioned polish courtesy of Cyndee herself or long-time employee Joe Jones.

Cyndee Walker, owner and operator of Cyndee's Shoe Shine, learned her skills from her father, who founded the stand at GFIA in 1990. One of six children, Cyndee began working with her dad at his shoe shine stand in the Flint airport at the age of 12. Over time, and with lots of practice under Dad's watchful eye, Cyndee honed her skills and decided this was the career path she wanted to follow. In 1998 Cyndee began managing the Grand Rapids stand, and in 2001 she became sole owner. In 2007, Cyndee completed the lengthy process to become a certified Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE). This certification keeps Cyndee's Shoe Shine competitive during the bidding process.



Over the years, Cyndee and her father have found many ways to improve the results of their shoe shines; they have even developed their own polish. From products to processes, Cyndee can give you suggestions for keeping your footwear in tip-top shape.

Following family tradition, Cyndee's 11-year-old daughter, Angel, is now beginning to learn the trade as well. Working with Mom and Grandpa, Angel is perfecting her skills and learning some very important lessons...about shining shoes, about running a business, and – most importantly – about customer service.

So, next time you plan a trip through GFIA, take a few minutes for a shoe shine and polish up that first impression.

## With Sam Around, Everyone Wins

For our patrons, “airport security” conjures up thoughts of curbside security officers, airport law enforcement officers, and TSA baggage and passenger screeners; easily identified individuals working in cooperation to ensure the safety of airline passengers. But, to airport employees, “airport security” might just mean looking for someone who appears out of place, who isn't displaying appropriate credentials to be where he or she is; it means a heightened level of situational awareness everywhere they work.

Twelve years ago, airport police chief Dave Stricklen and his staff introduced GFIA employees to Sneaky Sam. The Sneaky Sam Security Challenge program uses positive reinforcement to encourage airport employees to keep their eyes open for security, and Sam (or occasionally Samantha) is the cornerstone of the program. Chief Stricklen explains, “Employees are required to ask anyone in a restricted area without a visible badge for proper ID. So, we take someone who most employees won't recognize and send him or her out into the restricted areas without a badge to act as Sneaky Sam. When the badged employee challenges the badge-less Sneaky Sam and Sam is unable to produce a badge, the employee is expected to escort the unbadged individual out of the restricted area and/or call airport law enforcement. When law enforcement is summoned, the employee who caught Sneaky Sam is rewarded with \$20 cash on the spot.”

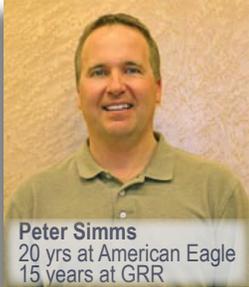
An additional benefit for employees is that all \$20 winners also earn a chance to play for the annual grand prize. Each January, all winners from the prior year gather in the International Room in the passenger terminal building for the grand prize contest. Participants have had to perform a variety of different tasks, including flying balsa-wood airplanes through a hoop, spinning a card wheel, playing “Rock ‘em Sock ‘em Robots,” and good old-fashioned Rock – Paper – Scissors. The winner of the grand prize receives a \$400 travel voucher, while the second-place finisher receives a \$100 travel voucher. This year's top finisher from a field of 37 was Mike Decker of Servisair, with Doug Burns of American Eagle finishing second.

“Before Sneaky Sam, the airport would score near 65% compliance with federal security guidelines regarding challenging people without proper identification while in restricted areas,” says Chief Stricklen. “In the twelve years since Sam came on the scene, we consistently score 95-100%. Last year we were at 100%. I'd say that's a good return on investment.”



# Meet Your Local Airline Managers

With a combined 115 years of experience, these six local airline station managers represent a wealth of knowledge and experience in airline customer service management. We'd like to introduce you to the station managers at GFIA and see what they have to say about the future...



**Peter Simms**  
20 yrs at American Eagle  
15 years at GRR

Thoughts on GFIA: "I am confident GFIA is well-positioned to meet the future needs for air travel. American Eagle is excited about our future in Grand Rapids and will continue to partner with the airport to ensure the needs of the airlines and its customers are met."

Thoughts on air travel over the next 3-5 years: "Air travel will continue to be a competitive business so keeping costs contained will be a high priority in order to keep air fares affordable as fuel prices increase. Expect full aircraft to be the norm and as a result, the empty seat you were hoping for next to you won't be there on most occasions, so pack accordingly."



Thoughts on GFIA: "Gerald R. Ford International provides a 'hometown' feeling, featured as the largest airport on the west side of the state of Michigan."

Thoughts on air travel over the next 3-5 years: "The future of air travel will be an exciting time. Technology is changing the airline industry. Most importantly, remember to be patient."



**Michele Diehl**  
18 years at Continental  
6 years at GRR



**Kristan Dragisic**  
5 yrs at COMAIR  
5 years at GRR

Thoughts on GFIA: "GFIA has positioned itself to be a key player in meeting West Michigan's transportation needs now and into the future."

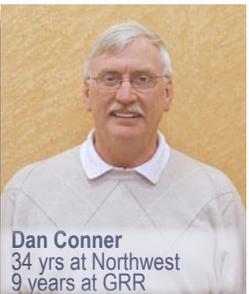
Thoughts on air travel over the next 3-5 years: "I see airlines becoming more 'green' in the future as customers grow more concerned about offsetting their carbon footprints."



Thoughts on air travel over the next 3-5 years: "People have accepted flying again since 9/11; the sky and airports are getting busier and, with the cost of fuel, expect higher ticket cost."



**Nancy Rich**  
8 yrs at Midwest Express  
8 years at GRR



**Dan Conner**  
34 yrs at Northwest  
9 years at GRR



Thoughts on GFIA: "GFIA is very clean, open, and pleasing to the passengers. People really have all the amenities of a major airport because it is a major airport."

Thoughts on air travel over the next 3-5 years: "I can see an increase in operations as more and more regional jets come into the mix of equipment. Passengers want frequency and this is a way that it can be achieved. Airlines flying to cities other than their connecting hubs will increase as well within the next few years. West Michigan has enough traffic to start the growing process."



**Diane Anderson**  
30 yrs at United  
9 years at GRR



## construction update continued from page 1

the ground. These columns (there will be 26 in all) will support the roadway canopy that will provide protection from the elements and connect the parking deck to the passenger terminal building. Beginning in mid-May, the curved steel girders and connecting trusses will begin to be placed on top of these columns. The girders will support the canopy glass system.

For the most up-to-date information on the TAPIP project, go to the airport's website at [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org) and click on the "Ramp Up!" logo or call (616) 233-RAMP (7267).

## News In Brief

- » GFIA has been presented with the Airports – General Aviation Facilities award from the Michigan Concrete Paving Association. The award is for the Taxiway J reconstruction project. The award also honored Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc., project engineers, and West Michigan Recycled Aggregates, contractor.
- » GFIA will be partnering with Michigan Community Blood Centers to host a community blood drive on Friday, May 16, 2008, in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. You may pre-register for a time on our website at [www.flygrandrapids.org/BloodDrive.php](http://www.flygrandrapids.org/BloodDrive.php) or by contacting Donna Thomas, Office Administrator, at (616) 233-6046. Walk-ins are also welcome.
- » Kent County Department of Aeronautics Public Safety and Operations Director Rob Benstein has been elected to serve on the Airports Council International – North America Public Safety and Security Committee Steering Group. The mission of the Public Safety and Security Committee is to enhance the safety and security of airports by providing recommendations to industry and government for public safety and security policies, identifying and promoting best practices for public safety and security, and identifying and/or developing educational and technological resources that help accomplish public safety and security objectives.
- » Kent County Department of Aeronautics Operations Manager Bruce Applebach has been appointed to two national committees. The Takeoff and Landing Performance Assessment Aviation Rulemaking Committee (TALPA ARC) will review regulations affecting certification and operation of aircraft and airports for aircraft takeoff and landing operations on runways contaminated by snow, slush, ice, or standing water. A Transportation Research Board Airport Cooperative Research Program will develop a scope of services for a study of the requirements and training for airfield vehicle operators.
- » Rick Vriesenga was recently promoted to Captain with GFIA's Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) unit. Rick has been a firefighter with the ARFF unit for 13 years.
- » Operations Supervisor Aaron Keller recently passed his American Association of Airport Executives Certified Member (C.M.) exam. While the C.M. credential can stand alone, Aaron completed the exam as part of the process to become an Accredited Airport Executive. Congratulations Aaron!
- » The next three meetings of the Kent County Aeronautics Board will take place May 28, June 25, and July 30, 2008, at 8:30 am. All meetings are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building and are open to the public.

## Hot Off The Press! 2008 Airport Profile Now Available

The Airport Profile is an annual publication of the Kent County Department of Aeronautics.

The 2008 Profile offers readers a “by the numbers” look at GRR, recapping the events, activities and accomplishments of 2007, and offering a look forward to the plans and projects for 2008 and beyond.

The Airport Profile is available on the airport website at [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org). If you would like to receive a printed copy of the Profile, 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

**Fax:** 616.233.6025

**Web:** [www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org)

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