

## More Florida Sunshine Returns for GFIA Travelers

As the cold and snow creep into West Michigan this December, travelers will have even more options to escape to the Florida sun! On 12/16, Allegiant Air is bringing back nonstop service to Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL).



This seasonal twice-weekly service will offer Grand Rapids fliers the only nonstop service to Florida's east coast. Other cities served by Allegiant include

Orlando/Sanford, Tampa/St. Pete, Phoenix/Mesa, and Las Vegas.

"We are thrilled that Allegiant is once again expanding its air service coverage in the Grand Rapids market, and we look forward to offering Fort Lauderdale as a nonstop destination for our travelers, says GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks. "The nonstop service to Florida's east coast will give West Michigan passengers an additional option for leisure travel, and it is a perfect place for a sunny escape during our winter months."

## Changing of the Guard

At the end of May, Federal Security Director Max Harnish retired, closing out a career in the law enforcement and security fields that spanned more than 40 years. Mr. Harnish joined the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in October 2002. During his tenure he served as Training Coordinator, Assistant Federal Security Director (AFSD) and Federal Security Director. His law enforcement career was highlighted when he co-founded the West Michigan Criminal Justice Training Consortium, which is the largest collaborative training network of its kind in the nation. AFSD Roger Dubuc has been appointed interim Director.



Assistant Federal Security Director Steve Bastek (left) & retiring Federal Security Director Max Harnish.

**guard**

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## The Royal Treatment

On June 2, the Gerald R. Ford International Airport was proud to play a key role in welcoming the Dutch king and queen to Michigan. King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima are the first Dutch monarchs to visit the United States in more than 30 years, and a stop here was almost inevitable since Michigan has the largest Dutch-American population in the U.S. (10%).

After exiting their airplane and meeting area dignitaries, the King and Queen were treated to a musical performance by sixth-graders from Ada Christian School who sang a Dutch-language song to welcome them.

During their whirlwind five-hour visit to Grand Rapids, the King and Queen attended a reception at nearby Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, visited with patients and toured the facilities at Helen

**royals**

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## Take Us Out to the Ballgame!

For the spontaneous adventure traveler, a last-minute getaway is simply what they do. But would you pack and head to the airport for a weekend trip without a ticket? On May 15, that's exactly what more than 200 people did – and they showed up as early as 4:30 am – as we hosted our second “Pack Your Bags” contest event.

GFIA, in partnership with Cumulus media and the Lambert St. Louis Airport, sent six lucky winners off to St. Louis for a weekend of fun and baseball as the Detroit Tigers took on the St. Louis Cardinals. The getaway package included roundtrip airfare, hotel accommodations, transportation to/from the St. Louis Airport, gift cards for food, and suite tickets for the game.

WLAV's Tony Gates and Michelle McCormick joined us and broadcast their morning show live from the airport, entertaining hopeful travelers, promoting the contest, and selecting the winners! Shortly after their names were drawn, our six winners were whisked away to the Southwest Airlines gate where they boarded their 7:20 am flight. In addition to the grand prize drawing, we drew many additional names and awarded a variety of other items including Southwest Airlines travel vouchers, luggage, T-shirts and more.

Follow GFIA on Facebook and Twitter to learn about all of our contests and events.



Our Winners (from left) are Catherine Marie Johnston, Carrie Hull, Jane Kilszewski, Nathanael West, Blake Salisbury, and Alyssa McMURPHY



### royals

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DeVos Children's Hospital, and toured the labs at the Van Andel Institute. “West Michigan was chosen not only because of our strong Dutch heritage but because of our ongoing business and cultural ties,” said Paulus Heule, honorary Dutch Consul for West Michigan. “We are emphasizing to the people of the Netherlands not only our rich heritage but also the great human and economic resources West Michigan has to offer to strengthen the global ties between our two countries.”

While their visit was quite brief, we hope that they experienced the best that West Michigan has to offer and will plan to return someday. It was an honor to assist them.





# Honoring Veterans - One Flight at a Time



Sending veterans on an all-expenses paid tour of Washington, D.C. is just one of the ways local supporters are honoring veterans for their service. On Saturday, May 16, 2015 and Tuesday, June 2, 2015, two separate Honor Flight groups brought veterans to our nation's capital for a tour of some of the most historic landmarks in the city.

On May 16, the Talons Out Honor Flight group flew over 100 veterans, mostly from World War II, to Washington, D.C. for a day of touring. The veterans made stops at the World War II Memorial, Air Force Memorial, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Korean & Vietnam War Memorials, along with Arlington National Cemetery, and the Marine Corps Memorial. The veterans were treated to a surprise performance by the USMC Silent Drill Team.



“This is just incredible and so emotional,” said Virgil Westdale, a World War II veteran and former TSA officer at GFIA, while visiting the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington. “So many young people have come up and said ‘thank you.’”

The flight home included a special surprise – mail call. Each veteran received stacks of letters from family members and friends, thanking them for their service.

“I didn’t get this much mail the entire time I was overseas,” said World War II Army veteran Dick Spencer. “This is just so neat that people took the time to write these letters to thank me.”

The Mid-Michigan Honor Flight group hosted a similar tour on June 2 with stops at Washington D.C.’s historic landmarks. The group flew over 60 veterans on the all-expenses paid trip, and were greeted by a welcome home of cheering crowds, emergency vehicles, and thank yous.

Another Talons Out Honor Flight is scheduled for September. To nominate a veteran, travel as a guardian or donate to the cause, visit: [www.talonsouthonorflight.org](http://www.talonsouthonorflight.org).

The next Mid-Michigan Honor flight is scheduled for October 13 from Traverse City. For more information visit: [www.midmichiganhonorflight.com](http://www.midmichiganhonorflight.com).



So many young people have come up and said ‘thank you.’”

~ Virgil Westdale,  
World War II Veteran

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## News In Brief

- » The next three meetings of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board are currently scheduled to occur on August 26, September 30, and October 28. Meetings begin at 8:30 am and are held in the International Room in the passenger terminal building. Meetings are open to the public.
- » The Kent County Department of Aeronautics is pleased to introduce our newest Fire Captain, Thea Dornbush. Thea has been with the Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting unit since 2000. She holds an Associate's Degree in Fire Science, as well as AAAE Airport Master Firefighter and numerous other certifications.

## Did You Know?

Did you know that the phonetic alphabet used in aviation is completely different than the one used by law enforcement? Check out the aviation alphabet below.

A - Alpha	N - November
B - Bravo	O - Oscar
C - Charlie	P - Papa
D - Delta	Q - Quebec
E - Echo	R - Romeo
F - Foxtrot	S - Sierra
G - Golf	T - Tango
H - Hotel	U - Uniform
I - India	V - Victor
J - Juliett	W - Whiskey
K - Kilo	X - X-ray
L - Lima	Y - Yankee
M - Mike	Z - Zulu

## guard

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Earlier in May, Stephen Bastek was promoted to Assistant Federal Security Director. Mr. Bastek began his work with the TSA in September 2002 as the Scheduling Operations Officer. He retired from the Coast Guard as a Chief Warrant Officer in Grand Haven after 23 years of service. During his time in the service he served on four Coast Guard Cutters and lived across the U.S. in Hawaii, Florida, New Jersey, Alabama, Minnesota, New York and Michigan.

TSA security operations in Grand Rapids cover Region 3, comprising their hub at GRIA and 12 spoke airports located in western and northern Michigan and Michigan's upper peninsula. The TSA is responsible for the operation of the passenger and baggage screening checkpoints.

**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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