



1963 YEARS 2013

GERALD R. FORD
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

AIRPORT BOARD

ROGER MORGAN, *Chairman*
RICHARD A. VANDER MOLEN,
Vice Chairman
STEVEN R. HEACOCK
BIRGIT KLOHS
DAVID A. SLIKKERS
THEODORE J. VONK
FLOYD WILSON, JR.

KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF AERONAUTICS

BRIAN D. RYKS, A.A.E.
Executive Director
PHILLIP E. JOHNSON, A.A.E.
Deputy Executive Director
ROBERT W. BENSTEIN, A.A.E.
Public Safety & Ops. Director
BRIAN PICARDAT, A.A.E.
Finance & Admin. Director
THOMAS R. ECKLUND, P.E.
Facilities Director
TARA M. HERNANDEZ
Mktg. & Comm. Manager

Gerald R. Ford International Airport

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 30, 2014

Contacts:

Tara Hernandez, GFIA Marketing & Communications Manager
thernandez@grr.org or 616-233-6053

Ashley Diersch, SOMI Marketing & Development Director
Ashley.diersch@somis.org or 734-624-4220

Gerald R. Ford International Airport Celebrating 50th Anniversary with Airport Day & Plane Pull[®] to Benefit Special Olympics Michigan



Grand Rapids, MI – The Gerald R. Ford International Airport opened the runways at its current location on November 23, 1963. To commemorate fifty years of service in the West Michigan community, the Airport, in partnership with Special Olympics Michigan is holding a 50th Anniversary Airport Day & Plane Pull[®].

The event is scheduled for **Saturday, July 19, 2014 from 9a.m. – 2 p.m.** on GFIA grounds. All celebration activities will take place at the Air Cargo and



5500 44TH STREET SE • GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49512-4055
• PH. 616-233-6000 • FAX 616-233-6025 • www.FlyFord.org



1963 YEARS 2013

GERALD R. FORD
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Gerald R. Ford International Airport

AIRPORT BOARD

ROGER MORGAN, *Chairman*
RICHARD A. VANDER MOLEN,
Vice Chairman
STEVEN R. HEACOCK
BIRGIT KLOHS
DAVID A. SLIKKERS
THEODORE J. VONK
FLOYD WILSON, JR.

KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AERONAUTICS

BRIAN D. RYKS, A.A.E.
Executive Director
PHILLIP E. JOHNSON, A.A.E.
Deputy Executive Director
ROBERT W. BENSTEIN, A.A.E.
Public Safety & Ops. Director
BRIAN PICARDAT, A.A.E.
Finance & Admin. Director
THOMAS R. ECKLUND, P.E.
Facilities Director
TARA M. HERNANDEZ
Mktg. & Comm. Manager

Trade Center located on the east side of the airfield, accessible from Thornapple River Drive.

The Plane Pull® will offer quite a challenge for participants, and a fun scene for spectators! Details on the aircraft are still being finalized, but on one end of the rope will be 25-person teams, and on the other end will be the aircraft (either a Boeing 757 or an A310). Each aircraft weighs over 220,000 pounds!

“Special Olympics Michigan is offered to all of our athletes at no cost to them or their family members, which is why fundraisers such as the LETR Plane Pull® are so important to the organizations,” said SOMI Development and Events Coordinator Sarah Henry. “I am truly excited to see all of these teams in action on July 19th along with all of the other fun the day will bring.”

In addition to the Plane Pull® event, GFIA is hosting an Airport Day complete with static aircraft displays, skydivers, kids’ activities, giveaways and a tent offering 50-cent hot dogs, chips and other foods. Honorary guests will be in attendance including a National Anthem singer as well as local professional athlete to kick off the event at 9 a.m. with a special welcome.

“We have been celebrating our 50th anniversary throughout the year, but this celebration is to thank the West Michigan community for supporting our local airport and local jobs,” said GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks. “We hope people come out and enjoy a Pure Michigan summer day and some free family fun.”

Special Olympics Michigan (SOMI) raises money for nearly 20,000 athletes to participate in programs across the state. The Plane Pull® to benefit Special Olympics is taking place on GFIA grounds for the first time in ten years.

“The Plane Pull® event is a fun and challenging way for groups of individuals to come together to support a great cause in the Special Olympics Michigan,” said Lt. Kevin Sweeney, Michigan State Police. “This event can be used by corporations to create team building within their organization.”

“Not only are we thrilled to be celebrating our anniversary, but we are proud to support Special Olympics and its efforts across Michigan,” said Ryks. “We know many athletes lives will be touched thanks to the funds raised at our July 19 event.”

To register for a team or for more information on the event visit:

<http://grr.org/OpenHouse.php>



5500 44TH STREET SE • GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49512-4055
• PH. 616-233-6000 • FAX 616-233-6025 • www.FlyFord.org



1963 **YEARS** 2013

GERALD R. FORD
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

AIRPORT BOARD

ROGER MORGAN, *Chairman*
RICHARD A. VANDER MOLEN,
Vice Chairman
STEVEN R. HEACOCK
BIRGIT KLOHS
DAVID A. SLIKKERS
THEODORE J. VONK
FLOYD WILSON, JR.

KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AERONAUTICS

BRIAN D. RYKS, A.A.E.
Executive Director
PHILLIP E. JOHNSON, A.A.E.
Deputy Executive Director
ROBERT W. BENSTEIN, A.A.E.
Public Safety & Ops. Director
BRIAN PICARDAT, A.A.E.
Finance & Admin. Director
THOMAS R. ECKLUND, P.E.
Facilities Director
TARA M. HERNANDEZ
Mktg. & Comm. Manager

Gerald R. Ford International Airport

Please note: No Coolers, Smoking or Weapons or Pets are allowed inside the event. Handicap Parking and Drop-off will be available as well as media parking. More event details to follow.

Live and in-studio interviews are available from Special Olympics and GFIA representatives the week leading up to the event. To schedule an interview, please contact Tara Hernandez.

About GFIA

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) is the second busiest airport in Michigan. The airport served over 2.23 million passengers in 2013 and over 6,000 travelers pass through GFIA each day. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport offers non-stop service to 23 major market destinations with 120 daily non-stop flights. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is managed and operated by the Kent County Department of Aeronautics. GFIA generates over \$500 million annually in economic activity throughout West Michigan and employs over 1,500 people. For more information on GFIA visit: www.flyford.org or follow the airport on Twitter: @FlyGRFord.

About Special Olympics Michigan

Special Olympics Michigan Inc. (SOMI) provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for 19,613 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Athletes build physical fitness, develop self-confidence and prepare for participation in society. SOMI is a non-profit organization supported almost entirely by corporate and individual gifts, without support of state funds. The generosity of Michigan organizations, individuals and statewide businesses enable the program to continue.



5500 44TH STREET SE • GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49512-4055
• PH. 616-233-6000 • FAX 616-233-6025 • www.FlyFord.org