

# eXcerpts

10 PERSPECTIVES ON GRR





On the cover: Frequent business flyer Kathy Kluck, VP of sales & marketing for 2/90 Sign Systems, is just one of the many thousands of West Michiganders who count on the Gerald R. Ford International Airport each day to fly to all kinds of places or accomplish a long list of other things. Inside this Profile is a look at 10 of these interesting stories.

*Ralston Bowles*



*Senator Bill Hardiman*



*Dennis Moosbrugger*



*Joyce Flowers*



*J. Gregory Ford, O.D.*



*Bing Goei*



*Paul & Carrie Soltysiak*



*Bradford Stretton*



*Eva Aguirre Cooper*



*John Wheeler & Mike VanGessell*



**We talked to West Michiganders from every walk of life:**

Men and women, business owners and elected officials, corporate “road warriors,” local celebrities and everyday folks. We asked them all, “How does the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GRR) impact your life?”

We could easily have surveyed dozens of people on this topic, and filled hundreds of pages with their responses. But instead, we pared down the number of interviews and made sure we included a cross-section of people who use the Airport in many different ways. Excerpts from the top 10 interviews make up the rest of this Profile.

Graciously, nearly everyone we spoke with was complimentary of GRR and its service to West Michigan. Many said things you’d expect to hear: how the Airport helps them stay close to families and friends in other cities, or how it helps their businesses operate better. Others shared more unique stories, like how they’ve adopted children from foreign countries or used GRR as a launch pad to expand their fan base around the country. A couple of these stories were even downright profound.

In past years, we’ve done our level best in this Profile to talk about the important role the Gerald R. Ford International Airport plays for West Michigan. But this year we’re handing over the microphone to the people who actually live, work and fly through here. We’ll let them vouch for us – and admit we couldn’t have said it better or more colorfully or convincingly ourselves.



## Dear Friends of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport:

As leaders of the Airport for the past several years, we have been sincerely gratified to see how West Michigan has grown and prospered over time – and we are proud of the important role GRR has played in the region’s development. That’s the “big picture” of our job. And the results have been grand.

But even more satisfying (and more concrete) is witnessing the hundreds of individual success stories that pass through the Airport each day. The two of us are in a very fortunate position to watch these stories unfold before our eyes.

We often look up from our spreadsheets or blueprints to watch as about 5,000 travelers pass through GRR each day. We see streams of industrious businesspeople representing thriving companies on the move. We witness countless joyful reunions in the Grand Hall, including the return of many of our men and women in uniform. And we observe lots of other folks obviously on their way to vacations, family visits or other pleasure trips. Then, just by turning our heads to look out the windows, we can monitor all the other activities going on outside the terminal – from cargo planes loading and taking off, to military aircraft practicing touch-and-go landings, to departing airliners disappearing into the sky, to dozens of smaller general aviation aircraft moving up and down the taxiways, in and out of the private hangars.

It really is a fascinating show – and a wonderfully rewarding one at that. With this year’s Airport Profile, we want to share the view with you. From the thousands of possible stories about how different people use GRR and what it means to them, we’ve picked 10 that cover a lot of ground. While these people’s specific experiences are unique to them, there’s a good chance you’ll recognize parts of your own story in parts of theirs.

We hope these excerpts will remind you of the many ways GRR can add to your life. We hope this publication increases your appreciation for the Airport and furthers your understanding of how this place impacts the lives of all of us who live and work in West Michigan. And who knows? Reading how others use the Airport might even give you ideas about how to better use it yourself. And that would be fine by us, too.

Thank you for your support and patronage of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. We look forward to seeing you at your Airport again soon.

Sincerely,

**John Van Laar**  
*Chairman, Kent County  
Aeronautics Board*

**James A. Koslosky**  
*Executive Director,  
Kent County Department  
of Aeronautics*



## New Airport Parking Garage, Sky Bridges & Canopy Soar

It’s a massive project that was first envisioned nearly 20 years ago. In the past 10 years, it went on and off the drawing board in response to everything from timing considerations to airport security concerns. Then, ground was finally broken in September 2007. And just two years later, the Airport’s new Terminal Area and Parking Improvement Program will be complete and open for business in late 2009 – completely transforming the look of GRR and elevating the level of customer service provided here.

The new four-level, 4,900-space parking ramp runs the length of the passenger terminal and beyond, just across from the main entry drive. The widened and repaved terminal-front drive is sheltered from the elements by a 600-foot-long, wave-shaped glass canopy. The parking ramp is also connected to the terminal by two glass-walled sky bridges, allowing passengers to cross safely above the roadway.

The new ramp offers the first covered parking option at GRR, emphatically addressing what many saw as the Airport’s greatest need. The vagaries of West Michigan weather, including the 70-plus inches of snowfall we receive in Grand Rapids annually, make a covered parking option an even more welcomed addition.

The new ramp greatly expands the parking capacity at GRR – both in terms of close-in and total spaces. Within the ramp, there will be 4,400 parking spaces within a short walk of a terminal entrance, nearly four times more than before. The number of short-term parking spaces increases to 678 – up from 438 previously. Meanwhile, the total number of parking spaces at the Airport will increase to 10,050, enough to handle the estimated peak demand at least through the year 2030.

The entire project is self-financed through bond sales supported by parking revenue. Not a single dollar of taxpayer money will go to build or run it, which is the same way that GRR has operated for decades now.

## RALSTON BOWLES

"I count it a privilege to live in a city that has taken the steps to bring its airport up to the level of a major international terminal without losing its charm and personal touch in the process. ...An efficient and easily navigable airport is an important thing for a traveling musician. From the first time I flew out of what was then Kent County Airport to now - flying through Gerald R. Ford International - I've always been impressed by the high standards of excellent service offered at the Airport."

### Traveling Troubadour Spreads His Music & Fan Base Around the World from GRR

Ralston Bowles is widely known to the numerous musicians who make up West Michigan's rich folk/rock scene as a prodigious songwriter and super-personable performer - one who's on a first-name basis with countless local music fans. Indeed, Ralston has been a Grand Rapids music icon for more than 20 years now. → More recently, he has played to packed houses across the Midwest, recorded his latest album (Rally at the Texas Hotel) in Austin, Texas, and toured extensively throughout Europe - building quite a following for himself and promoting fellow musicians everywhere he goes. Ralston is a resident of Grand Rapids but truly a citizen of the world - and his many travels are very often through the gates at GRR.



### SENATOR BILL HARDIMAN

"The Gerald R. Ford International Airport has been very helpful in getting me where I need to be in a timely manner. Aside from my duties as State Senator, I was appointed by President Bush to serve on a board in Washington, D.C., where I occasionally need to attend board meetings. Our Airport has been instrumental in helping me manage my busy schedule to ensure that I can effectively serve my constituents in the 29th District in Lansing, as well as have some influence in our nation's capital.

...I also serve on the board of directors of North Central University, located in Minneapolis. I travel there from time to time for speaking engagements on marriage, family and mentorship, and I rely on the Airport for these trips, as well.

...As West Michigan continues to grow, so should our access to important destinations in the U.S. and around the globe. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport has very ably met this need - going from a small regional airport that only offered connecting flights to one that offers direct flights to many more destinations today."

### Busy State Lawmaker Runs to Serve Here, There & Everywhere on Flights Through GRR

After serving as Mayor of Kentwood, Michigan, for 10 years, Bill Hardiman was elected in 2002 to the State Senate from the 29th District, representing the City of Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Cascade, Lowell and Vergennes Township. He has worked tirelessly for a variety of causes for more than 30 years, serving on the boards of the Grand Rapids Transit Authority, Grand Rapids Housing Authority, United Way of Kent County and others. → For his extensive civic and community work, Senator Hardiman has also gained a voice in Washington, D.C., most recently as a founder and current chairman of Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids - a broad-based program to promote strong marriages and family life. He is also very active in his church. → Bill and his lovely wife of 35 years, Clova, reside in Kentwood.



## GRR Passes FAA Certification Test with Flying Colors & Wins Excellence Award – Again

For the fifth straight year, the Airport passed its annual Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Certification Safety Inspection with a perfect score. These exhaustive, multiple-day inspections scrutinize everything from runway lighting to perimeter fencing to airport firefighting and rescue operations. The FAA found not a single thing that needed repair, modification or even rechecking.

The Airport's exemplary performance helped us again win the FAA Airport Safety Excellence Award – making us one of only two of 95 comparable airports in the Great Lakes Region to claim this prestigious honor in the most recent year. This marks the seventh year that GRR has won the award.

In the words of the FAA, "Gerald R. Ford International Airport takes a systemic approach to managing safety and maintaining compliance with FAA requirements. Amid major construction projects and extensive passenger and cargo activities, [GRR] has accomplished a notable record of discrepancy-free inspections for the past five years. The airport management and staff have demonstrated a laudable commitment to safety, and the airport sets itself apart as a benchmark of airport operational safety."

## Oh, Canada! Air Canada Returns International Service to GRR

In July 2008, Air Canada began offering daily nonstop flights to Toronto from GRR, the first international service from here in more than a decade.

(GRR has long been named and technically designated an "international" airport by virtue of the U.S. Customs Office located here, which inspects and clears cargo traveling between the U.S. and other countries.)

For many passengers, Toronto is just the first (and often only) stop on the way to places around the globe. These new GRR flights arrive at Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ), with convenient connections to Air Canada's extensive cross-Canada route system, as well as to major international gateways on five continents with destinations including London, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Beijing, Tokyo and Sydney. In all, Air Canada offers scheduled and charter air transportation for passengers and cargo to more than 170 destinations worldwide.



## Allegiant Air Service Takes Off to Orlando, Tampa/St. Pete and Las Vegas

In early 2009, the Airport was delighted to welcome back low-fare airline service with several new routes on Allegiant Air between Grand Rapids, Las Vegas and two popular Sunshine State destinations.

Allegiant offers three nonstops each week to and from Orlando-Sanford International Airport (SFB), just minutes from the amazing entertainment playground of Orlando and equally near Daytona Beach – one of the world's most popular beach resort areas. In addition, Allegiant offers four weekly nonstop flights to and from St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (PIE), serving the ever-popular South Florida vacation destination of Tampa/St. Petersburg.

Thanks largely to West Michigan's tremendous response to this new service, we hit the jackpot again when Allegiant initiated new service between GRR and Las Vegas McCarran International Airport (LAS). In May 2009, Allegiant began offering twice-weekly nonstops to Las Vegas – one of the world's top entertainment and business convention destinations.

Allegiant Air is based in Las Vegas. All of the airline's GRR service is provided on full-size MD-80 jet aircraft with 150 passenger seats.

## West Michigan Keeps On Giving from the Heart at GRR

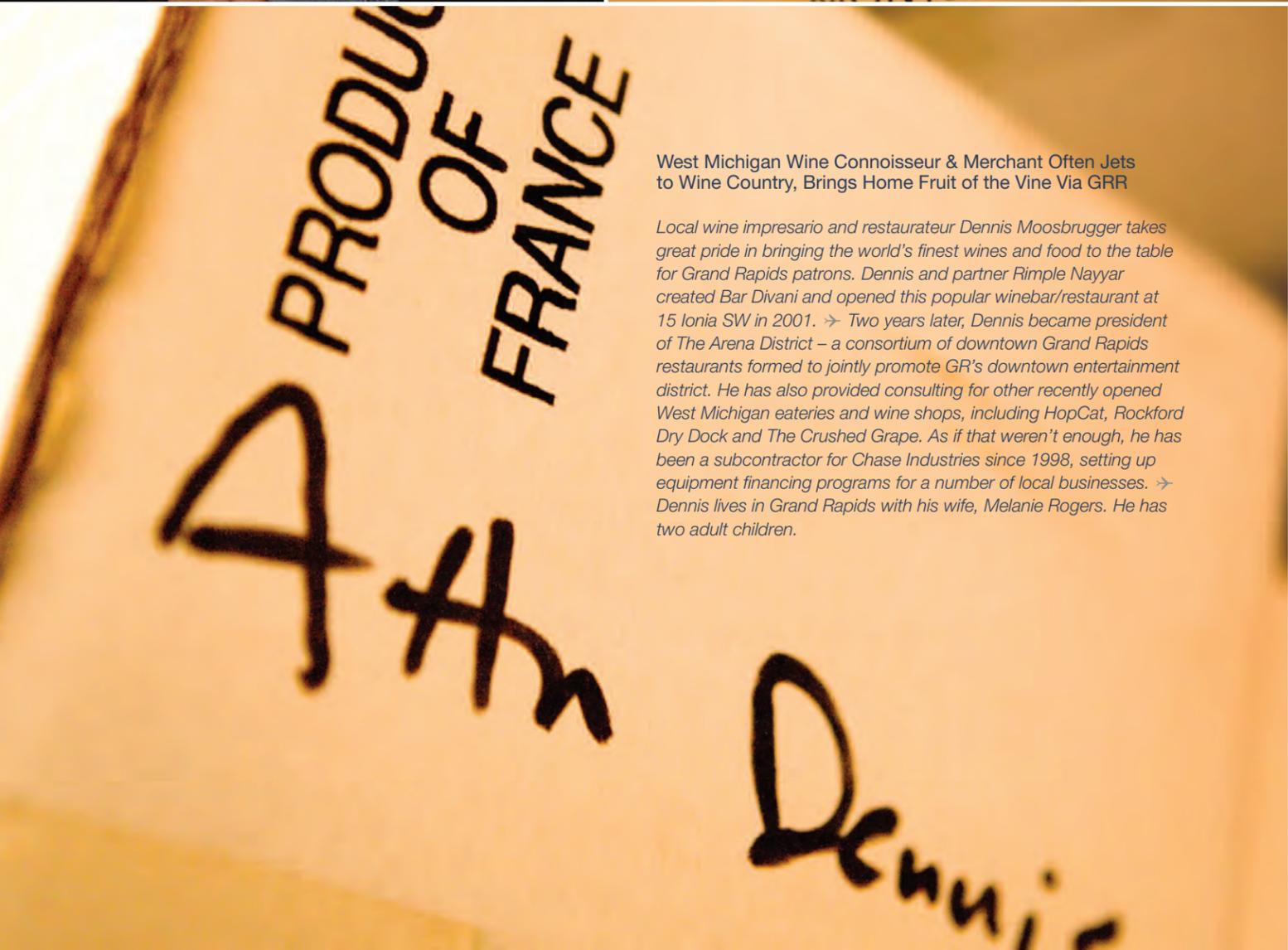
The Airport has partnered with Michigan Community Blood Center for many years now by hosting blood drives at GRR. The beat went on in 2008 with a blood drive in May and another in September. The community's response to these drives has always been generous and heartwarming – and the past year's drives were no exception.

Twenty pints were collected during the spring drive, and 19 more in the fall. That brings the total number of pints collected during blood drives at the Airport to nearly 700. Since each unit can be used for three people, that's potentially 2,100 lives that could be saved.



### DENNIS MOOSBRUGGER

*"I travel extensively to wine-producing regions to discover and sample wines that I think our customers will enjoy at Bar Divani. Since it's now impossible to carry wines back from either Europe or South America, U.S. airfreight has become an indispensable means for shipping my hand-selected biodynamic perishables back to GR. This way, I'm able to come home with an immediate memoir and samples of the wine journey I just took."*



#### West Michigan Wine Connoisseur & Merchant Often Jets to Wine Country, Brings Home Fruit of the Vine Via GRR

Local wine impresario and restaurateur Dennis Moosbrugger takes great pride in bringing the world's finest wines and food to the table for Grand Rapids patrons. Dennis and partner Rimple Nayar created Bar Divani and opened this popular winebar/restaurant at 15 Ionia SW in 2001. → Two years later, Dennis became president of The Arena District – a consortium of downtown Grand Rapids restaurants formed to jointly promote GR's downtown entertainment district. He has also provided consulting for other recently opened West Michigan eateries and wine shops, including HopCat, Rockford Dry Dock and The Crushed Grape. As if that weren't enough, he has been a subcontractor for Chase Industries since 1998, setting up equipment financing programs for a number of local businesses. → Dennis lives in Grand Rapids with his wife, Melanie Rogers. He has two adult children.



### JOYCE FLOWERS

"It is extremely important to our convention sales team to have an Airport that provides a hassle-free traveling experience in a state-of-the-art environment. In addition, GRR offers a better alternative to the congested airports in other cities. And it's great that our Airport is so close to hotels and the convention center, which allows guests to make a quick and easy transition from their flights to their meeting location.

#### Convention Planning Dynamo Relies on GRR to be a Magnet that Pulls Meetings & Attendees to West Michigan

As Director of National Accounts for the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), Joyce Flowers is an expert at bringing visitors to West Michigan. She pulls out all of West Michigan's top stops to persuade groups from around the country to host their conventions here; from the impressive new DeVos Place Convention Center to the area's numerous hotel options to the plethora of area attractions that visitors can enjoy during their stay. → Of course, having a top-notch international Airport so close to downtown is another big plus, and Joyce is quick to make that point on her sales calls. Her responsibilities at the CVB include handling the corporate and pharmaceutical markets, African-American religious groups, ethnic groups and women's groups. → Joyce lives in the Detroit area and works in the Detroit satellite office of the CVB, making frequent trips to West Michigan herself.

...The Airport recently played a key role welcoming over 1,000 attendees at a recent Conference Management Association event hosted by the City of Grand Rapids. Many of these guests commented that they were greeted at the Airport by genuinely friendly and helpful Grand Rapids residents. This warm reception helped guests have a positive experience at their convention from the very beginning – moments after stepping off their flights."



## Overall Activity at GRR Continues at Brisk Pace

2008 was another go-go year at GRR, with at least one area of operation hitting a new all-time high. Other business sectors at the Airport more than held their own despite a number of down-drafts that worked against us – from the nationwide recession, to Michigan’s own economic challenges, to the continuing slump in the U.S. aviation industry.

A record 95,190,603 pounds of airfreight were shipped through GRR in 2008, blowing the cargo doors off the previous record (set in 2007) by more than *3 million pounds*. This marks the fifth straight year the Airport set a new all-time high in cargo handling. On average, more than 130 tons of air cargo per day are now loaded or unloaded here, everything from fresh flowers, food and wine to heavy machinery parts to giftware from around the world to dozens of bags full of mail.

On the passenger side, just more than 1.8 million passengers arrived or departed on scheduled airline flights at GRR during 2008. While this total was down from the previous year, it clearly reflected the nationwide decline in airline traffic. For that matter, GRR fared relatively well, while many other airports saw dips of 10 to 15 percent or more.

In spite of these challenges, GRR actually increased its passenger air service during 2008 and early 2009. With new service from Air Canada and Allegiant Air, the Airport now offers nonstop flights to 18 destinations in 13 different states plus the District of Columbia and Toronto, Ontario. That represents the most destinations you can fly to nonstop from GRR in the Airport’s history. Today, the airlines offer nearly 60 daily departures from GRR to popular destinations including Orlando, Las Vegas, Denver, Toronto, Chicago, Atlanta, New York, Washington, D.C. and Dallas. And of course, from these and other hubs, passengers can make easy connections to literally hundreds of other destinations around the world.

Military operations at the Airport also climbed higher during 2008. Military aircraft, including A-10 Warthogs and KC-135 Stratotankers, made a total of 3,100 landings and takeoffs at GRR during the calendar year. GRR is a favorite location for military aviation units to practice critical “touch-and-go” landings. We are proud to offer our runways as a training site for nearby military air wings, including Selfridge Air Force Base in Mount Clemens, Michigan, and the Wisconsin Air National Guard Base in Milwaukee.



## New Airport Amenities Help You Relax, Recharge & Do More While on the Go

Besides adding more flights to more places than ever, GRR added several nice amenities within the terminal to help passengers make even better use of their travel time on the ground.

We’ve installed a pair of new Shiatsu massage recliners in the Grand Hall between Concourses A and B where you can enjoy a heated, deep-muscle back massage. A three-minute seated massage – which costs only \$1 – is a great way to ease tension and relax before or after a flight, or while waiting to pick up arriving passengers.

GRR has also recently installed three Charge Carte™ Rapid Chargers in the terminal, offering travelers a quick and easy way to recharge the batteries in their laptop computers, cell phones, PDAs and MP3 players while on the go. These self-serve kiosks can plug in up to 12 devices at a time, safely and fully recharging their batteries twice as fast as standard wall-plug chargers. And at just \$3 for an up to 30-minute recharge per device, it could well be the best investment you make on your whole trip. Charge Cartes are now located in both Concourse A and B, as well as in the Grand Hall.

Last but not least (at least not for movie lovers), GRR has installed a redbox® automated DVD-rental kiosk in the passenger terminal. You can choose from dozens of DVD rentals through this self-serve kiosk for just \$1 per night each. New releases are added every Tuesday. DVDs can be returned to any redbox kiosk, which are installed at many airports across the country. You’ll also find redbox kiosks at some Meijer and Wal-Mart stores, as well as at area McDonald’s restaurants. Our kiosk is in the Grand Hall near the security checkpoint for Concourse B. You can’t miss it – just look for the big, bright-red box, as the name implies.

## J. GREGORY FORD, O.D.

"My earliest memory of 'Kent County International Airport' was when my family and I boarded a chartered flight to Washington, D.C. to watch my uncle take the Oath of Office as our country's new Vice President. I was eight years old. Family, friends and media people from Grand Rapids were aboard that most unexpected flight. The pride and excitement we felt that day would stay with us our entire lives. The day I learned the Airport would bear Uncle Jerry's name, many great memories came flooding back.

These memories are numerous, and many revolve around our local Airport. I remember Air Force One arriving for a West Michigan campaign stop in 1976. The spectacle of seeing that majestic jet arriving and taxiing as the crowds and the bands welcomed our 'favorite son' seems like yesterday. We toured the President's plane that day, and I still have the card given to us as we entered saying, 'Welcome Aboard' with a photo of the modified '707' flying over the Washington Monument. Although we had many incredible trips to see Uncle Jerry in Washington, Vail and Palm Springs, it was always great to return to our great city and our wonderful Airport.

With a very heavy heart, I also remember the visit to Gerald R Ford International to welcome home its namesake for the last time. Air Force One landing, 'Hail to the Chief,' 'Hail to the Victors' and that flag-draped casket are burned in my memory forever. The emotions of that day still overtake me.

It is always a special treat to fly in and out of Gerald R Ford International given its named relationship to our family. Like our city, our Airport is a wonderful example of something that's just the right size, in just the right place, with just the right people."



### Area Eye Doctor Looks Back Fondly on Many Special Occasions at GRR Relating to "Uncle Jerry"

Greg Ford is a doctor of optometry (O.D.) who has run his own successful private practice in Grand Rapids since 1992. But he is also known in West Michigan for his relationship to the area's favorite son, the Airport's namesake. Greg's father, Jim, was Gerald R. Ford's brother, making Greg the President's nephew. → Greg moved back to Grand Rapids following optometry school in 1990. He currently resides in Cascade with his wife, Carla, and the couple's children, Natalie, 14; Zachary, 12; and Holly, 9.



## Now Hear This: GRR First in Nation to Offer “Hearing Loop”

In 2008, GRR installed a system that transmits public address announcements at a comfortable volume directly into the ears of people wearing most hearing aid brands. By doing so, the Airport became the first in the nation where such a system is in place throughout all terminal concourses at all aircraft boarding gates.

People with hearing loss may have trouble understanding airport PA announcements, such as gate-change and boarding calls. There are an estimated 33,000 hearing-impaired people in Kent County alone. The Airport added the hearing-loop system at nominal cost in conjunction with its already planned PA system upgrade.

“The Aeronautics Board is delighted to offer this innovative new service to our customers who use assistive-hearing devices,” said Kent County Aeronautics Board chairman John Van Laar. “This hearing loop will significantly enhance the airport experience for people with hearing loss.”

Travelers with T-coil-equipped hearing aids may turn on the feature after passing through the passenger security area in order to hear all announcements throughout Concourses A and B, including at all airline gates.

## Toys Pour In & Voices Ring Out During Holidays at GRR

In keeping with its annual holiday tradition, the Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighters (ARFF) collected donations for Toys for Tots during November and December 2008. ARFF revved up the drive in early December with an open house, treating visitors to a tour of its GRR station, fire truck demonstrations and other fun activities.

Travelers at GRR again responded generously, filling collection boxes with donated new toys, games, dolls and stuffed animals. (We even received donations of two brand-new bicycles complete with safety helmets!) Thanks to you, literally hundreds of area children who would otherwise have gone without received wonderful presents during the holidays.

Toys for Tots is coordinated across West Michigan by the Grand Rapids Santa Claus Girls, which leads the drive and distributes the toys to needy families across Kent County.

Meanwhile, the Airport’s passenger terminal once again soared with the sound of holiday carols during our annual Holiday Music Festival. Nearly 20 choral and instrumental groups from area middle schools and high schools performed in the Grand Hall during the first week of December 2008, delighting travelers and helping put everyone at GRR in the holiday spirit.



## Full-Scale Emergency Response Exercise Tests & Confirms GRR Preparedness

As most people know, flying is now the safest form of transportation by far. (Statistically, it is many times safer per mile than travel by car.) But that level of safety is no accident. It’s largely thanks to tremendous advances made in aircraft technology and our air-traffic control system. What’s more, the enviable safety of air travel is greatly enhanced by the preparedness of emergency response teams on the ground.

Toward this end, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mandates a long list of emergency response capabilities at airports throughout the country. One of these requirements is for every FAA-certified airport to conduct a full-scale emergency-response exercise every three years. The most recent one at GRR was held on May 30, 2008.

For this drill, a simulated crash landing was staged on 8L-26R – the north parallel runway at GRR – beginning with a distress call from the fictitious plane’s pilot to the control tower. The Airport immediately went into Alert 3 (crash) mode. Our own Airport Rescue Fire Fighter team sprang into action, immediately mobilizing emergency equipment and personnel near the runway. Emergency dispatch calls also went out to the Airport’s many mutual-aid partners, who would provide assistance in handling an actual incident. Within minutes, a unified command post was established near the scene of the (fictitious) crash.

As the exercise unfolded, two donated school buses parked in the field represented the downed plane, as if it had broken in two and skidded off the west end of the runway. Dozens of student volunteers from nearby Caledonia High School stood in as the plane’s passengers and crew – including many who were realistically made up to simulate injuries sustained in the “crash.” The rescue team responded as if the emergency were real, doing everything from spraying the buses with water and fire retardant to pulling “victims” from the scene and transporting them to area hospitals.

Under the watchful eye of the FAA, the GRR exercise went off flawlessly – both verifying and honing our ability to respond to an actual emergency. There has never been a major incident at GRR in its 45-year history, and everyone of course hopes there never will be. But just in case, we are totally committed to being as prepared as possible in order to minimize the consequences and potentially save lives.



### BING GOEI

"Eastern Floral relies a great deal on the cargo services at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. We have flowers shipped in from Hawaii every week, and we also bring in flowering plants from Oregon on a regular basis.

...Eastern Floral was asked to provide many floral arrangements during President Ford's funeral. We had a very short time to put this together, so we had to fly in certain flowers to meet the requests of the family and the community. This was another time when the Airport helped us do our job with flying colors - in this case, to honor Grand Rapids' favorite son and the Airport's namesake."

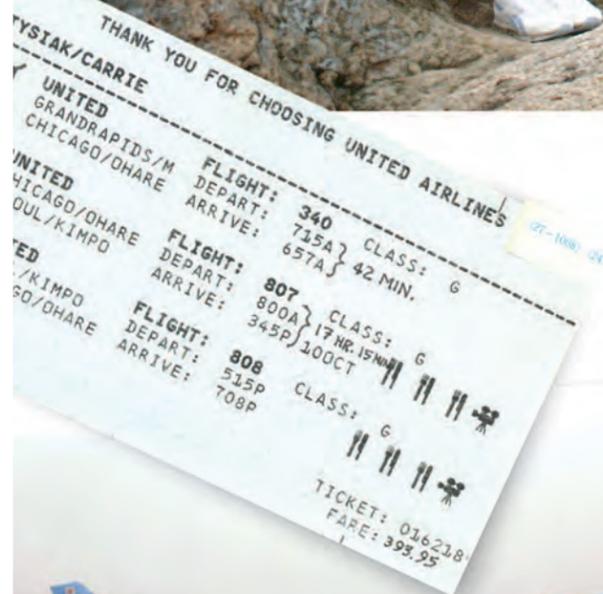
### One of Area's Favorite Florists Counts on GRR to Import More "Flower Power" to West Michigan

As the owner of Eastern Floral - one of West Michigan's largest floral companies - Bing Goei knows how critical it is to get even the most delicate flowers here quickly and in perfect condition from nurseries that can be thousands of miles away. No wonder he counts the Airport and its cargo services among his most important business partners. → Bing has owned Eastern Floral since 2001. He was recognized as the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Minority Businessperson of the Year in 2001 and the Ernst & Young West Michigan Entrepreneur of the Year in 2005. In addition, he has made time to serve his community as chairman of the board of the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce (2006, 2007) and member of the Asian Professionals Organization. → Bing and his wife, Jean, live in Grand Rapids. The couple has five children and eight grandchildren.



### PAUL & CARRIE SOLTYSIAK

"GRR has served as a very important gateway for our family. In 1995, we flew out of GRR on our way to South Korea to pick up our adopted baby daughter, Hannah Koo. It was so nice to have a large group of family and friends welcome us home when we landed here. Then in 2006, we flew back to South Korea, and each of our children got to visit the area where they were born."



### Proud Parents Depart from GRR, Return from South Korea with Adopted Daughter

Paul and Carrie Soltysiak, married since 1985, have lived in Grand Rapids for many years with three children they got from far, far away. All three of their kids - Louis Jae, now 18; Jacob Soon, now 16; and Hannah Koo, now 14 - were Korean-born and adopted by the couple at early ages. (The children's middle names were originally their first names, given to them by their Korean orphanage caretakers.) → To pick up Hannah, the Soltysiaks journeyed to South Korea from GRR in 1995. The family made a special return trip to Korea in 2006 to help in the kids' cultural and heritage education. → Paul is a commercial printing rep for a major West Michigan printing firm. Carrie keeps busy running the family's home and working in the kitchen at Catholic Central High School - where she's able to keep a watchful eye on Louis and Jacob, at least during lunchtime.





## General Aviation (GA) Operations at GRR Continue to Provide Huge Lift for West Michigan

Nearly half of all the takeoffs and landings at GRR during 2008 were made by aircraft that are *not* commercial airliners, cargo planes or military aircraft. These general aviation operations (or GA for short) have long represented a significant part of what goes on at the Airport. And if anything, that trend has accelerated in recent years.

GA operations at GRR include hundreds of flights each week on a wide variety of aircraft performing many different missions. These include everything from corporate jet traffic to individual private plane owners flying for pleasure and/or business to flight training schools to Aero Med helicopter ambulance runs.

Privately owned corporate aircraft make up a major share of GA at GRR. Several West Michigan corporations own one or more jets that they hangar and operate out of the two Fixed Base Operators (FBOs) located here – Northern Air and Rapid Air. Companies' GA fleets give them unmatched flexibility to go wherever they need to go, whenever they need to get there. GRR and its FBO tenants provide these operations with exceptional, state-of-the-art facilities and services.

Many other GA customers opt for fractional jet ownership at GRR. These programs, which are also offered by Northern Air and Rapid Air, provide the use of aircraft on a part-time basis for users who don't need or can't justify the cost of a full-time private fleet.

Finally, there are numerous individuals who base their private aircraft at GRR and who frequently fly in and out of here. Some do it for business, others for pleasure trips and still others for the sheer love of flying. These pilots fly everything from single-engine vintage Piper Cubs to the newest twin-engine jets.

Add all of these GA flights to the passenger airline/cargo/military traffic here, and you get hundreds of aircraft operations every day, of every imaginable type. Make that 97,501 takeoffs and landings at GRR in 2008, to be exact.



## GRR Recognized with Awards, Appointments & Acclamation

The Airport was recognized for excellence during 2008 with prestigious honors from national trade associations and other bodies.

- **Airports-General Aviation Facilities Award** – presented to GRR by the Michigan Concrete Paving Association, in recognition of excellence for the Taxiway J reconstruction project. The award also honored Reynolds, Smith and Hills Inc. (project engineers) and West Michigan Recycled Aggregates (paving contractor).
- **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** – presented to the Airport by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for our annual financial report. The award recognizes governmental agencies whose financial reporting meets the high standards of the GFOA. This was the 14th consecutive year GRR received this honor.
- **Honorable Mention for the Balchen/Post Award** – presented for excellence in snow and ice control at the 42nd Annual International Aviation Snow Symposium. The award recognizes the Kent County Department of Aeronautics Operations and Field Maintenance sections, which are responsible for snow removal at GRR.
- Executive Director James Koslosky was appointed to and served on the **Governor's Transportation Funding Task Force Citizens Advisory Committee** during 2008.



Chief Pilot and Rest of the Aero Med Spectrum Health Team Credit GRR as “Critical” to Responding Quicker, Saving Lives

*Born in Fiji, the son of a Royal New Zealand Air Force Pacific Flying Boat captain, Bradford Stretton has kept his family’s noble aviation heritage alive since his early 20s. And since 1986, Brad has used these high-flying gifts to actually help save lives as chief pilot for Aero Med Spectrum Health. → Brad was a key player on the team that helped Spectrum Health launch Aero Med. He flew a medical helicopter in Kalamazoo just prior and did the same job earlier in Cleveland. Basing a helicopter-ambulance program in an airport hangar was highly unusual at the time – and still is. But being at GRR provides Aero Med many important advantages. → Aero Med is Michigan’s only medical transport program staffed by full-time flight physicians – and one of very few in the U.S. Each Aero Med flight carries a doctor, flight nurse and pilot on board. The program averages more than 1,600 calls for service and transports about 700 persons annually. → Bradford has logged more than 4,000 flight hours in Aero Med aircraft alone. He holds an ATP rating for helicopter and multiengine fixed wing aircraft, the highest achievement a pilot can attain. He is married to wife Linda, a pediatric critical care nurse whom he met at (you guessed it) Spectrum Health’s Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital.*

### BRADFORD STRETTON

“The assistance we get from our Federal Air Traffic Control (ATC) personnel at GRR is imperative to our operations. It allows us to make very rapid departures, particularly on runs when response time is critical.

...ATC also provides us with critical air traffic separation the whole way. When approaching an accident scene, we might be coordinating our landing with three or more agencies at once: the pilot talking to firefighters who are managing the landing zone, ATC and our own flight communicators. During these extreme workload times, ATC’s assistance greatly reduces the pilot’s stress.

...Having flown in many parts of the world, I’ve found the GRR control tower personnel to be the most helpful and professional people I have ever had the privilege to work with. During the 20-plus years I’ve flown for Aero Med, we’ve developed a great deal of mutual respect and tremendous rapport – to the point where we can often anticipate each other’s needs as soon as we hear the voice on the radio.”



### EVA AGUIRRE COOPER

“The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is a great asset for my business and personal travel. I have lived in Grand Rapids for more than 20 years, and in one of my earlier jobs, I had to travel often to Mexico. The ease of driving and pulling into a parking lot so close to the terminal is truly nice compared to Chicago or Detroit.

...It’s important to have an airport in our community that offers all the services we have come to expect from any major airport.... As a board member of the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau, I also know how important it is to promote our community and have an airport that is welcoming and highly functional.

...With WOOD TV8, I’ve been able to shoot many a homecoming story at the Airport. Lately, there have been many men and women in the military making their way back home to West Michigan. I think we can all relate to waiting in anticipation as we watch for friends or family members to turn the bend and walk down the hallway toward the security check. The Airport has been the scene for many celebrations and homecomings for my family, too.”

### TV Station’s Community Ambassador Juggles Business & Personal Pursuits, Home & Away with Big Assist from GRR

*Eva Aguirre Cooper has been the Community Affairs Director at WOOD TV8/WOTV 4/WXSP since 1998. Her responsibilities include community outreach efforts, on-air reporting and special station projects, including Angel Tree, Drive to Life and Connecting with Community. → She also serves her community on various boards and committees, including the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Healthy Kent 2010 and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. → A proud Hispanic-American herself, Eva also serves on the Grand Rapids Sister City Mexico Committee and is actively involved in West Michigan’s Hispanic community. She lives in Jenison with her husband, Jay, a professor at Grand Valley State University. The couple has a daughter, Elisa, 21, a GVSU student, and son, Victor, 19, who is planning to study in California.*





## Airport Management and Leadership

THE KENT COUNTY AERONAUTICS BOARD is a six-member body appointed by the Kent County Board of Commissioners with responsibility for setting policy and providing general oversight of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. The Aeronautics Board is made up of three Kent County Commissioners and three citizen members, each serving staggered three-year terms. The Aeronautics Board maintains two standing committees: Aeronautical, Facilities and Marketing; and Finance, Administration and Public Relations.

THE AIRPORT IS MANAGED AND OPERATED by the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, a four-person management team heading the Airport's four primary functional areas and a 120-member Department of Aeronautics staff.

## Aeronautics Board

**John Van Laar**

*Chairman*

**Theodore J. Vonk\***

*Vice Chairman*

**Dean A. Agee\***

**Joseph Jones\*\***

**Thomas G. O'Hare\*\***

**Joseph Tomaselli**

**Richard A. Vander Molen\***

**Floyd Wilson**

\* *County Commissioner*

\*\* *Term expired 2008*

THE MISSION OF THE KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AERONAUTICS is to provide safe, efficient, environmentally sensitive and economically self-sustaining air transportation facilities that are responsive to regional needs.

THE GERALD R. FORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS A FINANCIALLY SELF-SUPPORTING PUBLIC ENTERPRISE receiving no general tax revenues for day-to-day operations or ongoing capital development.

## Financial Highlights

	2008*	2007	2006
<b>Operating Revenue</b>			
Airline Payments	\$10,908,082	\$10,037,191	\$ 9,892,673
General Aviation	1,504,129	1,384,901	1,388,140
Concessions	773,295	715,479	747,250
Air Cargo	2,559,503	2,323,568	2,455,920
Ground Transportation	10,882,591	11,638,577	11,562,774
Other	820,669	734,539	784,496
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$27,448,269</b>	<b>\$26,834,255</b>	<b>\$26,831,253</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>			
Personnel Costs	\$ 8,840,426	\$ 8,803,760	\$ 7,801,658
Supplies	1,062,634	1,021,634	723,028
Contractual	8,062,366	7,637,269	6,823,512
Depreciation	10,948,005	10,780,845	10,553,432
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$28,913,431</b>	<b>\$28,243,508</b>	<b>\$25,901,630</b>
<b>Net Income from Operations</b>	<b>(\$1,465,162)</b>	<b>(\$1,409,253)</b>	<b>\$929,623</b>

\* Unaudited figures. A comprehensive Annual Financial Report including audited figures for 2008 will be available from the Kent County Department of Aeronautics as of June 2009.

## Aeronautics Department Executive Staff

**James A. Koslosky, A.A.E.**

*Executive Director*

**Phillip E. Johnson, A.A.E.**

*Deputy Executive Director*

**Brian Picardat, A.A.E.**

*Finance and Administration Director*

**Robert W. Benstein, A.A.E.**

*Public Safety and Operations Director*

**Thomas R. Ecklund, P.E.**

*Facilities Director*

**Bruce L. Schedlbauer, APR**

*Marketing and Communications Manager*



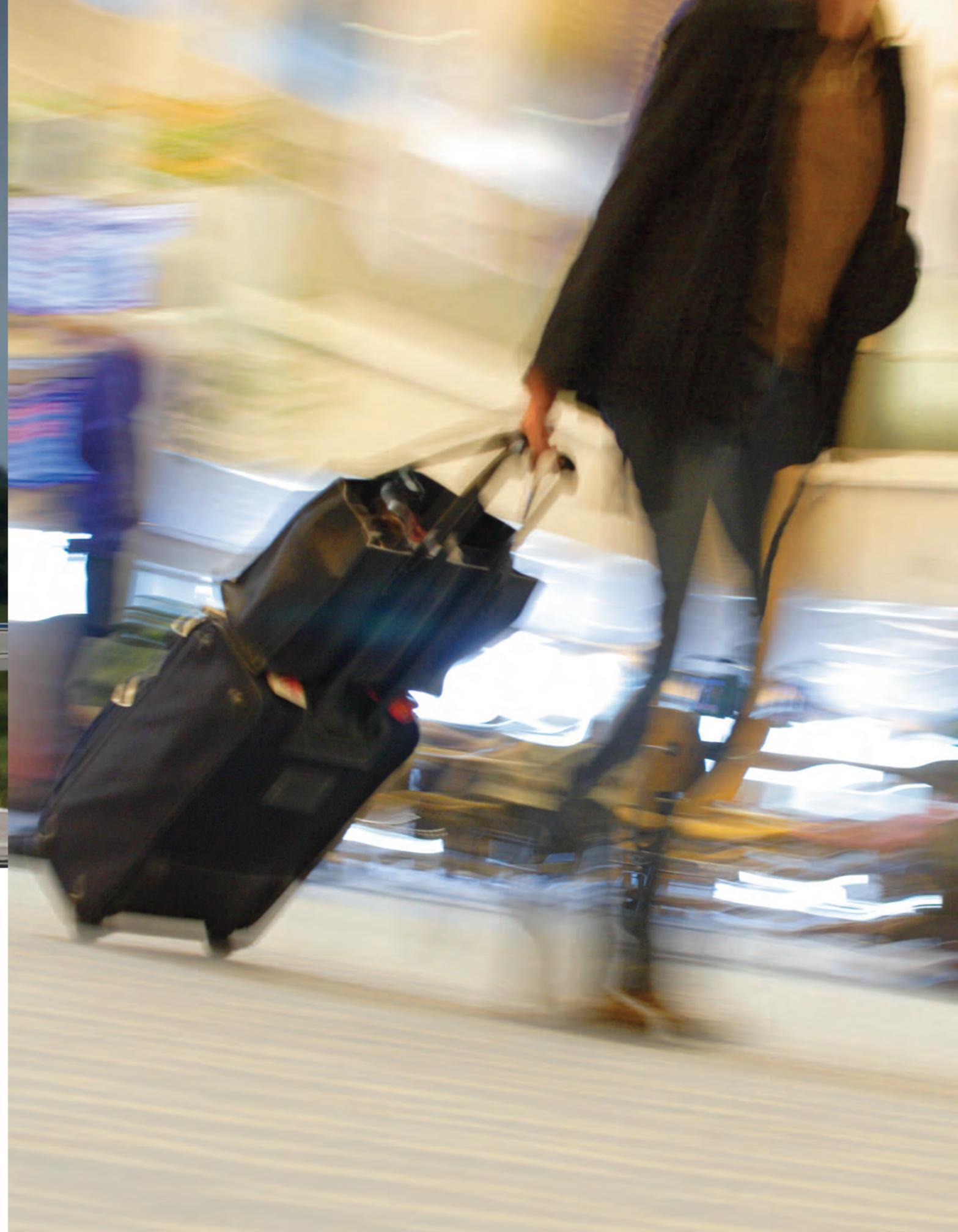
## JOHN WHEELER & MIKE VANGESSEL

"Rockford Construction purchased its first fractional jet share for business use back in the mid-'90s. That transaction was a key in allowing us to take a more regional approach to construction services throughout the Midwest and Ontario, Canada.

...Since we're based in Grand Rapids, Michigan – a state that's surrounded by water – our ability to expand much beyond hinges on one critical ingredient: getting efficient, cost-effective transportation to and from our regional projects.

...Over the past 12 years or so, we've had several fractional ownership shares through Northern Jet Management at Gerald R. Ford International Airport. These private flight operations give us tremendous flexibility in scheduling trips to attend key meetings, conduct negotiations, visit current job sites and pursue new opportunities.

...GRR, which is less than 10 minutes from our offices, and Northern Jet Management, with their highly skilled, professional staff, have never let us down. They have always enabled us to get to wherever we need to go in a safe and timely manner. We can truly say that Rockford Construction could never have grown to be a company that exceeds \$275 million in construction volume annually if not for that ability."



### GR Construction Company Dynamic Duo Builds Their Business into Regional Powerhouse with Big Boost from Corporate Jets at GRR

*John Wheeler and Mike VanGessel cofounded Rockford Construction Company in 1987, starting out as a two-person firm that built \$3.1 million worth of projects in its first year. With their vision and leadership, the company skyrocketed to more than \$275 million in annual revenue and 200 associates by 2007. → Rockford Construction's private flight operations out of GRR have also played a key role in catapulting its business success – as both of these gentlemen quickly point out. In the mid-'90s, the company bought its first fractional jet share through Northern Jet Management. One thing led to another, including many more new projects in increasingly faraway places, all of which led Rockford Construction to owning fractional shares in several jets over the past 14 years, including a Falcon 50 and Citation Bravo at GRR. → John and Mike are both Grand Rapids natives who have lived in the area most of their lives. Both sit on several boards, serve in many nonprofit community ventures and enjoy outdoor sports, including Lake Michigan boating and fishing. John and his wife, Chris, have four adult sons who live in and around Grand Rapids. Mike and his wife, Gayle, have three children who all attend local schools.*

GERALD R. FORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Grand Rapids, MI 49512  
[www.flygrandrapids.org](http://www.flygrandrapids.org)  
Phone 616.233.6000

