

News Release



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Detroit Leads the Way on Customer Appreciation Day

--Free flights, free parking to be raffled off on December 17

On December 17, 2003, many airports across North America will be celebrating the Centennial of Flight, commemorating the Wright Brothers' trailblazing, 1903 breakthrough—the first manned, powered flight. In addition, most airports will also be doing something special for customers on that day.

“Customer Appreciation Days are nothing new,” said Wayne County Airport Authority CEO Lester Robinson. “But this is the first time that there has ever been a North America-wide Customer Appreciation Day. Airports Council International-North America’s (ACI-NA) Marketing and Communications Committee is coordinating the activity. I’m proud to say the idea began here in Detroit, so naturally, we want our celebration to be the best.”

Welcome tables will be staffed by WCAA volunteers, beginning at 6:30 a.m. in the Smith Terminal at Detroit Metropolitan Airport providing coffee for early-morning travelers. Actors—graduate students from Wayne State University’s Drama Department--portraying **Orville, Wilbur and Katharine Wright** will distribute pin-on wings to children and provide special centennial luggage tags to adults. Other goodies and freebies will be distributed from the tables or from concession locations including: Wright-themed T-shirts, hundreds of granola bars, chocolates, airplane pens, and boxes of mints. A free-standing “History of Flight” display on loan from *Popular Mechanics* magazine has been erected in the Smith Terminal.

At 9:30 a.m., the whole operation moves over to the McNamara Terminal ticket lobby and will run until 11:30 a.m.

Customers will have the opportunity to enter a “**Thank You for Flying**” raffle for a variety of prizes including:

- Two round-trip tickets donated by American Airlines
- Two round-trip tickets donated by Spirit Airlines

- One round-trip ticket donated by Southwest Airlines
- Free long-term parking for the winner's next visit to the airport
- One night's free lodging at the beautiful airport Westin Hotel
- One night's free lodging + breakfast at the Metro Airport Marriott in Romulus
- Oxygen sessions at the airport's Ora Oxygen
- A meal for two at the airport's National Coney Island
- Free internet access at the airport's On-Line Cafe
- "Made in Michigan" baskets donated by Paradies-Metro Ventures
- A variety of Wright Brothers commemorative souvenirs from the airport's Henry Ford Museum store compliments of CA One Services

Colorful banners and balloons will denote the location of the tables.

"I am proud of how our concessionaires have embraced the spirit of Customer Appreciation Day," said DTW's Concessions Director Myrna Mendez. "They have really come through with some fun and valuable give-aways."

"We are also grateful to the airlines and to the hotels for donating raffle prizes," added Lester Robinson. "All of us in the airport community want to let our customers know that we appreciate their business."

"Much has changed in our industry since the early days of flight. What hasn't changed is that airports' efforts including enhancing terminal design, improving passenger conveniences, and ensuring the safety of travelers, are driven by the needs of our customers," said David Z. Plavin, President of Airports Council International-North America. "Because of their contributions, North American airports are able to generate more than \$533 billion each year in economic activity. We join the Wayne County Airport Authority in celebrating our industry's accomplishments and contributions to society."

"It is our customers who have made aviation such a successful industry," said Robinson. "Orville and Wilbur Wright could not have imagined that their flying machine, constructed in a bicycle shop, would spawn such a mighty industry. Their entire 12-second 120-foot flight could occur today inside a B-747 aircraft. The economic impact of aviation is enormous. Over 17,000 employees bring home a paycheck from our airport alone, and when the spin-off impact is included, over 70,000 people in our community owe their living to the existence of this airport."

The public affairs staff of Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA) is coordinating the celebration across the US and Canada. For information, contact Juliet Wright or Howard Mann at (202) 293-8500 or visit www.aci-na.org/asp/committeeindex.asp?page=257.

"Our customers, who drive and sustain this industry, deserve appreciation," continued Robinson. "Our message is simple, 'Thank you for flying.'"

For information on the Wright Brothers, their flying machines, and the beginning of the aerial age, visit the National Air and Space Museum's web site at www.nasm.si.edu/wrightbrothers/ For information on Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, visit www.metroairport.com. Airport employees are not eligible for the drawings.

The media is welcome to interview and videotape Orville, Wilbur and Katherine Wright throughout the morning, but at 7:15 a.m. they, along with WCAA CEO Lester Robinson, will deliver special brief remarks.