



Touching Ground

MAY 2004 • VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 2

AT THE DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Ad Campaign Promotes Airport's True Value

We just finished our own version of March Madness. It's called Spring Break. With all the different school systems staggering break weeks, pretty much the whole month of March is "high traffic". (We estimate we had around 5,500 passengers a day in and out of the airport.) Besides the lure of tropical beaches, there is another good reason why the airport is so busy.

Using the US DOT's most recent data, we calculated Des Moines International Airport's average airfare and compared it to competing airports in our region. This number represents the average fare paid for all tickets bought for our airport during a particular period of time. Of course there are several factors that enter into this, but the average airfare is the most appropriate comparison in that it represents the price of tickets available to most people most of the time.

The average roundtrip airfare for Des Moines International Airport was \$288.36. That is only \$55 more than

Kansas City's average, \$39 more than Moline (Quad City) and \$32 higher than Omaha. We were \$58 lower than Minneapolis-St. Paul. (We also discovered that we are the 88th busiest airport in the nation, out of 435.)

When you consider the true cost of ground transportation to and from another airport (\$.37/mile), parking and meals because of the extra time involved, these average differences disappear pretty quickly. Everybody decides what constitutes an appropriate savings, **but most people (most of the time) will actually save money by using their own local airport here in Des Moines.**



Do the math campaign underway.

This gives rise to our "Do the Math" campaign. So many people only consider the value of the gasoline they put in their vehicles. All we want to do is arm people with the facts,

ensure they are using the right information and let them make the best decision for them. We have received calls and emails from people stating this has changed their minds about which airport to use. (A little secret: through February, we are more than

7,000 passengers ahead of last year's record pace.)

Maybe you have seen one of our "Do the Math" billboards around town. Or, the next time you are shopping at Southridge or Valley West malls, look for our "Do the Math" kiosks.➔

March Is On Record Pace

March figures have just been released for the Des Moines International Airport and the Airport is elated to report that March 2004 was the best passenger activity month in the history of the Airport. Passenger activity includes both the

statistics for enplanements and deplanements combined. The chart below reflects that total activity jumped almost 10% from last year and that enplanements themselves are 11.67% higher than last year during the same time period. Total

year-to-date figures depict that we are a little more than 16,000 passengers ahead of last year's record-breaking passenger activity year, plus 7.5% ahead on enplanements alone inching us closer to that elusive 1-million passenger mark.➔

March	2004			Year-to-date (3 months)		
	2004	2003	% Change	2004	2003	% Change
Passengers Enplaned	85,307	76,391	11.67%	229,527	213,519	7.50%
Deplaned	<u>87,071</u>	<u>80,657</u>	<u>7.95%</u>	<u>232,030</u>	<u>218,393</u>	<u>6.24%</u>
TOTAL	172,378	157,048	9.76%	461,557	431,912	6.86%

Airport Test Flies Ambassador Program

Air travel can be exciting and intimidating all at the same time. The multitude of signs and regulations is often overwhelming. Comprehension of the Flight Information Display System boards that monitor times and status of flights can mean the difference in successfully making your travel itinerary or getting your trip off to a bad start. Passengers can be confused in the hustle and bustle of an airport environment. In continuing with the Des Moines International Airport's "homey" environment, we have embarked on a volunteer program during Spring Break 2004, a prototype Ambassador Program to help alleviate traveler's stress.

Sixteen AIB College of Business travel and tourism majors served as goodwill ambassadors. They were recognizable to the travelers by wearing blue vests with engraved badges and carrying airport folders. Working in groups of three, they served as roaming information booths providing friendly assistance to travelers. One was outside the terminal assisting with curbside check-in and another inside the terminal, monitoring the ticket counters and branching over to the

baggage claim area assisting with checkpoint lines if flow extended into the lobby area. And finally, one person would assist passengers in the concourse/gate area. They worked the

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Des Moines International Airport Ambassadors are committed to delivering accurate and courteous information and assistance to all passengers, visitors and employees. Our goal is to provide a positive image of the airport and the community by extending hospitality that reflects a "Welcome Home!" attitude and a sincere commitment to exemplify goodwill. In return, volunteers will be treated with appreciation and respect.

high-traffic days of the break period as determined by the airlines and Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) recommendations on March 11-14 and March 18-21 during two shifts in the early morning

and afternoon.

Rita McClain, Chair and Instructor of the Travel & Tourism Department at AIB, shared that it was a tremendous experience for the students and engaged them in community involvement. Positive feedback from passengers was common. One passenger stated he was impressed that the airport cared enough to institute an assistance program and it was appreciated. The kids loved the airport "giveaways" and consequently made the parents more content travelers!

The Staff of the Des Moines International Airport feels we need to make an excellent first-impression of our City. We are the gateway to Des Moines and Central Iowa, so it is imperative to influence visitor's opinions in a positive way to the airport and Des Moines. We would like to move forward with a full-time program of ambassadorship and even extend the parameters of the program to train them to be tour guides and assist with VIP events or other non-routine airport-related activities.➔

The 132nd Tactical Fighter Wing Iowa Air National Guard

The Iowa Air National Guard has been a resident of the Des Moines International Airport for over 60 years. The 132nd Fighter Wing has long been recognized as one of our country's finest Air Guard organizations.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Air Corps Squadron for Des Moines in January 1941. The



One of the F-16s that patrol the Des Moines air space regularly.

124th Observation Squadron was organized on February 25, 1941 and would be called to active service just prior to World War II. After the war, the 124th was combined with the 132nd Fighter Group and became the 132nd Fighter Wing. The Wing was again called to duty during the Korean conflict and returned to State control in January 1953.

The early 1950's arrival of the "Jet Age" in military aviation had a dramatic impact on

the Air Guard and our airport. Due to the pending arrival of F-80 Fighter Jets at the Air Guard, over one million dollars of federally funded improvements were added to the airport. The work included the addition of 1,800 feet to the main runway and 3,480 feet of taxiways. Today the 132nd Fighter Wing flies the F-16 Fighting Falcon, a modern front-line fighter.

Since October '96, the 132nd Fighter Wing has stepped to center stage on the world scene and validated the Total Force Concept with an unprecedented six overseas contingency deployments to patrol the No-Fly Zone over Iraq in Operations Northern and Southern Watch. The unit's most recent deployment was October – December 2002 in support of Operation Northern Watch. The unit's Block 42 F-16s are now powered by the new Pratt and Whitney 229 engine, which provides significantly more thrust and combat capability than the Pratt and Whitney 220.

The unit is capable of employing day and night.

The 132nd Fighter Wing has also been engaged in the Homeland Defense mission. Right after September 11, the Wing was placed on alert, poised to defend Iowans and all Americans against any possible attacks. Additionally, the Wing has accomplished the Air Sovereignty Alert mission three times since September 11, 2001. During these periods of time the unit's F-16s are prepared 24/7 to launch within minutes in the event of a "scramble" order. The unit has also provided continuous Combat Air Patrols over Des Moines during President Bush's visits.

A number of other members of the 132nd Fighter Wing have stepped up to help fight the war on terrorism and are supporting these efforts in both the United States and countries abroad, supporting Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Parking Rises to the Occasion for Spring Break!

One of many notable achievements by the Des Moines International Airport team during Spring Break was our parking operation. We parked almost 50,000 cars over the 3-week span. On March 17th alone, we were less than 15 cars away from filling every available slot for parking. Combine that with the fact that Des Moines had the third largest snowfall on record within that time frame, and you begin to see how

Standard Parking Manager, David Meyer quipped,

"I'm proud of the way the parking team rose to the challenge that volume and weather presented us in taxing both our equipment and personnel."

Meyer, who has been manager of Standard Parking for four years, now manages a team of five supervisors and



Cashiers Trick or Treat 2003

around 35 full and part-time employees, plus some casual staff that work flexible hours. "There are no weak links and cross training helps us be flexible, prepared and dedicated to customer service." Between Meyer and Tim Stiles, Contract Compliance Officer, every customer complaint is addressed individually and whenever possible resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Over the past three years, this team has minimized customer complaints.

Our Airport maintains a strong relationship and hands-on administration with our parking provider. Every three years the parking management contract is evaluated through a Request for Proposal process and awarded to the parking contractor for the next three years pending Board approval. The Des Moines International Airport Staff recommended the continuation and the Board approved the renewing of the contract to Standard Parking at the April 6th Airport Board Meeting.

Our parking staff tries to remain creative in

dealing with the public and have taken the initiative to sponsor many giveaways and promotions. They've given away everything from balsa wood airplanes and airport lapel pins to luggage tags and treats for customers and their pets if on board with them. They dressed festively to commemorate both Halloween and Christmas holidays. The parking staff and Airport staff are trying to consider even more helpful and innovative ways to provide better and unique service to their customers.

In looking at the bottom-line, Meyer is proud of the fact that Des Moines International Airport has very few problems with vandalism and thefts. He maintains that providing a clean, well arranged, kept up and adequately lit facility provide the impetus for customers to maintain the environment and feel safe. And, we can boast that our rates are one of the lowest in the Midwest for an airport our size or larger. "We give top value parking for bottom dollar!" exclaimed Meyer.➔

Airport represented at IPAA Exhibition

On March 9th Des Moines International Airport was represented at the Iowa Public Airports Association's (IPAA) Annual Exhibition at the Capitol Rotunda. We had a very informative and appealing tabletop display and were represented by Bob Hagener, Aviation Director; Mike Salamone, Deputy Aviation Director of Finance and Administration; and Gary Hagan, Marketing Coordinator.

There are three primary reasons for the all the airport representations at the Capitol:

- State funding for airport safety projects and programs continue to be critically low. An increase in awareness of that fact is necessary to boost support.
- Reduced funding for airport projects and programs is an issue. We need to maintain a strong presence in the State's legislative branch to insure the funds are

allocated for these important airport projects. Airports create economic development opportunities in cities of all sizes in Iowa.

- The final message is the State's budget issues have temporarily put the \$200,000 funding for the Iowa Airport Pavement Marking Program on hold. We encouraged



our legislators to release this money as soon as possible because it is necessary for safety at the airports in our state.

Current IPAA President, Shane Vande Voort, said he was very pleased

with this year's event. "I felt that the day was very well attended by both commercial service and general aviation airports." Feedback received from legislators and aviation advocates was very positive.➔

Airport Welcomes Rodent Guest

When you mention a rodent in regards to a guest, it usually isn't the "preferred guest". But, when that rodent is editor Geronimo Stilton of *The Rodent's Gazette*, the main character from the Scholastic Publishers children's books series, that's a mouse of a different color. On March 15, The Paradise Gift Shop here at the Des Moines International Airport hosted Geronimo in his tour of bookstores around America. Currently, the popular books are outselling Harry Potter in Europe.



While the popular mouse character was here, he was recruiting junior reporters and posing for photographs. He even managed to sneak in a picture with some of our staff. He also gave out Geronimo souvenirs and will probably write a special story about the airport adventure in a future publication. Parents can learn more about the large mouse and his travels by visiting www.theparadiesshops.com.➔

Cowles Drive Honors a Friend of DSM International Airport

The next time you turn off Fleur Drive to head to the DSM International Airport to catch a flight, you may notice that the U-shaped street that leads to the terminal is called Cowles Drive. You may be surprised to find out that the namesake of that road is a former executive editor, publisher, president and chairman of the board of the Register and Tribune Newspaper (now the DM Register). Gardner "Mike" Cowles was an advocate of the Des Moines International Airport and a visionary that knew the importance of an airport and aviation to a city. Hence, the honor of naming the main artery to the airport Cowles Drive.

Cowles served as chairman on the Des

Moines Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee some 60-70 years ago. Having the foresight to realize the thread that the airport held to the community, in 1936 Cowles purchased 160 acres of land at \$70,000 and transferred the ownership to the City of Des Moines at cost specifically for future airport development and expansion. Cowles also served on the United Airlines Board of Directors.

Not only did he endorse and invest in our airport, he was an aviation enthusiast as well. He took a trip on the German dirigible, the Hindenburg in 1937. It was the fourth flight of the notable zeppelin, but he'd earlier tried to be a part of the maiden voyage. Aviation buffs

may recall that the airship exploded on docking in Lakehurst, New Jersey, at the end of its 10th flight.

Five years later, in 1942, as an astounding feat in international diplomacy, Cowles accompanied former GOP presidential candidate Wendell Willkie in a worldwide, 49-day, global air tour to our allies in World War II. They encompassed the world on a four-engine bomber called the Gulliver, and some of the exploits of that journey read like a script of the movie *Adventures of Indiana Jones*.

Mr. Cowles was an influential pioneer in the City of Des Moines' business community. He invested in our airport to insure that the airport would be an integral player in the economic vitality of our City today. Cowles Drive means a little more when you know "the rest of the story."

*** Herb Strentz, from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Drake University here in Des Moines, contributed to this article.✈



The airport's main street, notably one of the busiest streets in Des Moines, Cowles Drive.

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BURLINGTON, IA
52601
PERMIT NO. 847

DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

5800 FLEUR DRIVE, SUITE 201
DES MOINES, IOWA 50321

