



# Touching Ground

FEBRUARY 2004 • VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 1

AT THE DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

## A Glance Back at 2003 by Roy Criss, Marketing Consultant

It has been about six months since I assumed the marketing and media relations position here. I thought I would just take a quick look back over the shoulder to get you caught up.

Enplanements continue to be the most exciting aspect. We averaged around a 4% increase for 2003 over 2002. **DSM International had its best enplanement year in history totaling 911,063.**

Total passenger traffic through the airport (enplanements plus deplanements) was 1,821,915. That's very significant for an airport our size. Our partner airlines have worked hard to keep fares competitive and I really believe that our educational approach is working. We have tuned our initiatives so that people see the "true value" of using DSM versus the "real costs" of going elsewhere.

Although cargo dropped slightly overall, mirroring the national trend, it still provides tremendous economic impact not only for the airport but for the community as well.

DSM International is the 37<sup>th</sup> most active cargo airport in the nation. In August we received a \$4.4 million AIP grant to expand our cargo facilities. We sponsored a media event in December, historically the busiest cargo period. The media outlets, both print and electronic, gave us incredible coverage.

Internal customer service got a boost when the airport "went wireless". We were the first airport in the country to install Opti-Fi's dual solution, neutral hosting software.

Customers can now stay in contact through their computers and palm pilots without being tethered to a wire. A big wire cutting-media event was held and once again the local press gave us tremendous coverage. We were even the topic of national press releases.

Our partner carriers continue to expand service. Northwest re-instituted its second daily to Memphis and America West started a daily red-eye to Vegas. Allegiant expanded its daily Vegas service from four to five days weekly. This is proof of one of our marketing

messages: if we sustain the demand for a certain service, someone will provide the supply.



DSM Partnership building and renewal has been revitalized. We have an improved communication with TSA and do joint press conferences

with them. We received tremendous assistance from the DSM Partnership in developing a presentation template for air service development. The AIB Business School's Travel & Tourism class has stepped up as an active partner. For a sponsorship, they have updated databases and will help us again in the future.

Then there is the "homey" stuff: Thank you gifts handed out by Standard Parking booth employees, free bingo cards for the kids and newsletters for the adults to help pass waiting times and the Wall of Fame that shows positive feedback we have received.➔

## Paradies Shops Win Award

Amy Beeghley, Paradies Gift Shop Manager, and Jamie Fuller, Assistant Manager, attended the December 3- 8 Paradies Gift Shops Annual Management Seminar in Atlanta, Georgia. Paradies, the largest airport concessionaire in the country, recognizes individual franchises for sales achievement in correlation with their size. The DSM International Paradies

opened in July '97 and usually wins an award. This time was no exception as they won "Best Results of General Merchandise." The award signifies they know what products to buy and stock, the right amount to purchase, and their displays are inviting to



Amy & Jamie with "Best Results of General Merchandise" Award

are big sellers," said Beeghley. "The corn heads, stuffed pigs and John Deere agriculture merchandise is really what they are looking for when they want to bring a memento home from Iowa." They also plan around events indigenous to Iowa like the

the public, making them [the public] want to buy.

With annual sales figures between \$1- 4 million, the managers and their staff of ten have a proven track record. "People are sometimes offended by what we stock here, but to the tourists they

Allianz Golf Classic and Iowa State Fair, when a spike in passenger volume translates into more sales. The recent onslaught of campaign workers and national media for the Iowa Caucuses marked a sharp increase in volume.

Most of all, tourists through DSM International remember Iowa, where the attitudes of the people make a lasting impression on visitors. Beeghley said "Busy or not, they take the time to greet and be courteous. This place is like a neighborhood, where all the tenants know one another and pull together, unlike larger city airports. We are happy to be a part of the DSM International family and look forward to expansion here in the future."

## Holiday Entertainment... An Airport Tradition



*Studebaker Elementary students entertain.*

The airport lobby is always a bustle with the songs of the season entertaining guests and passengers while they wait in the terminal. Vicki Dickinson, Airport Board Secretary, arranges local acts to come and entertain during the month of December. The groups' performances ranged from choral groups to a string ensemble. This year, from December 11-23, 716 adults and children came to perform in the terminal and as always, delivered a traditional hit with tenants, staff and passengers alike.

Dickinson sends out nearly 200 queries to schools and local entertainment groups at the beginning of October asking them to participate in this public service opportunity. We had 14 school groups, ranging from elementary to high school students, and one adult group from Allied Insurance called Premier Sounds. The home schooled sons of Bill Klees, Airport Operations Officer entertained by playing the piano. Gladco Enterprises, the airport's food vendor, treated the musicians to a cookie and soft drink after their performance. Airport staff wishes to thank all who participated in this annual event for making it a truly Happy Holiday season.➔

## Airport Staff Keeps Us Environmentally Conscious

DSM International makes every attempt to do things right and be a good environmental neighbor. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates airports in three areas; air quality, noise mitigation, and water runoff. Fortunately, we live in an area where our air is a non-issue. Our airport has been very proactive in insuring we comply with noise regulations moving forward in our Long-term Master Plan with property acquisition and independent noise studies. But, an area that needed attention was the water quality of the creeks surrounding DSM International. So much that they decided to hire a dedicated staff person to monitor and control that aspect of airport operations.

John Wheeler, Environmental Manager, is an engineer and certified ground-water professional. He has been on staff here for approximately one-year and his responsibility is to monitor the storm water runoff from the airport into Yeader and Frink Creek, and also manage the two new underground glycol retention facilities.

The containment project started in 1998 as a means to capture the glycol used to de-ice the planes in the wintertime, and minimize it's seepage into the storm sewer system and contaminating the creek water levels. The culmination of the project became complete in the summer of 2003 with bringing the smaller, 1-Million gallon, tank retention unit online. This storage unit captures most of the drainage from the new South Cargo Apron. The larger collection unit with a 4-Million gallon tank contains the runoff from the main concourse apron and the old cargo apron. The cost of the system was minimized since the terminal and concourse apron needed to be resurfaced anyway due to age and deterioration.

Since the connection of the large containment system and the addition of the snow dumps for the runway runoff in 2002, the levels have only exceeded the minimum three times in the last two winters according to Wheeler. "The Isaac Walton League who voluntarily monitors the creeks has found aquatic life living in the once polluted creeks. Since July of 2003, minnows, chubs, and crawfish have been spotted. This will help in lowering the requirements on numbers for our new permit we are processing currently with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This would be very good for us as the use of glycol for de-icing and the treatment of surfaces with potassium-nitrate for snow removal are crucial for airport operations in the wintertime."

The airport plans on putting a real-time, biological-demand, and analysis meter to take readings of runoff water before it goes into the diversion structure. If levels are fine, it can be directly routed to the creeks, thus eliminating operating expenses of running it into the sanitation sewer. This automation of the discharge system, if proven to the DNR is reliable and accurate, could save the airport an estimated \$20,000- \$30,000 per year for the aggressive management of runoff water. Although the meters should be in place by summer 2004, the testing will probably be monitored over a two-year period before the DNR would affirm the testing and okay the automation of the system in discharging to the creeks.➔

## Hawkeye Charters Head South To Florida Bowl - AGAIN!

For the second time in as many years, Iowa University football fans headed to Florida for another New Year's bowl game. American Airlines subcontracted with Southwest Airlines and charters through Signature Flight Support transported Hawk fans to Tampa, Florida for the Outback Bowl that was played on January 1, 2004. Returning on January 2, the planes were even more festive as the Hawks had beaten the Florida Gators.

American officials chartered two flights leaving on December 29 and 30<sup>th</sup> with a total

of 275 passengers bound for sunny Florida. An Iowa Alumni captained one of the flights and he bantered with the enthusiastic fans to give the trip a pep rally atmosphere. Darrel Marshall, Manager of Signature, said that they contracted with Champion Air out of Minneapolis, Minnesota and Miami Air to provide three flights on full-size jet airliners. He estimated that 425 passengers were on board their charters, one of which was adorned with authentic Iowa Hawkeye seat head covers.

# Maintenance Keeps Airport Running 24 – 7

Former Aviation Director, Bill Flannery, quipped to Bud Day, Day-side Maintenance Supervisor here at the DSM International Airport, “I could be gone for two weeks and no one would realize any significant change. If you and the maintenance crews would quit working for two hours, people would notice a drastic difference.” Though Flannery was being a little facetious, he drives home an important point—the airport couldn’t run without the dedicated services of this crew. Along with Nighttime Supervisor, Alan Whitlatch, the two supervisors organize and direct a staff of 34 employees over three shifts and keep our airport in tip-top shape.

“People think of the airport as being one entity, but in reality it is 25 or more separate operations going on,” said Whitlatch. There are the 12 airline carriers, 6 car rentals, two restaurants and the Landside Lounge, two gift shops, numerous air cargo operations, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Airport Police Unit, and Standard Parking. The staff of 23 custodians, five building equipment operators, three electronic technicians, and three electricians maintain a facility/grounds that includes; the main terminal and concourse/gate areas, the cargo buildings and apron, general aviation area, parking garages and surface lots, terminal apron and airline operations, about a mile of sidewalks to clean in the winter, and lots of grass around the airport’s 3200 acres when it’s warm.

Remaining flexible is essential for coordinating this scope of responsibility. Between the two of them they log a “normal” ten-hour day and are constantly on call for consultation or emergencies. Between the two of them they have about 55-years of experience in the maintenance field. From dysfunctional vehicle gates and overhead doors, to baggage belts, jet bridges, and the 1800 lights and 150 signs that are out on the runways, the crews rely on versatile training to keep things running. “We try to repair or secure to make things functional,” Whitlatch said. “Sometimes you make a call on what needs to be repaired immediately and what can wait.”

“Problems are all part of the job,” said Day. “Bottom line is to make it the safest, cleanest and most comfortable environment for the traveler.” When someone needs something, maintenance is usually the first responders. Also, when someone needs manpower, they are the ones that are re-directed from their normal duties to answer the call, such as the case in the overload of passengers for the Iowa Caucuses. When that happens, it doesn’t take long for things to get out of hand. A spotless restroom can be “trashed” after just one plane of 130 passengers arrives.

Supplies have increased drastically since 9-11. With the longer waits, passengers use facilities and amenities twice or three times as much. There are 35,000 rolls of toilet paper, 25,000 garbage bags and 7,500 rolls of paper towels used yearly. “We have the busiest street and sidewalk in Des Moines in front of the terminal,” quipped Whitlatch. “That means snow removal and sanding, which translates into a never-ending job of floor care inside the terminal.” Most of us just take our work environment for granted, but this professional crew painstakingly goes about their business with little appreciation. Then with motivation from their coaches, Day and Whitlatch, they come in for another day of peak passenger traffic and duties because they’re dedicated to getting the job done right.

“It’s like a busy anthill in the morning, as travelers begin coming at 3:30 AM for early flights,” concludes Day. “By 4AM it’s like someone kicked that anthill and there is all this activity taking place. It gets busy and things are swarming!”✈



L-R: Alan Whitlatch and Bud Day, Facilities Maintenance Supervisors

## Flannery’s Farewell Reception



On Monday, December 29, family, friends and business associates gathered in the Cloud Room at the DSM International Airport for a farewell/retirement reception to honor Bill Flannery. Bill retired after working for the City of Des Moines for over 27 years, and over 19 years as the City’s Aviation Director. Bill has won many awards during his tenure and as a Board of Director member for many state and federal aviation associations. His family, aviation associates, City dignitaries, airport tenants, friends and co-workers celebrated Bill’s achievements and illustrious career.

In a short program, Airport Board Member, Ed Hansell, presented Flannery with a plaque from the Aviation Department and the Board of Directors in appreciation of his dedicated service. The airport’s success over the last two decades is due in large measure to the leadership and reputation that Bill has brought to the Aviation Department. The Iowa Air National Guard also presented him with a plaque for being an excellent partner with them over the years.

From all the staff here at the DSM Airport, congratulations, Bill, and we will miss you very much.✈

# UPS Gears Up for Holiday Cargo Peak

The day after Thanksgiving marks the start of the holiday peak period for one of DSM International's cargo tenants, United Parcel Service (UPS) Jet Gateway. Everyone is shipping packages to accommodate everyone's wish list and that means big business for UPS and heavy traffic in and out of the airport until Christmas.

"The Des Moines UPS Jet Gateway is an integral part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day Operation as it plays a pivotal role in servicing the Midwestern section of the UPS network," states Tony Howard, DSM Gateway Manager. Flights from Louisville, Kentucky and Rockford, Illinois, bring packages to Des Moines to sort for truck delivery to the central third of the state of Iowa, while Cedar Rapids, Iowa Gateway handles the eastern third and the Omaha Gateway services the western

third. Because of its prime location at the crossroads of two major US Interstates, I-35 and I-80, easy access in and out and the bulls-eye for most of the major

cities in the Midwest, it is the logical place to consolidate and sort freight for shipping to anywhere in the continental United States.

During the holiday season they triple their daily flights from 5 to 15, and add 50-100 workers to their normal staff of 150 employees. The usual 767s are

bolstered with even larger aircraft like the A-300 Air Buses and 747s and bring in heavier loads of cargo. Howard says airport improvements, like the extension of the cargo apron, gives them additional room for more planes, and the connecting of the glycol retention unit allows de-icing anywhere on the apron to streamline their operation even more.

"Weather is always an issue in the wintertime and can cause unwanted delays. Obviously we want to operate safely, but we try and keep a continuous flow and alleviate service failures and late deliveries. Customers should ship early to eliminate that spike at the end of holiday peak. The night of December 23 is always the busiest of the year to make those last-minute December 24th deliveries," concluded Howard. →



*K-Lift Loader puts packages into jet. During peak, farm tractors are used for tugs to push planes out.*

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