



APPLETON AIRPORT HOSTS WINGS FOR AUTISM

SPECIAL "REHEARSAL" COMBATS STRESS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

WHAT: Wings for Autism

WHEN: Saturday, April 20, 2024. Two groups will participate in the program starting at noon and 1 p.m.

WHERE: Appleton Airport main terminal, media must confirm attendance prior to event

(APPLETON, Wis.) April X, 2024 – Most of us are used to the flurry of activity when traveling through airports, but for families with children who have autism or developmental disabilities it can be overwhelming. The bright lights, noise, activity, crowds, and security screening can trigger fear and even make air travel impossible.

Appleton International Airport, [the Arc US](#), Air Wisconsin Airlines, local autism support groups, and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) are partnering to host [Wings for Autism](#), a program designed to alleviate the stress of flying. During the program, families can rehearse navigating the airport, acquiring boarding passes, undergoing security procedures, and boarding a plane. The event is free to families and open to all individuals with autism or intellectual and developmental disabilities, however pre-registration is required.

"We're doing everything we can to take the stress out of air travel, but kids with special needs will react individually to different stimuli," said Abe Weber, Appleton Airport director. "Going through the process and knowing what to expect in advance makes a huge difference for families."

For many families, air travel has simply been something they have avoided, often missing out on family reunions or vacations.

"Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for all individuals impacted by disabilities. Wings for Autism aims to offer families a chance to experience flying in a controlled environment, all while ensuring future air travel is accessible and painless to all families."

During the program, families will go through each step of air travel from meeting with a gate agent to going through a security check with TSA. By far the most critical step is boarding a plane and being seated in airline seats. This important step would not be possible without the participation of Air Wisconsin providing a regional jet for practice.

"At Air Wisconsin, we are always looking for ways to support the local community and make a difference in the lives of many. Providing an aircraft for this event is just one way we can give back and help create a positive and inclusive experience for individuals with special needs and their families. We

are honored to be a part of such a meaningful event,” said Robert Binns, Air Wisconsin Airlines president and CEO.

The Arc founded Wings for Autism in 2014 and the Appleton Airport has partnered with the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin providing a Quiet Room for children and adults with neurodevelopmental challenges since 2020.

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About Appleton International Airport

[Appleton International Airport](#) connects our community to the world through American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, and Allegiant Air. In addition to offering nonstop service to 18 destinations, Appleton Airport connects to 11 major international airport hubs from which travelers can fly to almost anywhere in the world. Using Appleton Airport, travelers can safely and more conveniently get to their destination and home again, leaving them more time for what really matters. Visit atwairport.com to learn more.