

Leduc-Nisku Economical Development Authority (LNEDA) Partnership Breakfast Northern Lights Airport Volunteer Speech

Good morning!

As has been indicated, I have the honour of providing a brief overview of the EIA's Northern Lights Airports Volunteers.

The most often-asked question posed to me is - **who and what are we?**

My description is – a group of individuals, 80 in total, ages 18+, from various backgrounds, career paths, life experiences and interests but – united in our commitment to delivering the complete passenger experience.

While we started out as a small group back in 1992, 19 years later have brought numerous changes including three different uniforms and expanded responsibilities. However, what hasn't changed is our belief that our presence can compliment EIA's commitment as a caring, helpful, world-class company and our dedication to providing exemplary customer service & satisfaction.

Other questions often posed to me are:

Where can we find you?

Just about anywhere.....Pre-security, Post-security, US departures, Canadian Customs, Parking lots, Bridge decks AND In the community!

Are we there when you need us?

We'd like to think "YES!"

We volunteer from 7 am to 11 pm, 7 days a week and we've been known to volunteer starting as early as 5 am and stay as late as 1 or 2 in the morning when needed.

Just what do we do?

We direct, answer questions, assist, guide, converse, survey, handle inquiries, give directions, provide aid, and assist with luggage, strollers, carts and the list goes on.

But that doesn't tell the entire story ---- It's more!

Hopefully some of the scenarios I will present will provide all of you with greater insight.

It's celebrating with passengers travelling with a newborn on their way to visit grandparents and standing besides parents/grandparents watching the excitement on their faces as they wait for their loved ones to exit the post-security area. It's keeping company and consoling those who have received an emergency call due to a family medical emergency or have received notification of the loss of a loved one while they wait for the call to board. It's interacting with local school groups travelling overseas, for many – a first-time, and welcoming those students coming from other countries to visit our region. It's acting as unofficial photographers to help capture those memories forever. It's being a sounding board to passengers whose flights have been delayed due to weather and try to comfort them in their time of need. It's validating the

value of the passengers' responses to EIA surveys as we outline the numerous suggestions incorporated based on their comments. It's sharing in the enthusiasm of US departure passengers going on a long-planned holiday and standing in Canadian Customs welcoming visitors to our country and welcoming those returning home.

During the holiday seasons, it's seeing us at security entrances and at the kiosks on the departures level, helping our passengers speed through the process more quickly while at the arrivals level we are at the various gates keeping families company as they await the anticipated arrival of their loved ones for the various festive activities planned for them.

It's acting as front-line advocates for those with disabilities by reducing their stress level from the moment they enter the airport to the moment they board the plane. It's promoting events, activities, and venues in the Capital area – not only by telling them but also providing them with literature, maps and additional information. It's demonstrating to the public our commitment to teamwork as we respond to passenger, airline and EIA administration requests.

What expectations does EIA have of the Northern Lights Airports volunteers?

Put in weekly – 3 ½ hour shifts. Attend quarterly training sessions to educate us on the latest happenings at EIA and to become actively involved in the community!

But what I perceive makes EIA unique in this area is:

It recognizes the hours its volunteers have contributed when offering their services in other community-based events.

Some of these events include: Heritage Days Festival, Capital Ex Parade, and participation in lunches and dinners to spread the message of the latest happenings at EIA as well as organize school choirs at Christmas to perform at EIA.

While I have mentioned some of the events where the participation of Northern Lights Airports volunteers have been recognized, I would like to enumerate where EIA has acknowledged my participation over the past 9 years. In no special sequence:

Alberta Aviation Museum's Air Fest – two years running, Make-A-Wish Foundation – L. Y. Cairns School "Cairns in the Community- Students in Motion" bus fundraiser, 2007 Ford World Men's Curling Championship, Edmonton Universiade 2015 Bid Committee, 2009 Tim Hortons Roar of the Rings, 2010 Canadian Country Music Week and Grey Cup 2010: Spirit of Edmonton.

While my shifts have varied from 4+ hours to a weekend to 20 months and beyond, what is consistent is, regardless of my assignments which varied from ticket-taker to hospitality greeter to volunteer coordinator to chairperson to - all of my hours were equally credited as EIA views that your "doing" is more critical than "what you're doing"!

On EIA's website, under "Guiding Principles", it outlines six core values, one of which is sustainability and in part it talks about commitment to advance the social well-being and I truly believe that EIA not only "talks the talk but walks the walk" by recognizing it Northern Lights Airports volunteers' active participation in the community and the diversity of the events where you can find us.... sports, cultural, arts and entertainment, educational, community-orientated, historical celebrations and local/provincial/national and worldwide one-time events.

At this time I would like to acknowledge two groups of people:
First the EIA Northern Lights Airports volunteers for their commitment into looking into the heart and soul of each passenger as they determine how to best maximize their skills to provide the positive experience to all clients. And everyone in the community who volunteer to help make the Capital region, the province, and the world a better place. Because of your unselfishness, your services, your gratitude, your sincerity, your inspiration – you have made the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.



In closing I would like to share the following quote by Elizabeth Andrew:

“Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless!”

Thank you

Melanie Meheden

Northern Lights Airport Volunteer