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Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority
Reno-Tahoe International Airport and Reno-Stead Airport
Marilyn Mora, A.A.E., President/CEO
www.renoairport.com

RNO Hosts Air Travel Rehearsal for those with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

RENO, Nev. – Reno-Tahoe International Airport (RNO) and the JUSTin HOPE Foundation are set to host the first Wings for All® program in partnership with Southwest Airlines and the Transportation Security Administration. The event is set for May 19 at the Reno-Tahoe Airport.

Who: JUSTin HOPE Foundation, Reno-Tahoe International Airport and The Arc partnership
What: Travel dress rehearsal for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities
Where: Reno-Tahoe International, River Room near baggage claim
When: 6-8 p.m., Saturday, May 19

Wings for All is a national initiative of The Arc, a national organization that promotes and protects the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community. The program is an airport “rehearsal” specially designed for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, their families and aviation professionals. Wings for All is designed to alleviate some of the stress that families who have a child with autism experience when traveling by air. The program provides families with the opportunity to practice entering the airport, obtain boarding passes, go through security, and board a plane. The local JUSTin HOPE Foundation has partnered with The Arc and Reno-Tahoe International Airport to bring this program to RNO.

Wings for All also gives airport, airline, TSA professionals and other personnel the opportunity to observe, interact and deliver their services in a structured, learning environment. This experience is equally useful for families that have a member with other intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) that are concerned about the ability of their family member to travel.

Approximately two dozen families from northern Nevada are eligible to sign up for this experience by contacting <https://fs30.formsite.com/wingsforautism/form395/index.html>. The event will kick off with families arriving at the airport and participating in a short reception to introduce the program, then heading to Southwest Airlines ticketing to receive their boarding pass, go through security, and be greeted at the gate prior to boarding the plane. While the aircraft won’t taxi or take off, participants will board the plane and experience all the sights and sounds of an actual flight.

“For parents of children with autism spectrum disorders, everyday tasks can sometimes prove far more difficult for their child. Air travel can be particularly challenging between clearing security, the unfamiliar noises, and bright lights,” said Marilyn Mora, President and CEO of Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority. “We’re thrilled to have Southwest Airlines, the TSA and JUSTin HOPE as community partners who all see the need for families to be introduced to air travel in a safe, non-stressful environment.”

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The Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority receives no state or local funding. All operating revenues are derived from tenant and concession fees. The Reno-Tahoe International Airport (RNO) is the 66th busiest commercial airport in the United States, with more than 4 million passengers per year. For more details, visit www.renoairport.com.

NEWS RELEASE

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This program will not only alleviate the stress children and their parents may feel, but help educate airport and airline professionals about how best to serve children with autism or other intellectual and developmental disabilities in the future.

“As a parent of a child with autism myself, I know all too well the challenges families face in traveling. It can be quite overwhelming and affect the whole family. We are extremely excited to be working with RNO, Southwest Airlines and The Arc in providing this program to our community,” said Carol Reitz, Executive Director of the JUSTin Hope Foundation.

“We’re honored to take part in Wings for All® at Reno-Tahoe,” said Melissa Farnsworth, station manager for Southwest Airlines. “The program literally opens a window to the world for families with children with autism and other disabilities by allowing understanding of air travel expectations.”

Individuals interested in signing up for the program should contact Carol Reitz at (775) 453-9262.

The Arc - The Arc advocates for and serves people with I/DD, including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc has a network of 700 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.

JUSTin Hope – The JUSTin Hope Foundation is a nonprofit located in Northern Nevada that helps families affected by autism and other related disorders by providing support and/or opportunities that will have a meaningful impact on the family as a whole.

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