



RSW AIRPORT TOUR REPORT

Our Successful Collaborative Youth Program

Abstract

Community Connection Services Summer Flight Academy (CCSIFA) presents our Southwest International Airport Youth Tour, collaborating with Southwest International Airport, Fort Myers Police Department PAL, STARS Complex, and our volunteer staff members.

The RSW airport staff passionately engages with our youth group to share compelling insights about aviation and the international airport system.

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Southwest Florida International Airport Youth Tour

The Tower

Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) is located fifteen miles southeast of Fort Myers City Hall in Lee County, Florida. The airport is owned by the Lee County Airport Authority. The Southwest Florida International Airport Youth Tour Plan was a collaborative effort involving youth programs in the city of Fort Myers, Florida to expose our young people to career opportunities in aviation. The institutions involved in our airport youth tour, dedicated to youth development in the area include Community Connection Services, Inc. (CCSI), The Fort Myers Police Athletic League (PAL), and the STARS Complex (STARS).

On July 18, 2024, Thursday, three different youth development organizations had the wonderful opportunity to visit the FAA control tower at Southwest Florida International Airport, our local commercial aviation complex. After months I finally got the correct contact and requested to tour the facility. It wasn't too much of a hassle to get a date and time down- the tower supervisor was extremely accommodating. The RSW Airport is a huge facility, and it is a primary commercial service airport it had over 10,069,849 passenger boardings in 2023¹.

That aside, after everything was settled, I took a brisk 25-minute drive on I-75 down to Daniels Road. Eventually turned off and went to the security screening gate where we were met. We were led to the correct site and our car, van, and school bus were let in and we parked.

The tower director who greeted us (40 young participants and 6 mentors not so young) at the door went by the name of Tom Harris. He was the one who structured the tour on-site, so it was nice to meet him in person.

After some quick pleasantries, he assigned three groups of ten to an individual guide who were passionate about their jobs but, importantly, loved sharing the experience with the group. The staff loved the responses and questions that were asked. The staff developed scenarios on the fly and captured the attention of every visitor who was in the tower.

Ground Floor

The staff members who conducted touring duties showed us around the ground floor first. Distributed throughout the area were your briefing room, vending machines, break area, and a training simulator for controllers. Since RSW is a newer facility, everything was fairly new and had that shine to it.

¹ Commercial air carrier operations moved from Page Field to Southwest Florida Regional Airport on May 14, 1983. On May 14, 1993, the airport became Southwest Florida International Airport. On Sept. 9, 2005, all operations moved to a new terminal complex

I believe the only time we stopped was to discuss the ATIS (Automatic Terminal Information Services) screen in one of the rooms². The staff tour member brought up some ideas concerning the METAR³ (Weather Reporting) which was a good bonus.

Upstairs to the Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON)

TRACONs are U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) facilities that house air traffic controllers who guide aircraft approaching and departing airports. TRACON controllers generally handle within a 30- to 50-mile radius of an airport and up to 10,000 feet, as well as aircraft flying over that airspace. They are responsible for safely separating aircraft flying in the busy areas surrounding airports.

Once an approaching aircraft that is landing is within five miles of an airport and below 2 500 feet, TRACON controllers hand off the plane to air traffic controllers in the airport tower.

Departing aircraft leaving the TRACON's range of control are handed off to controllers at the FAA in route center or Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCC). ARTCCs handle high-altitude traffic.

Four controllers were working inside this glass observation area when we went in. One was



handling runway directions- and the other was handling approaching aircraft. The other controllers took the participants through a demonstration of runway control and landing control. The young participants were able to report if the landing gear was applied before landing and learn how to route planes on the runway

Conclusion

Overall, the youth participants were very mannerly and loved the experience. As you can tell from the length of questions and participation, the visit was something that not enough words can justify. I can still go on for a while, but I will wind up here. What we all took with us that day was an increased love and appreciation for Air

Traffic Control.

The Fire and Rescue Station

Fire and Rescue will remain an indispensable part of our daily airport operations. This service is crucial. After expressing gratitude to our Tower Tour Guides, we visited the Airport Fire and Rescue

² ATIS broadcasts contain essential information, such as current weather information, active runways, available approaches, and any other information required by the pilots,

³ Meteorological Terminal Aviation Routine Weather Report

team. We quickly introduced ourselves at the fire station and gained insight into the modern technologies central to the daily life of an airport firefighter. We were then promptly ushered into a spacious training room to receive a briefing from three firefighter trainees. During the meeting, the team confidently outlined what they would demonstrate and discuss, and proactively inquired if there were any specific requirements for the youth group.

During our visit, we had the opportunity to explore the living quarters of the firefighters. We learned that multiple shifts were in place with three people sharing each room, requiring the rooms to be kept as if unoccupied. The fully equipped gym, complete with a racquetball/wallyball court, highlighted the importance of physical fitness in this career. Additionally, we were impressed by the theater room and the well-equipped kitchen with an outdoor grill.

Moving outside, we were shown the impressive firefighting trucks and rescue gear. It became evident that with a two-minute call for service, everything must be clean, and ready, and each person needs to be trained to use the tools efficiently. At our final stop, we observed the super water pump truck in action and examined the EMS equipment prepared for various situations, from minor injuries to life-threatening emergencies.



Conclusion

We thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The visit was truly remarkable and left a lasting impression. I'll summarize by saying that I gained a greater appreciation for what happens at the airport behind the scenes and learned valuable techniques for managing emergencies and dangerous situations

Participants:



CITY OF FORT MYERS



SUCCESS THROUGH ACADEMIC & RECREATIONAL SUPPORT