

Airport partners with VIPs for ambassadors

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AIRPORT AMBASSADORS

Airport authorities have partnered with Laughlin Chamber of Commerce Volunteers in Partnership to provide volunteer airport “ambassadors” to assist passengers new to the area with information when scheduled service begins in February. Jeremy Keating, Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport director, left, explained the program to VIP members during the January meeting of the Laughlin Chamber of Commerce Volunteers in Partnership. Nearly 20 VIP members have applied for the program so far.

BULLHEAD CITY — Airport authorities have partnered with Laughlin Chamber of Commerce Volunteers in Partnership to provide volunteer “airport ambassadors.”

“The idea started as an additional way to provide the best customer experience we can for the new type of passengers we’ll be serving at the airport,” said Jeremy Keating, airport director.

American Airlines will provide daily scheduled passenger service to and from Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport beginning Feb. 16. The airport has been working to secure passenger service in addition to existing charter service for about 18 years.

“We’re a small airport and we don’t have an information booth,” Keating said. “Who better than the people who live here to welcome visitors and provide information on all there is to see and do in the Tri-state.” Keating pitched the idea directly to the VIP membership earlier this month during the group’s January general meeting.

“The response has been terrific,” he said. “We’ve had nearly 20 people apply for badges.”

Because of the strict regulations on airports, VIP members who apply to become ambassadors must submit to a background check and fingerprinting. Each ambassador will also receive security and program training.

“We’ve created eye-catching and recognizable vests for ambassadors to wear,” Keating said. “They say ‘How Can I Help You?’ on the back and have an airport logo on the front.”

The program, Keating said, is one piece of the puzzle in making scheduled service a success.

“We’re doing a lot of things as we prepare for American Airlines to begin service,” he said. “Electronic check-in kiosks will be installed, a new charging station has been ordered for Terminal B, we’re improving our WiFi and installing new wayfinding signage — there’s something new every day.”

The success of scheduled service to and from the airport is critical to the community, Keating said.

“This is a community thing, not just an airport thing,” he said. “It’s taken about 15 years and more than a quarter-million dollars to make this happen. The community really needs to step up and use this service — if it’s not supported and profitable, we’ll lose it.”

So far, he said, community support has been terrific.

“The resorts are doing a phenomenal job marketing the service,” he said. “Now the residents need to support and use the service, too.”

The ambassador program is part of the community support he envisioned, Keating said.

“The VIPs already have an eager group of volunteers and a structure in place for coordinating them as well as the application process,” Keating said. “I have been surprised and pleased to discover a lot of VIPs love aviation. It’s a great partnership.”