NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former Air Force One steward to be guest speaker at Georgetown Airport’s Aviation Week Celebration

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — Howie Franklin, former chief steward for Air Force One and the only flight attendant to ever work for five U.S. presidents consecutively, will be guest speaker at a Georgetown County Airport event this week.

Franklin has agreed to be the keynote speaker for Georgetown County’s celebration of S.C. Aviation Week. The event is open to the public and begins at noon on Friday, Aug. 22, at the Georgetown Airport, 129 Airport Road.

“We're delighted that Mr. Franklin has agreed to join us at the Georgetown Airport to talk about his experiences,” said Ray Funnye, Georgetown County director of public services. “We’ve been told he has hundreds of stories and we’re looking forward to hearing some of them. I'm sure this is going to be an event to remember.”

Franklin spent 24 years stationed at Andrews Air Force Base, the last 18 of which he worked aboard Air Force One, serving as flight steward. He served from 1976, during the Ford administration, through 1994, halfway through Bill Clinton’s administration. Franklin is now director at the Cape Fear Regional Jetport at Howie Franklin Field. He is past president and a current member of the executive board of directors of the N.C. Airports Association.

When he came aboard Air Force One in April 1976, Franklin said he was told he would not be guaranteed the position when a new administration took over. However, he made the transition through Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton. He retired in 1994 and moved to Brunswick County, N.C., with his family.

Franklin also flew extensively with Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State, on his shuttle diplomacy missions during the Nixon and Ford administrations. Franklin spent 29 years in the Air Force, reaching the rank of chief master sergeant.

Friday’s event will be a celebration of the history of aviation and all the economic benefits that come with it, Funnye said. Georgetown County has two bustling airports. Those facilities have a direct economic impact of more than $1 million for the county. The indirect economic impact is more than $900,000, and factoring in the “trickle-down effect” increases the impact to up to $3.5 million, according to officials from the state Aeronautics Commission.

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“Aviation is a self-sustaining industry,” said retired Major Gen. Gerald Harmon, the county’s representative on the S.C. Aeronautics Commission. “It’s an economic engine not only for our airport but our entire state.”

Statewide, the dollars linked to aviation are in the billions, he added.

Georgetown County’s two airports employ about 50 people, house more than 40 aircraft and see well over 100 takeoffs and landings every day. The county’s airports are also active in the support of businesses, as well as the growing tourism industry.

The event on Friday will also include a County Council proclamation in honor of Aviation Week. Activities will continue on Saturday, Aug. 23, with Young Eagles Flights at 9 a.m. and a tandem jump by S.C. Skydiving at 10 a.m.

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