

# Yankton Air Connections Vital

## Chan Gurney Airport Remains A Necessary Front Door For Business

BY NATHAN JOHNSON  
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Did you know that Yankton's Chan Gurney Airport is home to a time machine?

That is, if you don't define "time machine" by traditional standards.

In this case, the so-called time machine is actually an aircraft, a Cessna 425 Conquest, that is housed in a corporate hangar at the airport.

According to Joe Vig, president of Kolberg-Pioneer, Inc. (KPI), the company sometimes refers to its private planes as time machines because of the time they save on travel for company officials versus flying commercially or driving.

"Due to all of the security issues involved in flying commercial, the drive to either Sioux Falls, Sioux City or Omaha, and the resultant time involved, the presence of the aircraft in Yankton is a huge plus," Vig said. "Of course, we still fly commercial at a very high rate, but the KPI-owned plane augments this very well."

KPI is a member of Astec Industries and received the twin turboprop aircraft from its corporate headquarters in Chattanooga, Tenn., in 2007.

The City of Yankton collaborated with KPI to build a hangar to house the plane, and it was finished by the spring of 2008.

"Prior to the construction of the hangar, we kept it at the Sioux City FBO, requiring our pilots to shuttle back and forth for a few months when we flew the plane," Vig stated.

Aside from the time an airplane can save, he said the real purpose of having an aircraft is to



Vig

provide better customer service.

"Our number one core value is 'continuous devotion to meeting the needs of our customers,' and the ability to work with them more responsibly is an end result of the airplane," Vig said.

Yankton Economic Development Director Mike Dellinger said Chan Gurney Airport continues to grow in importance for Yankton commerce and industry.

"In addition to KPI, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital and L&M Radiator, as well as other businesses use the airport for corporate visits," he stated. "We are fortunate that several corporations have key personnel located in Yankton, and that requires local flight options."

Rock musician Ted Nugent and members of the Easton Sports Development Foundation have also used the airport during visits.

"Yankton Motor Company has provided dozens of rental and courtesy cars to visitors during the years," Dellinger added. "Our airport makes business more efficient, and it has attracted new capital to the community. For example, air travelers have used it in the past for refueling during non-commercial flights across Yankton airspace. There is no doubt that well-reputed airport infrastructure and services create a marketing and sales resource for those in more rural locations."

Yankton resident Vernon "Skip" VanDerhule is a member of the South Dakota Aeronautics Com-



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Yankton's air facilities, which include Chan Gurney Municipal Airport, are an indispensable doorway for corporate travelers who visit plants in the community.

mission and is also a pilot.

"There are a lot of smaller aircraft that use Yankton for business. Little records are kept, but (the flights) are pretty much daily," he said. "I guess I am an example. I usually travel for business purposes monthly. Could I drive? Sure. It's 5 1/2 hours by car to North Platte, Neb., and then an overnight. By air, it is under 2 hours, and I come back the same day. There are a lot of people like me originating from Yankton, as well as coming here."

For large companies, especially, VanDerhule said it is important to have airport access.

"The CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, in particular, will not fly into a remote airport and then take an hour's car ride to a site.

They just won't do it," he stated. "It wasn't for industrial purposes, but a few years back I talked to a jet pilot who had flown the company CEO into Yankton to use the hunting lodge east of Gayville. I asked, why here versus Mitchell or Winner? The answer was that he could get to the lodge east of Gayville in 15 minutes or less. At Winner or Mitchell, it took a lot longer, and travel time was the controlling factor."

VanDerhule points to a recent Forbes.com article that addresses the growing use of business aviation instead of commercial aviation.

Corporate planes save time, as well as costs on overnight stays and meals. They also allow employees to conduct business

meetings while in flight.

Perhaps most important, commercial airlines have access to 500 airports, while business aviation aircraft have more than 5,000 facilities around the country at their disposal.

Chan Gurney is one of the thousands of small airports without commercial service but still has an important function.

"Chan Gurney Airport is basically the 'front door to Yankton' for many businesses and other travelers, e.g. the hundreds of pheasant hunters arriving here each October," Vig said. "Without it, our company would certainly not be able to host customers and grow as we are required to do."

## Recruitment: Workers Seek Reasons To Come To Yankton

BY ANDREW ATWAL  
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Employers in the area are constantly striving to draw national talent to help their businesses.

Case in point is Mount Marty College. When Emily Johnson applied for a job at MMC while living in the Twin Cities area, she did not know what to really expect about the area.

However, a month after starting in her new position at MMC, she is beginning to adjust and enjoy all that Yankton has to offer.

When she interviewed for the position of director of disability services and residence hall director, she asked what people liked to do in Yankton.

"I was told bowling leagues are pretty big here, along with the many outdoor activities that are offered in Yankton," she said. "I was also told that the Wal-Mart here was recently noted as being the best in the area."

She added that the people she interviewed with spoke a lot about Riverboat Days in Yankton, as well as several other



Johnson

festivals in the area.

"The group of people I interviewed with shared that Yankton is a developing area and it's a nice place to raise a family," she said.

Now that Johnson has been here for over a month, she is finally getting settled in with the town.

"Now that I've been here a while and been able to explore the area a bit more, I think that the Lewis and Clark Recreation Area and the dam are big selling points for this area," she said. "It's beautiful here."

Although she had a job in Minnesota as a social worker, the biggest reason why she chose Yankton was the job that she was offered at MMC.

"I tried to do some research about the town and area prior to coming for my interview, but I found that many businesses in the area do not have websites," Johnson noted.

She added that when she came for her interview, it was raining and dark so she could not get a very good impression of the

town and all that it had to offer.

"Mount Marty College blew me away as an employer and as a college," she said. "I was impressed, and continue to be impressed, with the school every day while I'm here."

Recently a study showed why healthcare employees choose to work where they do, specifically in rural areas.

A rural healthcare employee retention

and recruitment study for 2012 showed why healthcare providers decide to remain in or leave their communities and practices. The biggest reasons include salaries, being able to cultivate relationships with patients, education for children, various incentives such as sick leave, cost of living

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## MASABA

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proud of," Jerad said.

MASABA's range of products has also grown, now including portable and stationary crushing, screening, and wash plants, as well as a complete line of conveyors, surge bins and feeder hoppers.

In recognition of its success, the business recently was named 2012 Small Business Exporter of the Year by the South Dakota Small Business Administration. It was also named the award winner for the

region, which consists of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

Regarding MASABA's future growth, Jerad said "the sky is the limit," and while the company will continue to look for new opportunities, it won't change how it conducts business.

"At the end of the day, it's about our company and our value system and the direction we want to go," Jerad said. "We want to have a presence in the marketplace and have people know us as a company that operates with character, integrity and honesty, builds a heck of a product and stands behind what they build. That's how we got here, and I don't want to stray from those principles."

## Dellinger

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greater automation, robotics and mechanics that lessen the labor-intensity of previous manufacturing processes. Fewer people are employed in manufacturing but the processes have added value to the employee, the product, and the company's bottom line all while creating goods that are more cost efficient for the consumer. Twenty years ago, a production line might have required five welders; today, that line has a single operator managing five welding robots. This added value results in even greater capitalization (new money) into the local economy and increases the wage opportunity for the skilled worker. This changing, skilled labor dynamic has already created an incumbent need for the individual and community to continue to focus on workforce development to ensure that manufacturers have an ample and skilled labor shed from which to employ.

Where will manufacturing lead us in the future?

According to a number of knowledgeable sources, American manufacturing is currently at the front end of a Renaissance that could last for years. With the emergence of global markets, productivity improvements through aforementioned

technological advances, dramatic gains in America's manufacturing efficiencies vis-à-vis rising global production costs and the declining value of the American dollar, Yankton is well positioned to further benefit from new manufacturing capitalization that is on the horizon. Yankton is home to a manufacturing cluster that is world class and world competitive, and this critical economic sector is our best bet in turning out new innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit that is renowned in Yankton manufacturing. Everybody knows of that manufacturing company that started in the garage where the entrepreneur housed and tinkered on his dreams that one day became a reality with hundreds of employees producing millions of dollars of product. Is that your company on the future's horizon?

It's not your grandfather's dirty old manufacturing plant anymore, and it requires critical skills to produce products for the global economy. Are you educated and trained to a level that meets and exceeds expectations? If you seek opportunity, manufacturing offers it — from accounting to production to machine maintenance to human resources — a career in manufacturing may just be the game changer that you've been seeking for your quality of life.

Are you ready for it? "Made in Yankton" is ready for you.

Dellinger is the executive director of the Yankton Office Of Economic Development.

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