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FlexJet signs with DeKalb airport

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AUBURN — Century Aviation, the DeKalb County Airport's fixed-base operator, soon will be servicing a new client.

The company has been awarded a two-year contract to serve as a fueling location for FlexJet, a fractional aircraft ownership provider, said Laura Zook Gaerte, Century's co-owner.

Zook Gaerte said the airport could see many Flexjet aircraft landing and taking off in the future.

As fractional owners plan their flight paths, and FlexJet moves their planes around to accommodate them, those planes could land at the DeKalb County Airport to refuel, Zook Gaerte said. The airport will also serve as a preferred pickup location for FlexJet owners.

"If they need to refuel in this area, we pop up as one of the preferred locations for refueling," she said.

Zook Gaerte said FlexJet planes already were landing at the airport occasionally, but she hopes the frequency will increase with the new contract. She said being named as a preferred airport has many benefits. With every FlexJet landing or refuel, outside business is being brought into the area, she said.

"They are bringing money into the community which wouldn't otherwise be here," she said, and recognition by FlexJet brings validity to the airport and the money spent to maintain it. Zook Gaerte said the fact that FlexJet chose the DeKalb County Airport over others in the vicinity means a lot to her.

"(FlexJet) will come here and spend money because of the good work we do," she said. "What it says is that we offer a competitive price structure and a set of amenities that are pleasing to FlexJet. Being awarded the bid says we offer the best package."

Russ Couchman, airport manager, said the new contract is great for the airport.

"The airport can hope to see increased traffic due to winning this bid, which means increased fuel sales, increased revenue due to ramp fees, hangar fees, lavatory service fees and fuel flowage fees and more," he explained. While the incoming funds won't be a windfall, Couchman said, it is a very positive event for Century Aviation and the DeKalb County Airport Authority.

For Century, a growing business owned by Zook Gaerte and her husband, Tony Gaerte, "It means we are exceeding expectations," she said. "(The contract) signifies that we are doing a good job."

Zook Gaerte said the contract would not have been possible without BP, the airport's fuel supplier. BP facilitated the bids for Century and FlexJet. She said it is encouraging that BP is invested in both Century Aviation and the airport's success.

Zook Gaerte said she hopes the community will see what FlexJet already has seen — that the airport is an asset to the county and it stacks up well against other airports in the area.

"For the size we are — we are very capable," she said. "As we grow, we are just going to get better."