



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOUTHWEST FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PRESENTED WITH THREE AWARDS FROM THE FLORIDA AIRPORTS COUNCIL

FORT MYERS, Fla. (Nov. 10, 2008) – The Florida Airports Council (FAC) presented three awards to the Lee County Port Authority (LCPA) at its Annual Conference in West Palm Beach, Fla. The awards given were the *2008 Environmental Excellence Award*, the *2008 Honorary Mark Winkelmann Blue Light Award* presented to John Merola and a *Student Recognition Award* presented to Amit Seetahal.

The FAC Environmental Committee presents the *Environmental Excellence Award* annually to a member airport that promotes, implements or undertakes environmental projects and programs that have a positive effect on the Florida Aviation System. LCPA was selected for this award for its Mitigation Park project, a 7,000-acre preserve that was acquired and returned to its native state to offset wetland and upland impacts from building the new airport terminal. Airport staff and contractors worked closely on coordinating this project with local, state and federal environmental agencies for nearly a decade.

The FAC Facilities Committee presents the *Honorary Mark Winkelmann Blue Light Award* to a general aviation or commercial airport employee who has demonstrated exemplary service, skill and aptitude specifically in the field of airport facilities and maintenance. The 2008 award was presented to John Merola, an LCPA maintenance department senior tradesworker. Merola joined the airport in March 2005. He is responsible for maintenance of the Airport Fire Department, training center, facilities and vehicle maintenance buildings, taxi area, toll plaza, rental car facility and parking structure. His other duties include lighting for airport roadways, parking lots and the airfield and Merola recently passed the Siemens Certified Airfield Professional-Airfield Lighting Test.

The Lee County Port Authority has an annual student internship program. FAC selected Amit Seetahal, a Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) student, as the *2008 Student Recognition Award* winner for his work while interning with the Port Authority. Amit took the lead on a research project regarding airport privatization for the airport's executive director and the information compiled will be used in an analysis of the operation of an airport in the Middle East. Seetahal will be graduating in December 2008 with a master's degree.

The Florida Airports Council is an association of publicly-owned and operated airports, airport professionals, experts in the fields of airport design, development and improvement as well as aviation trades that support the airport industry in Florida. For more information, visit www.floridaairports.org.

Southwest Florida International Airport served more than 8 million passengers in 2007 and is one of the top 50 U.S. airports for passenger traffic. No ad valorem (property) taxes are used for airport operation or construction. For more information, log onto www.flylcpa.com.