



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Delaware Honors the Legacy of Pioneer Giuseppe Bellanca *Celebrates the 140th Anniversary of the “Father of Delaware Aviation”*

NEW CASTLE, Del. – Today, local Delaware elected officials, Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) representatives, aviation advocates, and members of the Bellanca family gathered at the Wilmington Airport (ILG) Terminal to honor the life and enduring legacy of Giuseppe Mario Bellanca. The commemorative ceremony marked the 140th anniversary of the birth of the "Father of Delaware Aviation," a visionary whose aeronautical designs revolutionized global flight and established New Castle as a historic center for aircraft manufacturing.

The event featured a formal presentation of a DRBA Resolution to the Bellanca family, recognizing Giuseppe’s 1927 establishment of the Bellanca Aircraft Corporation in New Castle. At the urging of the du Pont family, Bellanca brought his revolutionary designs to Delaware, eventually producing over 3,000 aircraft and serving as a vital military supplier during World War II.

"Giuseppe Bellanca’s decision to establish his corporation here in 1927 didn't just create airplanes; it established New Castle as a serious player in the global aerospace industry," said **Joel Coppadge, Executive Director of the DRBA**. "At the DRBA, we view Wilmington Airport as a living piece of that legacy. Hosting this 140th-anniversary commemoration is about more than just looking back at the history books—it’s about honoring the technical standard Bellanca set and ensuring that his contributions to American manufacturing and Delaware’s economy are never forgotten."

The ceremony included reflections from a wide array of dignitaries regarding the cultural and economic impact of the Bellanca legacy on the City of New Castle and the surrounding communities in New Castle County.

"New Castle County is proud to be home to a legacy as impactful as that of Giuseppe Mario Bellanca," noted **New Castle County Executive Marcus Henry**. "Today’s recognition is not just

about honoring one individual, but about celebrating the spirit of innovation and opportunity that has long defined our community. His story a reminder of the innovation and ingenuity rooted right here at home.”

New Castle City Councilman Brian Mattaway shared his reflections, “It is always the right time to do the right thing. Today, we collectively choose to celebrate, affirm, and honor a local, City of New Castle International Hero in this Semi quinentennial year of America’s founding. First the party happened here. Long live the legacy of Giuseppe Mario Bellanca.”

New Castle City Mayor Valerie Leary added, “Giuseppe Bellanca’s impact is a big part of what makes New Castle what it is today. For generations, the Bellanca name has stood for innovation and the hardworking spirit of this community. As we celebrate the 140th anniversary of his birth, we’re also celebrating the legacy he built—one that put our city on the map and still inspires local industry today.”

The event highlighted Bellanca’s numerous "firsts," including the 1922 Bellanca CF—the first American transport plane with a fully enclosed cabin—and the *Miss Veedol*, which completed the first non-stop trans-Pacific flight in 1931. Attendees also heard from August Bellanca, grandson of Giuseppe, and Bill Boyle, President of the Friends of Bellanca Airfield, who spoke on the family's continued connection to the First State.

Following the formal program, guests enjoyed refreshments provided by Aunt Vonda’s Kitchen Table, who will soon begin concession operations at the airport, while viewing commemorative displays of Bellanca’s record-breaking achievements.

About Wilmington Airport (ILG)

Wilmington Airport (ILG), operated by the Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA), is the Delaware Valley’s most convenient and traveler-friendly airport. ILG offers low-fare, nonstop service to popular, sunny destinations in the Southern U.S. With its easy-to-navigate terminal, affordable parking, and short lines, ILG provides a stress-free alternative to larger, more congested airports. The airport also offers an innovative Landline service in partnership with American Airlines, providing seamless bus connections to Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) for global travel. Learn more at www.flyilg.com.

About the Delaware River and Bay Authority

The DRBA, a bi-state governmental agency created by Compact in 1962, owns and operates the Delaware Memorial Bridge, the Cape May- Lewes Ferry, and the Forts Ferry Crossing. The DRBA also manages two airports in New Jersey (Millville Executive Airport and Cape May Airport) and three in Delaware (Wilmington Airport, Civil Air Terminal and Delaware Airpark). All DRBA operating revenues are generated through the bridge, ferry and airport facilities. For more information, visit www.drba.net.