Watco railroads win Norfolk Southern awards

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

The Norfolk Southern Railroad recently hosted its 16th Annual Short Line Conference and eight Watco short lines received awards during the closing ceremony. The Grand Elk Railroad and the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad both received General Manager Operating Awards for their areas. The Kanawha River Railroad took home the Coal Business Group Marketing Achievement Award. Receiving the 250 Business Initiative Bronze Award was the Alabama Southern Railroad while the Ann Arbor, Wisconsin & Southern, Alabama Warrior, Birmingham Terminal Railway, and the Blue Ridge Southern all went home with a 250 Business Initiative Platinum Award.

The Kanawha River received their Marketing Award for the increase in coal business which is an amazing accomplishment because the railroad hasn’t been operating the line for a full year yet. “This award may be called a marketing achievement award,” said Commercial Manager Brigid Rich, “but it really should be called an overall achievement award because it took the entire Team coming together to make the KNWA successful.”

KNWA General Manager Derrick Jackson added, “I’m thankful for the team we have and the level of dedication everyone commits to the success of our railroad. I’m proud to be a part of it.”

Vice President of Operations - Division 2 Bill Goldsberry, said, “I couldn’t be more proud to have all of these roads receiving these different awards. A lot of hard work and dedication by the Teams went into earning them and I’m positive that they will be back to receive more awards next year.”

Watco holds Ribbon Cutting for STAT Center

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Watco Companies hosted a ribbon cutting near Fairfield, Alabama, at the state-of-the-art STAT (Safety Through Awareness and Training) Center. Hundreds of Team members from around the country will be trained each year in the new facility. Jefferson County Commissioner David Carrrington, members of the Birmingham Business Alliance, the media, and others joined Watco Team members to celebrate the event.

“ar the important thing to focus on is what this will do for Watco,” Travis Herod, Watco senior vice president of safety and training, said. “It’s taking our training to the next level, incorporating the same modern training technologies and tools that Class Is are using, equipping people better in the field to operate new equipment and to work more safely and efficiently.”

The Center was dedicated to Watco’s Senior Vice President of Transportation Rules and Regulatory Compliance Gary Vaughn. Vaughn has created many of rule books and safety processes that are used in the industry today. He started the original safety team which has grown from four to more than 40 to help keep all of our teams in the field safe.

The STAT Center was created as efforts to provide standardized safety training were ramped up. The addition of the STAT Center allows for team members to receive the same training regardless of their location. The new facility features classroom space, breakout session space, a functional model railroad to assist in non-traditional learning instruction of railroad operations, a simulator room with two FRA Type II Simulators, two portable desktop type simulators, and an indoor components training area with a cutaway railroad, air brake simulator rack and other hands-on tools for training operating and mechanical personnel.

Herod served as master of ceremonies while Dan Smith, Rick Webb, and Commissioner David Carrington provided additional comments. Following the ribbon cutting, guests were invited to tour the facility and test drive the simulators.
**Scholarship Recipients**

by Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

It’s always a difficult decision, says All Aboard Foundation Fundraising and Event Coordinator Cassie Bicknell, but scholarship recipients have been chosen for this year.

“We had 20 applicants this year and all were very worthy of receiving a scholarship,” she said. “It was hard to narrow it down.”

Watco created the All Aboard Foundation as a philanthropic arm of the company to provide funding for a better quality of life in the communities we serve.

“We want our Team members to be surrounded by communities that are growing and actively involved in the betterment of life and sustainability,” said Foundation President Brad Snow.

To that end, the Foundation established the scholarship program for graduating seniors who are dependents of Watco Team members. Recipients must be in good academic standing and be planning to attend a post-secondary institution within one year of graduating from high school.

This year’s recipients, each receiving $500, are:

**Brian Skilling**
Brian’s parents are Christopher and Mary Ann Skilling. Mary Ann is an account manager for Watco Supply Chain Services in San Antonio, Texas. Brian will attend Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ, where he will major in communications public relations and sports broadcasting. Brian’s career hope is to work in the sports media and broadcasting field.

**Connor Smith**
Connor’s parents are Robert and Elizabeth Smith. Robert is a business solutions analyst in the home office in Pittsburg, Kansas. Connor will be attending Kansas State University in Manhattan this fall. He will be majoring in business, with a possible emphasis in accounting. His plan is to either become an accountant or an FBI agent.

**Ethan Burke**
Ethan’s parents are Misty and Ryan Burke of Parsons, Kansas. Ryan is a helpdesk analyst in Information Systems at the home office in Pittsburg, Kansas. Ethan will be attending Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas, in the fall, where he will major in pre-pharmacy and biomedical chemistry. He would like to work in research in the pharmaceutical field.

**Jacob Wiebelhaus**
Jacob’s parents are Sarah and John Wiebelhaus of Victoria, Texas. John is a Terminal Manager in Refugio, Texas. Jacob will be attending Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. He will major in kinesiology and minor in business management. He dreams of becoming a coach and a teacher.

**Joseph Robinson**
Joseph’s parents are Dana and Jerry Robinson of Blaine, Washington. Jerry is a rover/conductor in Ferndale, Washington. Joseph plans to attend the University of Washington. Active in sports, he also has been a member of the band, math team, and drama club.

**Taylor Morgan**
Taylor’s parents are Steven and Jolene Morgan of LaCrosse, Kansas. Steven is a roadmaster on the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad. Taylor plans to attend Ft. Hays State University in Ft. Hays, Kansas, and earn an associate’s degree in pre-pharmacy science, then continue her education at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Taylor wants to pursue a career in the medical field.

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**Summer Spike program heats up**

by Travis Herod
SVP Safety & Training

The “101 Critical Days of Summer” lasting from May 27 to September 4, traditionally marks one of the highest increases for work related and recreational related injuries. During this time, we would like all of you, the Watco family, to make a commitment to place safety first in all your activities, for yourselves, your family, and your Team mates.

Watco has once again launched a Summer Spike Prevention Program that focuses on the root causes of personal injuries and accidents with the goal of having an injury free “101 Critical Days of Summer.”

Get involved, and stay vigilant: Look out for each other, and truly be your brother’s or sister’s keeper. YOU might be the difference between a normal day, and one that ends in injury or incident. Decide now, “not on MY watch!”

Help us protect our families, both at work, and at home. Thanks for all you do, let’s have a great summer!

Be sure to send your Summer Spike and safety related photos to tvans@watcocompanies.com.

Watco CEO Rick Webb was a keynote speaker to a crowd of 200 last month at the 25th Silver Anniversary of the Annual Transload Distribution Association of North America (TDANA) Transloading Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

The three-day conference featured more than 10 guest speakers and Webb’s presentation covered the topic of transload mergers and expansion. Derek Penner, Watco SVP Strategy & Customer Development, serves as vice president of the transloading organization.
What seems impossible — to move unusually oversized loads across the U.S. in 10 days — was made possible for Customer Victory Energy.

The move also was noteworthy for the way it started and ended: On Watco short lines.

The product? Two steam boilers each weighing 280,000 pounds, measuring 12-feet, 10-inches wide and 19 feet tall, 105 feet bumper to bumper.

The mode of transportation? On 8-axel railcars, with buffer cars in between in order to distribute the weight load.

The boilers were manufactured by Victory Energy in Collinsville, Oklahoma, and needed to reach a chemical plant in West Virginia. Their end use will be to produce 300,000 pounds of steam per hour.

To get them there, Victory Energy relied on Watco’s South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad on the front end and the Kanawha River Railroad for the final leg.

"Watco Companies owning both short lines on either end of the delivery actually made it quite simple," said Jeff VanderMaas, director of transportation at Victory Energy.

"With the SKOL on our end in Collinsville, Oklahoma, and needed to reach a chemical plant in West Virginia. Their end use will be to produce 300,000 pounds of steam per hour."

"It was an unusual move, that we get that much cooperation." VanderMaas described Watco conductors as "the friendliest bunch of guys you’d ever want to meet."

"It wasn’t the first time for Watco to move boilers for Victory Energy. With the SKOL last year, the line made history by moving a boiler that was more than 23 feet tall — the highest that would ever be shipped," said Ron Spencer, Watco’s director of Customer Service and Collections.

"With overpasses and bridges, that’s the tallest that could safely go through," said Spencer, whose job entails analyzing dimensions of such big loads and determining whether it will work.

Bound for the Port of Catoosa where it would go by barge to South America, the historic undertaking was made easier due to a new spur built through the Victory Energy plant.

"Once we build the boiler, we can bring the rail car into the shop, load it, secure it, and ready it for transport," VanderMaas said. Victory Energy also offers water tube packages, waste heat recovery solutions, fire tube and solar powered units. Their company is built on the principles of commitment, honesty and integrity.

To learn more about what Watco Moves, follow us at Facebook/WatcoCompanies, on Twitter at @WatcoRail, Instagram @WatcoRail, and on LinkedIn.

Have a suggestion for a product to be featured in #WatcoMoves? Email astefanoni@watcocompanies.com.
Safety must become a part of the culture of your site, and it must become ingrained in your everyday thought process in order to reach a 10-year Exceptional Safety Performance milestone. This milestone was achieved by the TPC Houston Switching Team on April 30.

“Such an accomplishment takes every single team member’s hard work, dedication, and efforts to get to this point,” said Robert Rios, site manager for the TPC Houston location.

Each Team member must recognize they are their brother’s keeper, and are encouraged to identify any potential hazards or issues they come across while they are on site. A normal day at TPC Houston starts off with safety briefings, and covers matters such as any issues the previous shift of Team members encountered, and how the current team can help address, avoid, and fix those issues.

Coaching opportunities also take place as often as possible to see how the Team can continue to grow in awareness for not only themselves, their Team, and the site, but also the community that surrounds them.

The Team understands the significance of realizing safety begins at home and follows them wherever they venture. Team members get an opportunity to voice any of their concerns, and learn how their fellow Team members’ insights and knowledge can help them to complete their tasks better.

An atmosphere where everyone takes ownership of their job and is accountable for their actions has been created, and has become part of the mindset of the Team members.

“There is no I in the word Team, and it takes each and every individual’s efforts from a Team unit to get to a point where you can enjoy such an opportunity to celebrate this success in safety,” Rios said.

The TPC Houston Switching site is a 24 hour operation, open even on holidays. In addition to underlining the importance of safety within our Team, we also place a tremendous value on servicing our Customer’s needs.

TPC, the Customer, and Watco all stress the importance of keeping the Team members and the environment around them safe at all times. Practicing safety needs to become an integral part of every aspect of operations, and this will help to encourage a Team to thrive in what they do.

A reward system called Eagle Eye has been put into place; if you spot a hazard and you report your findings, then you receive some type of reward like gift cards or other options. The TPC’s years of service range from a couple months to more than 12 years, but there is an understanding in place that it takes every Team member, whether new or more experienced in the job, to achieve such an outstanding accomplishment.

Contributing Writer

By Jennifer Sévère

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Houston Track Maintenance Team passes it on at Middle School Career Day

by Jennifer Sèvere
Contributing Writer

The Watco Track Maintenance group participated in Career Day at the Woodland Acres Middle School last month as an opportunity to give students a taste of careers and options available to them. Careers represented ranged from NASA suit technicians to personal shoppers, bankers to architects, and of course, railroading.

Houston Track Maintenance Manager Mark Cendejas was excited and determined that his Team was represented this year. Nahum Hernandez and Armando Bernabe, operators in the Track Maintenance department, enthusiastically discussed what they do. Hernandez said he “...definitely enjoyed being able to explain to the kids that an opportunity for them in track is something they can choose to get into and grow in with determination and hard work.”

Bernabe and Hernandez brought various giveaways, handouts, photos, and knowledge and insights to share with the students. Both explained the purpose of various tools used to complete their tasks, and how they help keep trains moving the way they were intended — on the track, and avoiding derails.

“This experience I have gained in presenting what I do is not only rewarding for the children, but for me as well,” Bernabe said. “I am truly happy I was a part of this chance to help bring possibly new perspectives on a career options to these kids.”

Our Team members engaged in insightful dialogue with the students, and actively answered questions, since it was from the perspective of having personal experience in the area they were representing.

Armando Bernabe and Nahum Hernandez, members of the Watco Track Maintenance group, spoke about their jobs at a recent Woodland Acres Middle School Career Day. They shared with students giveaways, handouts, photos, and knowledge and insight of what it takes for a career in railroad ing.

By the end of the event, both Bernabe and Hernandez were discussing what they could do next year to garner even more participation from fellow Watco Team members, and what they could do to build upon the success of the presentation.

Perhaps they helped to spark interest in students that might blossom to actual entry into the track maintenance field, and one day they’ll grow up to become Watco Team members!

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Watco Team Member wears many different hats

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Watco’s Assistant General Counsel Michael Gray wears a lot of hats depending on where he’s headed. Royals baseball caps when he drives to games in Kansas City. Pittsburg State University Gorillas hats when he’s tailgating.

And for the second time in the past six years, he wears an invisible hat every day: He’s mayor of the town that Watco calls its home base.

‘Long shot’

Gray spent 11 years of his childhood in the bustling, vibrant Puebla, Mexico; his parents served as missionaries there for 20 years. Fluent in Spanish, he attended a high school that involved students in a model United Nations.

“It was my first introduction to the concept of representing citizens and country,” said Gray, who served for three years as a delegate, then committee leader, then general counsel researching topics, engaging in daily discussion, working toward solutions or compromise, and writing out resolutions.

“Living in a different country opened me up to different ways of looking at things,” he said. “It was eye opening, living abroad.”

His parents were originally from Southeast Kansas, so it was natural for him to choose Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas, for his college education. His sister was also already attending Pittsburg State University at that time. There, he served in a number of clubs and organizations, including student government for one year.

After graduating in 2003 with a degree in political science, international studies and Spanish, he attended law school at the University of Tulsa, and later joined the Watco Team in 2006.

At a time when he believed Pittsburg was poised for growth but needed more progressive and new ideas, he threw his hat in the ring to run for city commission.

“It was a long shot,” he said. “I was up against some known names, and I’m not a local — I’m an outsider.”

He won a seat for two years, beating an incumbent by a handful of votes. At the end of that term, he was reelected for four more years, which will come to an end with a November election this year and the swearing in of the winning candidate in January.

During that time, Gray has served as mayor twice; first from April 2013 to April 2014, and currently. Occasionally the job has meant being on the receiving end of negative phone calls and emails.

“You’re not going to please everyone with every decision,” Gray said.

Western Australia Team breaks grain shipping records

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Things are looking good Down Under.

April was a banner month for Watco Customer CBH Group, which broke the Western Australian shipping record.

With 1.6 million tonnes shipped, it followed closely behind January, when shipping volumes broke through 1.8 million tonnes — the largest amount of grain ever shipped in one month.

March was also noteworthy: 964,832 tonnes were moved across the state — an all-time record for rail over the previous state record of 925,576 tonnes in April 2015. The Kwinana Terminal broke its best March ever, as did the Albany Terminal and Geraldton Terminal, which also has broken four consecutive month’s records.

Successive records like that demonstrate the ability of the supply chain to respond to a record harvest, General Manager David Capper told the World Grain publication.

It wasn’t easy. Challenges included flooding in February, which impacted both road and rail capacity.

But strategies CBH implemented, such as better berth utilization, helped increase shipping volumes, and Watco and CBH Team members working together to find the right solutions enabled them to recover quickly, noted Grant Thompson, COO of our Western Australia Railroad.

Capper told the World Grain that CBH was looking forward to continuing to respond to Customer needs with the roll-out of a Network Strategy focused on delivering an optimal supply chain from paddock to port. The strategy calls for an investment of $750 million over the next five years.

Watco Western Australia Rail and Customer CBH Group has set new records despite flooding that impacted road and rail capacity.
Abigail Courtney Cooper

Roy and Christy Cooper are proud to announce the birth of a daughter, Abigail Courtney Cooper, born on May 8, 2017.

Abigail weighed 7.5 pounds. She was welcomed home by big brother Jacob and big sister Shelby.

Roy has been a carman at the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad in Canton, North Carolina, for just over one year.

Colton Wendell Culbertson

James Culbertson is proud to announce the birth of his grandson Colton Wendell Culbertson.

Colton was born on May 5, 2017, and weighed 8 pounds, and was 19 inches long. Parents are Lucas and Keyra Culbertson and big sister is Faith Culbertson. James is a conductor on SLWC on the Stillwater Central Railroad.

Grads

Tiffany Musick: Daughter of Earl Musick, conductor for the Kanawha River Railroad in Belle, West Virginia; graduating from Honaker High School, Honaker Virginia.

Summer job

Continued from page 8-

Congratulations to the following Team members celebrating anniversaries this month.

1 Year: Jacob Baker, Austin Barton, Ryan Calderon, Ivan Casto, James Cooper, Daniel Deiss, Chad Easterling, Walker Fossett, Phillip Fox, Andrew Higginbothom, Jibreel Hunter, John Inouye, Derrick Jackson, Ricky Justice, Victor Lysakowski, Elizabeth Patterson, KenTravion Pitts, McKinley Porter, Miles Quisenberry, Gregg Robbins, Nicholas Sharp, Brandi Skilling, Jordan Sprague, Jennifer Summers, Brenton Thomas, Jordan Wagner, Jarred White, Edward Whitesel, Paul Williams, Joseph Zachmann, James Zimmermann


4 Years: Cassidy Arnold, Larry Belk, Jenna Duesi, Jeff Elkins, Rick Hansen, Timothy Hart, Philip Hennessey, Edwin Himmerich, Artemus Hines, Sergio Lara, Jacob Norwood, Jerry Rivera, Jason Sigman, John Thompson, Amanda Warner, Nick Weber

5 Years: Ronald Abbott, Thomas Barnes, Sean Benzimiller, Thomas Bolton, Susan Buffington, Tara Carpenter, Sean Cox, James Degano, David Elizalde, Ty Gatlin, Curtiss Hemby, Carol Kefauver, Jeff Kelly, Carey O’Connor, Jordan Pallanes, Brian Pindell, Steven Renn, Jose Rodriguez, Angela Schaefer, Amanda Shanatholtzer, Derrick Thomas, Mashaela Thrall, Duff Wagnon, Dana Wilkerson, Scott Winther, Jeremy Worm, Lloyd Young

6 Years: Christian Breetz, Felicia Fearmonti, Cynthia Johnson, Taylor Jones, Nathan Kime, Benjamin May, Kristi Nunnelly, Alfred Pope, Michael Stotts, Paul Watland

7 Years: William Ascanio, Robert Betts, Silvestre Garza, Paul Goins, Russell King, Michael Mangen, Melissa Pennington, Tom Scheidemanter, Kenneth Smith, Douglas Steed, Brandon Tomblin

8 Years: Sean Crowe, Daniel Garrett, Brent Marsh, Derek Witsman

9 Years: David Brock, James Hite, Bernardo Santos, Richard Smith, Randall Thompson, Matt Troth

10 Years: Tony Cox, Michelle Hubbard, Curtis Testerman

11 Years: Randall Chaney, Ivan Etherton, Phillip Forrest, Timothy Ragsdale, Pete Tavernaro, Mohamed Zahiruddin

12 Years: Paul Christenson, David Gonzales, Nicholas Hanson, Jeremy Hollis, Leslie Kissel, Bubba Lundy, James Marr, Randall McIntyre, John McKinney, Angelina Pridmore

13 Years: Nolan Darthard, Joey Meadows, Marco Mendoza, Billy Mott, Chad Schillerman, Larry Shavers

14 Years: Clint Chestnut, Donnie Creed, Mark Glover, James Waite

15 Years: Matthew Diestler, Mark St Aubin

16 Years: David Morrow

17 Years: Barbara Crawford, Jesse Gage, Nancy Newbery

18 Years: Stacey Ayers, Dion Baltzell, Lawrence Milton

19 Years: Robert Einke, Luke Hartman, Christopher Jacobson, Randy Jacobson, Jason Rossman, Daniel Tank

20 Years: Matthew Meekma

21 Years: Jason Ford

22 Years: Brian Lanham

24 Years: Willis Iverson

25 Years: John Nippa

26 Years: Paul Lawson, Gary Lundy

28 Years: William Gamble, Joseph Hackimer, Gary Harville, Michael Lollard

29 Years: Janice Ferrin

34 Years: Deborah Moody

36 Years: Michael Koon
Ann Arbor Railroad wraps up infrastructure projects

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Last week was the perfect week for the Ann Arbor Railroad to wrap up an infrastructure project, noted Roadmaster Steven Ayala: It was National Infrastructure Week.

The Team began the 2017 capital road crossing projects on April 17, starting work on replacing crossings on the Michigan Sub near Temperance, Michigan.

Ayala said the Team was a few weeks ahead of its typical schedule, because due to the mild winter, the asphalt was available earlier this season. The project was planned a year ago as a priority due to deterioration from salt spread during harsh winters and heavy traffic causing the wearing down of the crossings.

It involved organization and coordination, Ayala noted: The Team had to obtain permits from counties and townships, move the material using in-house labor to help reduce costs from contractors, temporarily close rail crossings, stage all the signs and barricades — again, to reduce costs — and tear out old crossings.

The Team then built panels, slid them in place, and added rock and surface through the new section of track. Thermit Welders and the asphalt company helped to finish the project.

“It was definitely a group effort,” Ayala said. “It’s nice working with a contractor that puts quality first – they believe in working as a team, as well.”

He also credited Team members behind the scenes, including purchasing, AARR Maintenance of Way, and the AARR Mechanical Department for putting the necessary pieces in place to make it possible.

Summer job turns into lifelong career

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni

When Keith LaCaze graduated from high school, he needed a summer job. He found one sweeping out boxcars for Watco in DeRidder, Louisiana. And he never left.

Today, LaCaze, is senior vice president of operations for Division 3 and 4. “I truly believe today, you get back out of Watco what you put into it. I truly believe if you work hard, you’re honest, you have a good work ethic, you treat people like you want to be treated, you’ll get back 10 times that.”

Born and raised in Louisiana, LaCaze thought he’d one day follow in the footsteps of his dad and grandpa, both of whom worked at the Boise Cascade paper mill.

“I guess I kind of did — just on the other end. Instead of making paper, I helped ship it,” LaCaze said.

As cars came in from their routes, LaCaze emptied them of debris, hauled it to the dump, and made sure they were ready for the next Customer. It was not glamorous.

“You open those doors in Louisiana, it’s 100 degrees outside, it’s 105 inside,” he said. “But it was important. Time passed, and with the satisfaction of earning a living came the desire to stay with the company. Watco added him to the payroll fulltime and trained him to be a switchman, then an engineer. Eventually, he was promoted to assistant manager at the Boise plant, fol-

Continued on page 7-

Ann Arbor Team Members took Infrastructure Week in May literally and wrapped up one of the railroad’s maintenance projects.