Classes starting at new Watco safety center

A warehouse-turned-training-facility in Birmingham, Alabama, is set to take Watco initial training for conductors and locomotive engineers to the next level while making training consistent for everyone who completes it.

“This is a big deal,” said Watco Senior Vice President of Safety and Training Travis Herod. “We will have a place to do our training in a standardized way, so it is the same for everyone no matter whether they work in North Carolina or Idaho. It will be consistent with the same curriculum, instructors, equipment - the entire process.”

Previously done on location in the field, training used to be limited to “whatever we had on hand,” Herod said. “On the Black Thunder, we might only have coal cars, but no box cars or tank cars to train with, or other factors that could limit what our students are exposed to, such as type of locomotives available for training.”

“We’d send instructors to geographic locations wherever it was needed the most, and they’d set up in hotel conference rooms or depot offices — wherever they could find a place, and that wasn’t optimum for anyone, often requiring loading up a class and driving to a nearby railroad facility for hands-on training in the field,” Herod said.

Called the Watco STAT (Safety Through Awareness and Training) Center, the new facility will provide dedicated air conditioned and heated classroom space, a state-of-the-art simulator breakout room, a kitchen and a break area, and restrooms. All of it meets accessibility codes, Herod said.

“All big Class 1 railroads have similar facilities,” he noted.

Initially the staff will include three full-time transportation instructors and two full-time engineering instructors, with others rotating through to supplement as necessary.

“We are also making plans to further develop this location for training Maintenance of Way and Mechanical students from across the system, as well as offering safety development and leadership training for officers,” Herod said.

The first ground school for conductors is slated for three weeks beginning January 9th; installation of full-size simulators being built in Florida is slated for April 7th, and training should ramp up after that.

Those simulators include two full-sized, FRA Type II simulators — one hybrid and one desktop style in use in more modern locomotives — and two portable simulators with desktop controls that can be taken to the field as desired for smaller locations, or for specific training objectives at the field level.

“Those will be great at locations like terminals and ports, or start-ups for new technology like PTC or DP operations,” he said.

Last year, Watco trained nearly 200 initial ground school students, along with 75 initial engineer students, and with recent growth at Watco, Herod anticipates approximately a 10 percent increase over these numbers in 2017.

In addition, when fully implemented locomotive engineer recertification would cycle an additional 120-140 team members through in a given year, to train on the simulators as part of their tri-annual recertification process.

“The important thing to focus on is what this will do for Watco,” Herod said. “It’s taking our training to the next level, incorporating the same modern training technologies and tools that Class 1s are using, equipping people better in the field to operate new equipment and to work more safely and efficiently.”

Watco Executive Vice President and COO Dan Smith said he was proud of this great milestone because it will take the Watco safety culture and performance to the next level.

“Nothing reinforces our Customer First Foundation Principles more than a dedicated training facility that helps us serve our Customers safer than we ever have before,” said Smith, who added his thanks to the many team members who laid the foundation in order for Watco to take this step.

“The many benefits our Watco Team will gain from this facility will have an amazing impact to the culture we are so focused on creating each and every day,” he said.

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer
For the past three years, a partnership between Iowa Pacific and Watco has enabled licensed, franchised Polar Express excursions in Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin, putting smiles on thousands of children’s faces.

But implementing the excursions also accomplished two things.

“It put a positive face on short line railroads that otherwise might be invisible in the region, the community, making them much more publicly known. Many don’t realize there’s a railroad there,” said Mathew Abbey, formerly the general manager of a short line in Colorado and now Corporate Director of Special Events with Polar Express through Iowa Pacific.

“With this, the nature of a property’s image changes in the community; suddenly it’s recognized.”

And, the excursions also contribute significantly to the economy.

“It’s an offering that can bring revenue and additional value to railroads,” he said.

Perhaps nowhere was that more evident this year than in Stillwater, Oklahoma, a city of about 45,000. In its first season there, The Polar Express served 40,000 riders, 80 percent of whom drove in from outside of the area — at least an hour away, Abbey said.

He credits the City of Stillwater, Watco leadership, Stillwater’s Special Events Director John McClenny, and Tourism Director Cristy Morrison as having instrumental roles in its success.

McClenny tackled infrastructure items like a platform, crossings, parking, and electricity, while Morrison delved into marketing and promotions across many channels, and the city and university partnered to provide a parking shuttle.

Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma, the National Marching Band Fraternity and Sorority, are headquartered in the historic train depot there and agreed to the use of its grounds, where a large waiting tent, temporary gift shop and ticketing area, and portable restrooms were erected for passengers.

Downtown, restaurants were so busy they had to turn people away, and shops were packed with visitors, Abbey said.

The 70-minute ride was scripted and included music, hot chocolate, cookies, storytime, carol-

One of Santa’s helpers reads the Polar Express book to guests on the Polar Express train ride on the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad line.

ing, a visit by Santa and his elves, and a jingle bell for each child. The line ran two to five trips a day, with 600 to 700 passengers on each ride, from the weekend before Thanksgiving through December 23rd.

“The take-away is that these excursions, these trains, are not only possible, but with the right team and the right expertise, they’re profitable, they’re safe, they’re a fantastic forward-facing presentation of the property in the community,” Abbey said.

The line, called the Cowboy Subdivision, has a freight business but low volume, so there was capacity to take on a Polar Express franchise there, Abbey said.

“It’s a case study of a relationship and a location and a community and all the pieces there coming together and fitting right,” he said.

“I’m really grateful, very appreciative to Watco for being willing to explore options.”

“We’re the largest single operator of licensed Polar Express, and our relationship with Watco is partly to thank for that. Access to properties allow that to happen,” Abbey said.

Morrison said it’s been a pleasure to host The Polar Express with Watco, Iowa Pacific, and praised both them and their partner organizations.

“The speed in which the team at the City of Stillwater built and improved infrastructure to accommodate the holiday event was impressive,” she said. “The City, Chamber, Downtown Business Improvement District, Visit Stillwater and other local businesses and organizations have had a blast developing and enhancing a variety of events and attractions to appeal to locals and visitors throughout the holiday season.”

By the numbers:

• There are 50 Polar Express franchises in the U.S. and England
• Iowa Pacific operates 11 of them — 9 in the U.S. and 2 in England

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

Passengers on the Permian Polar Express look out the windows to get a view of the “North Pole” as they pass by.

Permian Polar Express Ride

Children and adults of all ages were welcomed to take part in the Christmas spirit as three different railroads partnered together to bring a Polar Express ride to the families and team members in the Permian Basin area.

The ride took place the evening of Tuesday, December 6th. Invitations were sent to the families and Customers of the Texas & New Mexico Railway (TXNR), the Lubbock & Western Railway (LBWR), and the Pecos Valley Southern Railway (PVSR). The train ride ran from the Wolfforth, Texas depot on the LBWR all the way to the north pole to pick up Santa Claus!

On board the train, there was singing, dancing, hot chocolate, cookies, and plenty of smiles from kids and adults alike. According to Kurtis Lindsey, Commercial Manager of the three short lines, there were over 230 riders on board “from newborns to not-so-newborns.”

“We extended the offer to all of our online Customers and supporting agencies from facility managers down to the part-time truck driver,” said Lindsey. “If they’re important to you, they’re important to us—bring them on the train!” was our tag line.”

Lindsey continued talking about the train ride, saying “Family means the world to us, whether that means our personal family, Watco family, or our family of Customers. We saw an opportunity this year to help our Customers make a memory and get into the Christmas spirit. What a better environment to get families together?”

The train ride for the Customers was a huge success, and the very next week the train was run again for the team members and their families.

- Michaela Kinyon, Contributing Writer

Santa visits with guests aboard the Polar Express that operated on Watco’s Lubbock and Western Railway.
As the circa-1956 passenger train chugged south through rural Southeast Kansas countryside on a cold December morning, the only thing that remotely resembled the North Pole were the frost-covered fields.

But to the 280 first graders aboard, it was everything they imagined the Polar Express to be.

Published in 1985, the book-turned-computer-animated movie by that name is now a classic Christmas story beloved by children around the world.

The Watco Christmas Express was special for these three, Camden Deao, Fallyne Deao, and Callie Lundy. They rode in the passenger car named Fallyne by her Papa Dick, who was Dick Webb, the founder of Watco. Her son Camden and Callie are two of Dick’s great grandchildren.

The boy to receive the first gift of Christmas, and the boy requests a jingle bell from one of the reindeer’s harnesses. He places it in his robe pocket, but on the train ride home discovers it has fallen through a hole in the pocket.

On Christmas morning, a small package under the tree holds the bell, presumably found by Santa and delivered to his home. Both the boy and his sister can hear its beautiful sound, because they believe. His parents, alas, cannot.

Starting eight to 10 years ago, the Kansas-based Heart of the Heartlands Railroad Club partnered with Watco in Pittsburg to offer “Watco Holiday Express” rides to students at a local elementary school who completed reading goals.

Last year, the idea was expanded to include every first grader in the public schools in Pittsburg and this year the students at St. Mary’s Elementary were included as well. Students wore jammies and were given special tickets that would allow them to board. Heart of the Heartland members dressed in period train conductor uniforms, and the children enjoyed sugar cookies and water provided by Ron’s Supermarket.

Looking out the windows as the train lumbered along, Sivardo Rueda said he was excited to be on a train for the first time.

“I’ve never done this before,” he said. “It’s cool.”

For one child, Spencer Grosstephan, the ride was extra special: It was his birthday, and he got to wear a birthday hat the entire trip.

But for Camden Deao, the trip was “amazing,” he said, because he got to ride in a passenger car with “Fallyne” printed on the side. It was named for his mom, who got to join him for the ride that day. Also joining him was his cousin Callie Lundy, daughter of Fallyne’s brother, Bubba Lundy. Fallyne and Bubba are grandchildren of Watco founder Dick Webb.

As the ride drew to a close, everyone aboard squealed and waved as they spotted Santa alongside the tracks in a bucket truck provided by Westar Energy.

And when the children disembarked, Watco team members Brad Snow, Cassie Bicknell, and Tracie VanBecelaere handed each one a jingle bell.

“This was awesome,” said Alex Edwards as he received his. “I love trains. I have toy ones and I might be a train guy when I grow up.”

- Andrea Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

Wisconsin & Southern Railroad uses annual Christmas party to raise funds

The team at the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) like to celebrate Christmas together as well as help others have a good Christmas. This year they combined the two and not only had an enjoyable Christmas party but they were also able to help out others with a 50/50 raffle and by providing donations to the Ronald McDonald House in Madison, Wisconsin.

The team raised $1,488 in their 50/50 raffle with the University of Wisconsin Children’s Hospital receiving $744 and Trainmaster Justin Cox winning the other half. This is the third year that the team has held the 50/50 raffle to raise funds to split between a team member and a charity.

The TS&IC also worked on a fundraiser to benefit the Ronald McDonald House. Each team member that brought in an item received a raffle ticket and then four $100 gift cards were raffled off throughout the party. However, the real winner was the Ronald McDonald House.

To add some fun to the party an Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest was held. The contest was a close one but, Ted Nicholson came out on top by a vote of applause from the party attendees for his not so nice looking kitty Christmas design.

“Everyone seemed to have a good time and it was nice getting together outside of work and spending time with our team members and their families,” said Joe Via, WSOR general manager.
Ann Arbor Team Safety and Improvement Committee takes on winter projects

As the three year anniversary drew near for the Ann Arbor Railroad, team members felt that it was time for a morale boost.

“We wanted to come up with new, fresh ideas to boost morale through our TS&IC (Team Safety and Improvement Committee),” said Will Richardson, who with Art Perez was tasked with leading the effort.

When the TS&IC initiative began company-wide in 2009, the premise was having a tool for teams to discuss and improve safety, starting with the members who knew the most about the jobs they do. But team leaders soon realized it could achieve much more, including engaging team members emotionally and mentally in the jobs they do while also building relationships with their communities.

In Ann Arbor, the 83-mile short line, which operates between Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Toledo, Ohio, serves the automotive industry with Customers like Chrysler, General Motors, and Ford, while also hauling bulk materials like flour, sugar, grain, plastics, sand, cement, recyclables, paper, lumber, and petroleum.

That work is vital to the economy of the nation, noted Richardson.

“We really wanted to take a fresh approach to help our team members with their morale, having them buy in, have them feel appreciated, because what they do is important,” Richardson said.

“Our goals were improving the work site, and giving team members a voice,” he said. “We’re the bridge to the management, and if there’s an idea they come up with, we can see that idea brought to life.”

One idea on everyone’s mind was parking lot safety at the Ottawa Yard, an issue that impacted everyone.

“There was no organization in it, and as the Ann Arbor has grown with Watco’s help, we’ve added more team members, and we knew we had to look at a solution,” Richardson said.

Fellow TS&IC member Art Perez said he observed wintertime bringing a unique set of hazards to those using the parking lot: It’s often slick, and the temperature can be in the single digits.

“The roundhouse is near the office, and there is traffic around those two building at all times during the day,” he said. “It’s hard to see around the corner.”

So Perez came up with signage to remind people to drive at a safe speed, especially during winter weather, and hung 36-inch mirrors to improve visibility at blind corners near the buildings.

The extreme cold had caused the rail to contract, causing the rails to split apart and the bolts to be stripped from their joints, which put the main line track out of service. MOW Team members Arturo Perez Jr., Floyd Russell Jr., Franky Perez, Marcos Soto, Mark Adams and CDL Electric Supervisor Todd Osment battled the cold weather to make repairs and put the main track back in service with minimum delay to the Customers.

The team used a product called a “Firesnake” to heat the rail which allows the rail to expand so that the team can make the necessary repairs. An environmentally safe rope containing a flammable gel which burns with little smoke is laid on the base of the rail and then lit, as the rail expands, it’s a newer practice that they don’t have to use a lot but have used more recently than in the past.

The team is able to put the bolts that have been stripped out back in place.

Ann Arbor Roadmaster Steven Ayala said that it’s time for a morale boost.

“We had quite a few people stop at the nearby crossing to watch the team at work,” said Ayala.

After letting the track cool back down for approximately half an hour, the track was put back into service and traffic began running across the rail again.

- Tracie VanBecelaere, Managing Editor

Ann Arbor MOW Team uses snakes to repair rail

Normally when you’re doing trackwork the last thing you want to come across is a snake, especially down in the south where some can be deadly. However, in the northern part of the country snakes can be a necessity when repairing track. Such was the case with the Ann Arbor Maintenance of Way (MOW) Team who used a “fire snake” to repair a section of track along their Michigan Subdivision.

Ann Arbor TS&IC Team Members; Art Perez, Jim Taylor, William Richardson, Brian Maxey, and Todd Dominique.

Ann Arbor Team Members Brian Maxey, Todd Dominique and Art Perez prepare to deliver the toys collected for the Toys for Tots Christmas program.

A second project was taken on the TS&IC to create a stronger bond with the local community and each other, the committee began a Toys for Tots program this year for Christmas.

“Things like that bring everyone together,” Richardson said. “And helping children at the holidays is near and dear to our hearts; it was something we could all get behind.”

Team members donated generously, he said. “I think it turned out pretty good,” Perez said. “Hopefully it’s something we can do for years to come.”

The TS&IC also completed a three-day team building meeting led by Nick Weber that engaged them with hands-on challenges and covered strategies like making the workplace better and how to talk with team members.

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer
When the Pecos Valley Southern Railroad (PVSR) took on new Customer Badger Mining, improvements needed to be made to a crossing to accommodate for all the trucks full of sand that the Customer would be carrying across the structure.

Lubbock and Western Railway Roadmaster Rick Grant is all about teaching, so he saw that as an opportunity to provide a hands-on learning experience for his Texas team members.

Grant gathered team members from the Texas & New Mexico Railway and the Lubbock & Western Railway and went to work to improve the structure. It took the team two days to complete the crossing. A 207 ft. rail relay was completed, from 60 lb. rail to 115 lb., which included a 32’ cement panel crossing. Forty cross ties were added to the main line in addition to the new ties for the crossing. The team building the crossing resulted in approximately a 30 thousand dollar savings. “I’ve picked up a lot of experience throughout my years in railroading and thought this would be a great learning experience for the team. It may not be something they need to do everyday but it’s always better to have the experience,” said Grant. “It also gives the team a sense of accomplishment. They can look at what they did and say ‘I built that.’”

An interesting series of twists intertwines the Customer and Grant. The Customer is bringing down the sand from Wisconsin and Grant himself is a transplant from the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR). He worked for the WSOR when he joined the Watco Team and then moved to Texas to work for the LBWR in January of 2016.

“I really enjoy being in Texas and the mild weather that we have here. This area is a great place to be and the PVSR may be a small railroad but the business is growing like you wouldn’t believe.”

- Tracie VanBecelaere, Managing Editor

The Pecos Valley Southern Railway crossing that was completed by Watco team members can now withstand the heavier truck traffic as a result of new business.

GO GREEN

SAVE GREEN

Sometimes, in the scheme of things, it’s the little things that make a difference. Such is the case with saving both the environment and money. At times, we may think the one thing we do won’t really make a difference or have any impact at all.

The thing to remember is it all adds up. Take for instance, the Watco newsletter. There are approximately 3,000 copies printed and mailed out each month. Not only does the financial cost add up but the cost to our environment is impacted as well. Most copies are thrown away after reading and hopefully recycled, but most likely not.

Here’s what you can do to go green and save green. Go to the Watco web site and at the bottom of the main page you can choose to sign up for the newsletter. If you sign up your name will be deleted from the mailing list and you will just receive the electronic copy. You can always unsubscribe if you decide you would rather have a paper copy instead. You can also request a certain edition of the paper version if there is an article you would like to keep for a special reason.

If you have any questions about going green you can contact tvan@watcocompanies.com.
What started off as a cost comparison by the military back in the spring of 2016, turned into a nice piece of business for the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) this December and going forward. Oshkosh Corporation is doing a rebuild program for 2,000 of the military’s HEMTT and PLS trucks over the next two years. A majority of these trucks are coming from the Army’s storage depot in Herlong, California, thus giving rail a chance to compete for this business.

A call was made in mid-November that the Military was going to load a 41 car unit train with 82 vehicles for a move to Oshkosh, and the train launched from California just before Thanksgiving. WSOR and Watco Terminal and Port Services (WTPS) teams quickly formulated a plan to unload the train which involved a crane, a train crew to index the cars for unloading, and a fleet of wrecker trucks to tow the vehicles the final mile to Oshkosh’s drop lot. There were initial setbacks due to the mild winter weather conditions, but once the site was fully prepped the unloading process rapidly ramped up. It was a race against time to get the train unloaded on the final day, but the staff on-site was up to the challenge and completed the work 20 minutes before another train was arrive that to interfere with the off-loading.

A special thanks goes out to the following for their contribution on this project. The WTPS staff out of Omaha, Pittsburg, and Oshkosh who provided the rigging experience, crane operating, and labor to unlash and unload the vehicles. The WSOR Operations, Mechanical, and MOW Teams who accommodated the special requests and staffing to switch the train, provided the mobile crane, and moved the crane to and from the site. Furthermore, Watco was blessed with having the assistance of very committed contractors for this project: Trans-Link USA, #1 Stop Towing, Soper Excavating, and Noltes Towing. The success of this project was truly a team effort from all parties!

- Brad Peot, Commercial Manager

In good weather and in bad, the Blue Ridge Southern (BLU) Team knew they could count on Charlie McCoyle to brighten their day by greeting them as they passed by his trackside home in Clyde, North Carolina.

McCoyle, a 90-year-old veteran of WWII, lived there alone. Eventually, he needed some help. And the BLU Team was only too happy to offer it.

“The story really began back in 2014, when not long after we began operations here, we became acquainted with him,” recalled General Manager Darl Farris.

“Hey wave, and our crews being friendly and civic minded, would always wave back.”

Their friendship grew.

“Hey hold up a sign wishing BLU team members safe travel and good fortune. Even without his sign, Charlie regularly greeted BLU crews three or four times a day at Clyde with a big smile and a bigger wave,” Farris said.

He found the office and dropped by for visits, hitting it off with the guys. They made him an honorary BLU Team Member.

“We recognized he was looking for companionship,” Farris said.

Later that year, they put him on a train for a ride, and he returned the gesture by bringing them bags of apples.

Then, last winter, the track crew was out sweeping switches, doing maintenance, and stopped by to check on him. The roads were bad, and they discovered he couldn’t get out.

“Hey found out he needed some groceries, so they went and bought bread and milk, that kind of thing, out of their own pocket,” Farris said.

And when the BLU Team learned McCoyle had the chance to live in a warmer, better home in a retirement complex, they wanted to help. They packed and moved him in less than four hours.

“He really hated to move away from the tracks, from seeing us every day. He was heartbroken about that. But it was an old home, drafty, and his new place is much better, warmer, more modern,” Farris said. “And there are other retired folks there for companionship. We’re excited for him.”

“We’re going to miss seeing him in Clyde, but he assures us he’ll continue praying for our safety every day, the safety of everyone who works for Watco, just like he always has.”

“He is one of a kind and we are proud to consider him one of our own.”

- Andra Bryan Stefaneli, Contributing Writer
December Graduations

Amber Lynn Jackson, wife of Kelvin Jackson, Dock Operator at Watco GPIP Houston Liquid Terminals, Houston, Texas; graduating from University of Texas-Arlington, Texas, with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Malory Moland, daughter of Kris Moland, Division Engineer at Watco, graduated with honors from Jacksonville State University in Lake Charles, La., with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education.

Elizabeth Neal Percival, daughter of Norman Neal Switchman & TSric Leader at the PCA location in DeRidder, La., and wife of Joe Percival, Switchman at Mead Westvaco, in DeRidder, La., graduating from McNeese State University in Lake Charles, La., with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting.

2017 Watco Calendar

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating anniversaries this month.

1 Year: Avery Aiken, Michael Aleknewicz, Mitchell Alfred, Joshua Breth, Jeremy Cazares, William Ethridge, Rodney Gaddis, Brady Hutching, Sue King, Charles March, Justin Marr, Lance McHan, Ryan Moore, Tung Nguyen, James Palmore, Adam Pope, Daniel Roth, Matthew Roth, Jonathan Scribner, Joe Valle, Richard Wampler, Neal Ward, Craig Welch, Kalob Winkler, Ryan Yanez

2 Years: Melissa Amaya, Mike Berry, Barbara Blankenship, Paul Blankenship, Matthew Brooksher, Jesus Carlos, Jacqueline Chavis, Daniel Coiner, Michael Cooper, Corey Crutchfield, Edis Cruz, Archie Fields, PJ Forbes, David Fugge, Robert Hall, Lezli Hicks, Brittany Hodge, Jesus Ibarra, Amy Iori, Aridin Johnson, Iran Johnson, Keith Lacaze, Sarah Martinez, Joshua Mayo, Manuel Mendoza, Patrick Paczosa, Destini Palen, Zachary Rietkerk, Robert Rios, Thomas Shilling, Jeffery Stiebbs, Bryan Stewart, Jordan Vasquez, Solomon Watkins, Amanda Whetzell, Marcus Wiley, Jeremy Williams

3 Years: Luther Boothe, Thomas Caffall, Nicholas Coomes, Kolby Crawford, Lance Gates, Amanda Haggerty, Thomas Held, Wendell Held, Darvis Hicks, Andrew Jones, Laura McKinney, Juan Moreno, Jessica Nielson, Buddy Olvera, John Peace, Brad Peot, Theodore Savage, Larry Shavers, Perry Thomas, Jonathan Thompson

4 Years: Michael Barajas, Michael Calligan, Robert Campbell, John Dellinger, Gregory Ferguson, Willie Green, Jonathan Hamm, Matthew Hayes, Jaime Henry, Kenneth Hogarth, Travis Luinstra, Kevin Martin, Morgan Ruggles, Kelly Sanders, Tina Swallow, Todd Trammell, Joseph Whitaker, Cyle Windsor, Brody Wolff, Michael Yoger

5 Years: Kenneth Brown, Bryan Castellano, Justin Haisch, Jeffrey Hart, Kris Hawley, Danelle Kenny, Russell Koczur, Todd Peterson, Lee Smith, Marcos Soto

6 Years: John Anderson, Nicholas Busshardt, Daniel Caine, Nathan Champion, Lucas Cummings, Israel Garza, Angela Gilmer, Bill Goldsberry, Daniel Harkness, Miranda Kichler, Stephanie Magrath, Johnathan Noles, James Schneider, Todd Vaughan

7 Years: Seth Morris, Keith Owens, Clinton Schipper

8 Years: James Carter, Michael Kertz, James McCoy, Steve Smardo, Raymond Warrington

9 Years: Ricky Carter, Jon Mihalic, Gina Williams

10 Years: Joshua Beaudry, Ron Close, Steve Iseli, Amy Miori, Frank Nichols, Doug Whalen, Jason Wood

11 Years: Thomas Addison, Derek Brown, Johnny Fields, Michael Gray, Robert Gray, Anthony Kirkland, Eddie Lapine, Joshua Leslie, Jason Welch, George Yellott

12 Years: David Fontaine, Matt Heeren

13 Years: Gary Griswold, Brian Pflughoeft

14 Years: Fallyne Deao, Patrick Peabody

15 Years: James Fearmonti, Samuel Winegarner

16 Years: James Brewer, Kenneth Parkin, Mindy VanBuren

17 Years: Robert Adams

19 Years: Justin Cox

20 Years: Roger Kelley, Artis Smith

21 Years: Dennis Gaddis, Kelly King

22 Years: Paul Cain, Clarence Kinzeler, Shannon Knisley, Rob Thrall

23 Years: Gregory Hoffman

24 Years: Sherlyn Graham, Santiago Montoya, Charles Shope, Milburn Stewart

25 Years: John Falk, John Pond

26 Years: Kirk Hawley

29 Years: Paul Swanson

30 Years: John Beilfuss, Michael Roknic

37 Years: Fredrick Burrell

40 Years: Tex Inman

Evelyn Louise Prestholt

Derek and Brenna Prestholt are proud to announce the birth of their daughter Evelyn Louise.

Evelyn was born December 3, 2016, and weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces, and was 20 ½ inches long.

Brenna is the Manager of Railcar Leasing and Storage and Derek is the Assistant Manager of Fleet Management, both working out of the Pittsburg, Kansas, office.

Have you started using your 2017 Watco Calendar? If you haven’t received yours yet let us know and we’ll get one out to you. Email chuskey@watacocompanies.com with your address and it will be on its way.

Please note that the August photo credit needs to go to Dalton McAdams, who took the awesome photo of the Woo Shock pulling a passenger train near Hutchinson, Kansas.

It’s not too late to start snapping away for next year’s calendar and it would be a perfect time to get those beautiful snow pictures for the winter months.
The All Aboard Foundation is pleased to announce its Scholarship Program will be open for applications mid January. The scholarship will be available to dependents of Watco Companies team members. The recipient must be in good academic standing and plan to attend a post-secondary institution within one year following high school graduation.

Scholarships will be awarded in the amount of $500 each and will be issued in two $250 disbursements for the first two semesters of college and will be credited to the recipients account at the financial aid office of the college of their choosing. The number of scholarships awarded will be determined by the number of applicants with a minimum of two awarded per year.

Applications will be available after January 16th at http://allaboardfoundation.com/scholarships/. Please submit your application to info@allaboardfoundation.com on or before April 30th.

A committee will review all applications and the winner(s) will be notified and announced in the June issue of The Dispatch.

Last year there were five applicants who were selected as recipients of the $500 scholarship. The recipients were Matthew Bohland, Mackenzie Boatman, Drew Davied, Devin Lamkin, and Jason Schroeder.

The All Aboard Foundation was established to provide funding for a better quality of life in the communities in which Watco serves.

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Birmingham Team Members serve Lovelady Center

On December 8th, a few team members on the Birmingham Terminal Railroad (BHRR) served a meal for the ladies of The Lovelady Center in Birmingham, Alabama. The Lovelady Center is a program designed to restore hope and rebuild lives. They help women with substance abuse problems and women and children that have been abused and battered, putting them in programs that build confidence and self-esteem.

Jeremiah Williams, Joseph Reid, and Robert Boyd were the team members that primarily helped with the dinner, serving chicken, green beans, potatoes, and other things to the ladies. The women of The Lovelady Center were also given various gifts, such as headphones, journals, and candles.

When asked about the dinner, Williams said that the event is important because “it lets these ladies know that there are people who care enough for them in a world where respect and love for one another has been lost, especially coming from positive male figures.”

Williams also stated that when the event was brought to the attention of David Tarwater, general manager of the BHRR, he didn’t hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity to offer assistance. Williams said it was a chance to apply the people-first principles of Watco outside of the workforce.

“Mr. Reid, Mr. Boyd, and myself are grateful to be a part of a team that thinks of others as well as themselves,” said Williams. “Thanks Watco, for partnering with our church ministry in giving these lovely ladies a night to remember.”

- Michaela Kinyon, Contributing Writer