Growing business in the Great Northwest

The team on The Great Northwest Railroad (GRNW) recently completed work on helping one of its valued and long-term Customers further grow their business in eastern Washington and northcentral Idaho.

On January 3, a GRNW train crew placed the first dozen cars at the new CHS Primeland fertilizer storage and production facility at the Port of Wilma, Washington. The project’s completion is the culmination of several years of work for CHS Primeland and GRNW Team Members, which included extensive site selection and track work, with the GRNW Operating and Track Teams providing assistance and expertise throughout the project.

“Rail is extremely important to this facility,” Ken Mingo, manager of the Port of Wilma facility, said. “It gives us options to bring in product from all parts of the country. It is just critical to our business.”

Mingo noted that CHS Primeland has moved fertilizer onto the GRNW in the past, but the new Port of Wilma facility, called the CHS Primeland Port of Wilma Agronomy Plant, increases the company’s capacity seven fold. In addition to fertilizer, CHS Primeland also moves barley from the GRNW.

“We have 10 retail agronomy locations that the facility will serve,” he added.

Mingo said the primary benefit of the new facility is that it will allow CHS Primeland to purchase and store fertilizer outside of the normal spring and fall fertilizer seasons. CHS Primeland will move both dry and liquid fertilizers, including urea, phosphates, potash, thyosol, and liquid phosphates. Moreover, they will have the ability to blend and produce products at the plant.

“It’s important for the growth of our company,” Mingo said, adding that CHS Primeland will move several hundred carloads annually on the GRNW to the facility.

“The GRNW has just been awesome,” he added. “The team there has been great to work with and we have really appreciated the help that you have provided throughout this process.”

Stacy Grant, general manager of the GRNW, said he and his team are thankful for the faith CHS Primeland has placed in the railroad and his team.

“The GRNW Team greatly appreciates the trust that CHS Primeland has placed in our railroad,” he said. "The new Wilma facility represents a significant investment in infrastructure for CHS Primeland on our railroad. We will work hard each and every day to continue to keep that trust. The entire GRNW Team is eager to grow and maintain our partnership with this valued long-term Customer.”

- Ted Kadau Vice President Commercial

SKOL wins Business of the Year Award

The South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (SKOL) was recently awarded the Cherryvale Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year Award at their annual banquet. Shirley Ann Hogben, Chamber Board Member, thanked the SKOL and Watco for their participation in the community and mentioned how the town loves to see the Cherryvale Charger locomotive pulling trains through the area.

Attendees also thanked Watco Founder Dick Webb and the Heart of the Heartlands group for restoring the depot in Cherryvale and keeping the town from losing that meaningful piece of history.

"Watco has always understood the importance of being good neighbors and partners with the communities we travel through and work in. Cherryvale is no exception. The city has been a great place for the SKOL to call home. The community involvement has been outstanding,” said Jimmy Patterson, general manager for the SKOL.

“We are looking forward to continuing to foster an already great relationship with the businesses, government, and people of Cherryvale and the surrounding areas.”

Awards given out at the Annual Cherryvale Chamber of Commerce Banquet were Volunteer of the Year, Charlie Blanchard; Outstanding Service, Janet Plumley; and Business of the Year, with Jimmy Patterson, general manager, accepting the award for the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Team.
STAT center graduates five

Watco reached a milestone in Alabama last month as the first class completed ground school training for conductors at the Watco Safety Through Awareness and Training (STAT) Center in Birmingham.

The class included Coy Haralson, Jon-Max Herman, and Kevin Lee from the Baton Rouge Southern, James Rutherford from Cicero Central in Chicago, and Chance Che-noweth from the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad in Kansas.

“All five did well, each had their own challenges and strengths, but all finished with high marks,” said Travis Herod, senior vice president of safety and training.

Previously done in the field, trainings used to be limited to “whatever we had on hand,” Herod said.

“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,” Herod said.

The new center means training in a standardized way, so it’s the same for everyone and is consistent with the same curriculum, instructors, and equipment.

Railroads fly team members to Birmingham, where they are picked up at the airport and shuttled between their hotels and the training center.

Noon meals are provided, and extended-stay hotel rooms include full kitchens — a home away from home, Herod explained, so “there’s nothing to worry about except focusing on what they’re trying to learn.”

“They are away from the usual distractions of home, and it’s completely hands on, so they are immersed in what they’re learning,” he said. “All they have to worry about is getting on class on time, learn, go back to the hotel, and study their workbooks in the evenings to help prepare for the next day’s class.”

Now, the first class of five are headed back to their railroads to begin the on-the-job training process, Herod said. They’ll be in the field, assigned to a peer trainer for two to three months, and then be certified to become conductors. Six more are headed to Birmingham for a class in February, and a ribbon cutting is slated for April.

Watco Chief Operating Officer Dan Smith praised Herod and the team that made it happen.

“This is a big step for Watco that will directly impact recruitment, training, and performance,” Smith said.

Instructors at the new Birmingham center include Jeff Holden, a Watco instructor for four years, Brad Hayes, who has held several roles in the rail industry, Todd Hamilton, who has extensive knowledge of distributive power, and Mike Smith, director of engineering training, and Mike Milligan, a track trainer with Watco since 2012.

In addition to those instructors, Herod’s team includes 40 people, from Philadelphia to Florida, who work daily to ensure safety.

“When I began in 2005, we had seven people,” he said. “We’re grown so much. Now we have 36 railroads, more than 30 switching locations, plus all the terminals and ports.”

That team handles audits and includes environmentalists who deal with air permits, water permits, and discharge. Instructors handle manager training, recertification training, OSHA/FRA compliance training, and track inspection training in 35 to 40 class offerings.

“We’re not just a rail company,” Herod said. “We’ve got terminals and ports dealing with hazardous materials, tug boats, boat pilots and deck hands, people who operate heavy machinery, and everybody has to have some kind of training. Through it all, safety comes first.”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

Product: Malt
Used for: Sierra Nevada Beer
Location: Blue Ridge Southern - BLU

If you’re gathering with friends and family watching the Super Bowl and enjoying a cold Sierra Nevada beer, thank the Team on the BLU! The Blue Ridge Southern Railroad, Watco’s first property in North Carolina, was started in 2014. It hauls the malt that’s used to craft Sierra Nevada Beer, from Asheville to Fletcher, N.C., after it’s imported to the U.S. from Western Canada.

At Fletcher, it’s transloaded by Sierra Nevada to truck to their brewery a few miles away.

BLU Commercial Manager Brigid Rich makes sure the cars remain moving and the Customer gets what they need throughout the process. Last fall, during the busy season, the brewery ran out of malt.

“‘They were the first Customer we served that night to make sure they didn’t run out,” Rich said. “We want to make sure our Customers never go into shut-down mode; if we can do anything to prevent that, we will.’

Rich was proud to see Watco’s efforts pay off recently when she picked up an issue of “Food & Wine Magazine.” In it, brewers and food critics chose the 25 most important craft beers ever brewed. In the No. 1 spot: Sierra Nevada Pale Ale.

About the BLU

Named for the Blue Ridge Mountains that overlook the scenic railroad, the BLU operates 92 miles of track consisting of three branch lines that feed into Norfolk Southern’s terminal in Asheville, N.C. The BLU ships other commodities, too: wood chips, paper products, plastics, concrete, coal, aggregate, and products used to make Epsom salt.

To learn more about what #WatcoMoves, 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

The first five Watco Team Members to graduate from the STAT Center are (I-r) Chance Che-noweth (SKOL), Coy Haralson (IBRS), Jon Max Herman (BRS), James Rutherford (CERR), and Kevin Lee (BRS).

Norfolk Southern’s “Honoring First Responders” EMD SD60E No. 911 passes local first responder vehicles in West Virginia belonging to Putnam County EMS, Nitro Police Department and the Nitro Fire Department. The “First Responders” locomotive was leading Watco’s Kanawha River Railroad (KNWA) coal train.

KNWA Engineer Adam Grimm and Conductor Keith Hoosier were given advance notice and stopped the train to make the photo possible. Thanks to photographer Chase Gunnoe for setting up the shoot!
Racking system eases a potato’s journey

A new technology is being used for the first time on railroads, to the benefit of Watco Customers and consumers: a refrigerated rail car with automated load-in using a racking system.

Before it was introduced, potatoes had a sometimes rough journey from field to user. After being harvested and bagged in Idaho, they were loaded by forklift into rail cars. Those forklifts weren’t easy on the cars, nor on the potatoes.

Bag after bag was piled on for the trip east, and by the time they arrived, the bottom level was crushed.

Borrowing a page from the FedEx and UPS playbook, both of which load their planes with an automated roller system with racks, Watco applied a similar technique to rail boxcars.

The car can accommodate 20 racks, each with four pallets, for a total of 80 pallets per boxcar, which helps shippers alleviate their recurring truck driver shortage. They also eliminate the need for dunnage in a traditional boxcar, which can cost around $700 per car to secure the load and $700 per car to remove to unload.

Our first load: Potatoes from Sun Valley in Burley, Idaho, with an interchange in Chicago, to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. For the final leg of the journey, they were trucked to New Jersey. Sun immediately reordered a second shipment for Sun Valley for the same route.

“It was flawless,” said Owen Zidar, Watco’s senior vice president for Strategy and Development based out of Overland Park, Kansas. “There was no damage; everyone was happy.”

“We physically loaded the product into the racks, and then it was loaded onto a table that automatically went into the car,” Zidar said.

A bonus: The refrigerated cars are temperature-controlled not just to keep perishables cold when needed, but also to warm them; in Idaho, where temperatures sometimes are below zero and there is significant snowfall in winter months, the car had to be heated to keep it at 42 degrees.

On the return journey from the East Coast, the car will be regulated at 38 degrees with a load of butter.

Zidar says there is huge demand for such a car, with Customers already interested.

With one of the rising sectors in transportation being perishables, Zidar said that there is tremendous potential for Watco using such technology.

“We used to get killed by trucks, because we took too long and damaged products,” he said. “This eliminates that.”

Expansion likely will be targeted in Texas, the Northeast, and the Southeast — the fastest growing populations.

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

A gift from home

Treats such as Maggie’s Popcorn, Signet coffee’s, and jams and jellies were part of a Pittsburg gift basket sent out by the Pittsburg ISS Team to their Class 1 counterparts during the holiday season.

Typically when Christmas rolled around, Watco’s Interline Settlement System Team Members would pool their money, buy cookies, and send them to their counterparts at Class 1’s.

“We love to keep good relationships,” explained Tara Carpenter, assistant manager of revenue.

This year, Senior Interline Accountant Jeff Linville (Wisconsin & Southern Railroad) suggested something new: Having Watco purchase locally items from Pittsburg, Kansas, where the company originated and is still headquartered today.

“We wanted to put more thought into it and make it special,” Carpenter said.

And the idea was born for “A Taste of Pittsburg” holiday gift baskets.

To fill them, Watco reached out to Signet Coffee Roasters, a mom-and-pop business that roasts coffee beans from around the world for a unique blend of flavors, to prepare small custom bags.

“We picked the flavors — Holiday Blend and Gorilla Roast, named for our university mascot — and they grinded them and packaged them for us,” Carpenter said.

Signet added their contact information to the bags so recipients could order more online if they enjoyed it, and offered Watco a bulk discount.

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Watco also reached out to Root Coffeehouse, a start-up venture by the Kling family, to order their locally crafted jams and jellies. They, like Signet, offered a bulk discount.

They purchased popcorn from Maggie’s Nutty Bavarian, and Pittsburg State University contributed magnets and small leather notepads marked with the iconic split-faced gorilla mascot.

Watco added some freebies of its own, like train whistles and photo calendars for 2017. Watco also added flyers from the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce and an explanation of the products they were sending.

And, a tongue-in-cheek apology that they couldn’t send what the area really is known for: fried chicken.

“It was fun,” Carpenter said.

“We got a really good reaction from everybody.”

All told, they prepared 17. Best of all, the homespun effort was cheaper than a commercial, prepared gift basket.

“Even with shipping, they were less than $30 each,” Carpenter said. “We felt it was a good investment for relations.”

“And once Watco Car Hire heard, they wanted to do it, too, for their counterparts, for the same reason.”

Linville said it was neat to get responses from recipients, “as these are people we work with all across North America, from Canada to Florida.”

He hopes it’s something the team can continue next year.

Jo DeToro, CSX Railroad supervisor, described the gesture as “a lovely idea and so thoughtful.”

“Our entire ISS team really enjoyed going through the various items and sharing among our team,” deToro said. “Although a couple of us think that if we can overnight it, that we should be able to try some of your great local fried chicken!”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni

Contributing Writer
Students “just imagine” working for Watco

An annual event started by a fourth grade teacher years ago allows elementary students to “work” for Watco Companies for a day each January.

The event, called “Just Imagine Kansas,” includes companies with roots in Kansas. They’re each set up as booths in a mock town in the school’s multipurpose room, complete with a mail carrier, police officer, and governor.

For weeks in advance, students research the companies and the products or services each company offers, plan a budget, create signs, package up items to sell, fill out work schedules, print business cards, and learn to make change.

“We want to highlight things that have really played a role in Kansas,” explained teacher Babbs Tims said. “Education, aircraft, farming, photography, the railroad — so many very successful businesses started right here in our town have been key players in those areas.”

That includes Watco Companies, founded by Dick Webb and now operated by his son, Rick.

Caedance Shepherd was one of several students who took turns “working for Watco” in the mock town, selling wooden train whistles and toy locomotives to visitors who were given pretend money to spend.

Tristan Fiechtl, 3, of Pittsburg, uses pretend money to buy a Watco locomotive at the Watco Companies booth during Just Imagine Kansas. Tristan was there with his grandma, Lois Lawrence, who does maintenance at Kansas City Southern in Pittsburg.

Shepherd enjoyed the chance to run the Watco business for a few hours, she said.

“I like selling things and serving Customers,” she said as she made change for Fiechtl and wrote him out a sales ticket.

Sounds like she’s already got the right idea.

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

WSOR Team Member wins photography contest

This year, a photography contest was held by the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) for contributors to their 2017 Calendar. First prize was $500, which went to WSOR Engineer Adam Weddle.

Adam spends a good deal of his free time photographing the trains and landscape in the area. His winning photograph was of a WSOR train and a sunset in Boscobel, Wisconsin.

“The sky was nice,” stated Weddle. “It was probably the best part.”

Weddle took the photograph in November of 2014 when trying out his new Nikon D3200.

“It was one of the first pictures I took with that camera,” said Weddle. “That was a good way to break it in.”

When asked about Weddle, Joe Via, WSOR general manager, stated, “Adam is a dedicated member who fits in very well with the WSOR. We appreciate Adam’s commitment to safety and his dedication.”

Weddle submitted several photos to the contest, but he didn’t think his winning photograph would make the cut, much less win the contest.

“I was surprised, but I’m not complaining,” he said. “I feel pretty gratified. I didn’t set out to win it, but I’m glad somebody thought the photo was worthy of winning the contest.”

Weddle said people often ask him why he chooses to photograph trains in his spare time, given that he spends his entire work day on them, “It’s a totally different thing to see the train as a job, with all the focus and responsibility. I enjoy going out in my spare time and taking photos. You can sit back and enjoy it more.”

- Michaela Kinyon, Contributing Writer

Western Australia Team ramps up service Down Under

Watco’s Western Australia Team began providing service in November of 2016 to Brookfield Rail, a rail infrastructure owner and access provider in Western Australia. The WA Team provides services delivering track, ties, and ballast via rail.

According to Ken Potts, WA vice president of projects finance and administration, the project has been moving along well and is for the various type of rail gages; wide, standard and narrow. Watco WA invested in three locomotives and several wagons (railcars) to transport materials. The crews working the Brookfield task are ones from Watco’s original CBH grain crews to move the Brookfield trains.

“It’s an advantage that we can use already trained crews and utilize our best resource efficiently,” said Potts.

The team is also gearing up for rail movements in conjunction with the IMG acquisition (see page 5).
Watco becomes majority shareholder in Western Australia intermodal company

Watco Companies is growing its business in Western Australia after becoming the majority shareholder in Intermodal Group, or IMG. In the process, it’s helping alleviate traffic congestion and reduce truck mileage and maintenance.

The acquisition of Intermodal Group on Dec. 21 comes five years after Watco entered the Australian region by winning the contract for CBH Group’s rail haulage.

IMG is an integrated provider of services, including rail, integrated logistics of containerized freight, storage, and handling of containers.

Watco CEO Rick Webb said the new relationship with IMG is an exciting move that follows Watco’s foundation principles.

“Our goal is to improve our business by providing quality service and value to our Customers,” Webb said.

At the same time, noted Watco Vice President of Projects Finance and Administration Ken Potts, the company is reducing negative environmental impacts in Australia.

“The government has targeted removing 30 percent of road traffic that is container traffic,” Potts said. “By putting containers on rail, we’re getting that done.”

Australia is among the most urbanized nations on earth, with one of the highest rates of population growth in the developed world. Projections show 4 million additional people could settle in capital cities Down Under by 2035.

“Simply put, the containers that go on rail reduce the number of trucks on the road,” Potts said. “That’s a positive.”

IMG will also spot empties within the plant and builds the consist requested by the Customer and the night crew in turn, will switch out an inbound that averages 80 cars daily brought in by the NS, spot empties within the plant, while

Watco directors and one director from IMG. WWAR Chief Operating Officer Grant Thompson, who will serve as chairperson of the board, said the partnership was strategic in that it combines both IMG and Watco’s logistics and

IMG loads intermodal containers onto railcars, in turn, reducing negative environmental impacts in Australia.

supply chain knowledge, which can be built on to provide Customers with the right service, at the right time, in the right condition and at the right price.

The acquisition aligns with plans for the future, which include growth.

“We will certainly be looking at opportunities that fit our strategy,” Thompson said. “We have long-term views on how we want to grow in Australia, and this acquisition fits with our business expansion plans. It adds to our current rail footprint in Australia.”

“The services that IMG offers will help us meet those requirements for growing Customer relationships and provide a base for the growth in Australia.”

Currently, Watco is reviewing opportunities to boost the growth of IMG, which operates the North Quay rail terminal at Fremantle and a container park at Forrestfield, Perth Western Australia.

According to Fremantle Port Authority, the North Quay rail terminal handled 14.5 percent of all container movements through the port in the Australian financial year 2015-16. IMG operates two container trains daily between North Quay and Forrestfield.

Thompson said former owner Jim Stevenson will continue as a minority shareholder.

“We look forward to working closely with Jim as we have done with CBH Limited, in growing the business for the benefit of our Customer base and the State of Western Australia,” Thompson said. “Watco appreciates that CBH first gave Watco the opportunity to establish a logistics company in Australia.”

Stevenson said the acquisition was good for Customers, team members and other stakeholders because IMG’s goals were aligned to Watco’s Customer focus and innovative solutions.

“I am excited to be a part of a strong partnership with Watco,” he said.

- Molly Henneke, Contributing Writer

McIntosh Team celebrates safety anniversary

The McIntosh Team in Alabama recently celebrated their two year injury-free anniversary along with the two-year anniversary of their start-up. The team plans on celebrating with a catered lunch from Brick Pitt BBQ in Mobile, Alabama. In addition, the team received jackets, safety shirts, polos, and backpacks with the team’s logo on them for their recent accomplishments. Customers also received polos as a thank you from the team for allowing them to provide safe and reliable service.

The McIntosh location is a Chlor-Alkline facility that moves chlorine, caustic, acid, salt, and bleach cars on a daily basis. When the facility first started it just moved a relatively small amount of cars, but have since expanded to handle all car movements within the facility. The team handles very hazardous and dangerous commodities on a daily basis and safety has always been always been an important goal, for both the team and the Customer.

An average day at the plant consists of a day and night crew providing round the clock services to the Customer. The day crew builds an outbound that averages sixty-five cars daily, which are then picked up by the NS. The crew

Watco’s foundation principles.

- Molly Henneke, Contributing Writer

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Blytheville manager sends two to play college ball

It’s no secret that Watco loves its baseball. There’s Pittsburg’s “Watco Raildogs” Little League competitive traveling team, which each season strives to bring home the trophies. And there’s Watco Refugio maintenance team member and electrician John Solis, a lifelong baseball coach in Rockport, Texas, who last summer was chosen above hundreds in the nation as a Little League World Series Umpire.

And there’s Dan Smith, a former National Baseball League pitcher with the Texas Rangers, Montreal Expos, and Boston Red Sox, who now serves as Watco chief operating officer.

So Sonny Sweatman, a new terminal manager who just signed on in Blytheville, Arkansas, figures he took a job with the right company. Sweatman’s two sons recently were featured in the Oscocila, Jonesboro, and Blytheville newspapers for signing to play baseball together at Central Baptist College in Conway, Arkansas.

The younger of the two, Brett Sweatman, is a high school senior, a good all-around player who bats above average. His older son, Joey Wayne Johnson, is 24, a pitcher who can throw a ball across the plate in the lower 90s with “insane ball movement,” Sweatman said.

“I have pushed my boys to be above average their whole lives” he said. “Some may think that is extreme. I would disagree until the end. Average doesn’t get you noticed.”

And Sweatman would apply this to the team at Watco, as well.

“Although I am new to Watco, I would say our goal is to not be average,” Sweatman said. “What sets us apart from the rest of our industry has to be a hunger to perform better than the average. Strive to perform and improve upon yesterday’s performance.”

“We can’t sit around and wait for other companies to make mistakes so we can get opportunities to take on new business in our industry. World class performance each and every day sets us apart.”

Sweatman likens his job to his coaching with this analogy: “I could have told my older son to get a grounder or fly out but I didn’t. I told him to throw the funky cheese and send them back to the dugout. I could have told my younger son to get a base hit when he was growing up but I didn’t. I told him to hit it out of the park every time he came to the plate.”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

The All Aboard Foundation is pleased to announce its Scholarship Program is open for applications. 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 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.

Congratulations to the Swan Ranch Railroad Team for going five years (since start-up) injury-free! Team members who helped reach this milestone are (l-r) Miles Quisenberry, Dakota Merritt, Cody Jensen, Joseph Bomgaars, Deron Deter, Thomas Held, and Leo Correa.
Noah Gordon Trappe
Gary and Lisa Cooley are proud to announce the birth of their grandson Noah Gordon Trappe. Noah was born November 10, 2016, and weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces and was 19 inches long.

Grandpa Gary is a section foreman for the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad in Janesville, Wisconsin.

Merritt “Rhett” Avery Smiley
Josh and Danielle Smiley are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Merritt “Rhett” Avery Smiley, who was born on October 31, 2016. Rhett weighed 4 pounds and was 17.5 inches long.

Rhett entered the world a little early and had to spend some time in the hospital initially, but she is healthy and doing very well at home now.

Josh has been with the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad since startup in July of 2014 and works as a conductor/engineer.

Ella LeighAnn White
Zach and Amanda White are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Ella LeighAnn White. Ella was born on January 19, 2017. She weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces and was 20.5 inches long.

Zach is a conductor and has been with the Eastern Idaho Railroad since November of 2015.

Births

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating anniversaries this month.

1 Year: Christopher Bollin, Phillip Borreresen, Adam Breeck, Tyler Burke, Kevin Byrd, Charlie Carr, William Clements, James Cooks, Benjamin Cox, John Cuevas, Daniel Czar, Jarmain Drake, Jessie Esca milla, Andrew Floyd, Se’Courtney Gardner, Michael Gomez, Anthony Gonfiantini, Mark Gyenes, Gary Hackenmack, Gary Huff, Jason Huffman, Mario Jimenez, Daniel Lemon, Perry Lunsford, Andre Majors, Shane Morris, Dustin Scrivner, Joshua Sheets, Caroline Spurrer, Colton Thies, John Weber

2 Years: Kevin Abbott, Melissa Akins, Derek Anderson, Edward Boring, Bradley Bridges, Timothy Brockway, Isaiah Calde ron, Ian Donovan, Jason Elliott, Nelson Guardado, Ryan Hager, Joshua Hawkins, Molly Henneke, Trevor Jones, Steven Kimmel, Christopher Klevenberg, Ernest Kwek, Matthew Martinez, Lea Meza, Shawn Miller, Alberto Ornelas, Jason Prain, Ethan Reed, Edwin Rial, Adrian Richard, Kevin Seeley, Mica Stevens, Blake Thomas, Jonathan Trusler, Jeremy Welsh, Michael Welsh, Sandra Williamson

3 Years: Kevin Adcock, Pedro Armendariz, Robert Carder, Darren Cloward, Nicholas Desjarlais, John Dietschweiler, Michele Dimick, Patrick Flower, John Gogniat, Jerry Goodwin, Sean Hayden, Mark Hulburt, Jayson Keith, Chris King, Evan Klaevemann, Jason Kraicek, Jeffrey Lien, Gregory Lockhart, Dee Mitchell, Ezekiel Montalvo, Cory Montoya, Justin Nasello, Odea Nowden, Zachary Overstreet, Walter Sansing, Juan Solis, Tyboria Springer, Charles Trapp, Tana Wagoner, Kareem Warren, Mark Wottowa

4 Years: Brent Aycock, Joshua Buee, Steven Coltrin, Steve Coomes, Seth Creason, Michael DeLaney, Kyle Forsman, Travis Gathan gan, Dylan Hoggle, Christopher Huggett, Reed Kunnanz, Michael McMillan, Derek Prestholt, Roger Schlecht, Laura Schmidt, Gregory Sherman, Mike Shoemaker

5 Years: David Abbey, Valerie Altenhofen, Michael Brinkerhoff, Daniel Brunk, Kyle Curry, Erin Flocchini, Paul Gage, Antonio Green, Martin Mandujano, Jacinto Mendez, Matthew Morrison, Sabrina Mounts, Drew Otto, Chad Shaffer, Timothy Sharratt, Matt Spade, Tyler Stapleton, Jeffery Summers, April Summit, Chris Wright

6 Years: Dennis Cain, Keith Cameron, Kevin Dean, Josh Gwillim, Sean Jameson, Christopher Miller, Derek Mooy, Scott Reeves, Michael Schaffer, Joe Del Smith, William Watts, Willis Whitaker

7 Years: Steven Bringer, Robert Johnson, Joe Marshall, Gilbert Perez, Dusty Young

8 Years: Lawrence Fix, Mark Leicht, Johnny Lima, Ronald Whitewater

9 Years: Timothy Ainsworth, Ben Coward, Brian Ezell, Ty Furgason, Joy Hill, Hugo Ortega, Joseph Patalano, David Riggs, Frederico Romero, Robert Smith

10 Years: Robert Balzer, David Flores, Albert Glenn, Andreas Lachino, AJ Mee, Derek Nyman

11 Years: Michael Lewis, Richard Polk, Daniel Reeves, Joseph Reid, Warren Sanderson, John Scheechle, James War y, Carla Wilson

12 Years: Douglas Fleming, Matthew Hinojosa, Gregory Lovelace

13 Years: Terry Gilbert, Michael Janke, Brandon Otter, George Villa, Bobby Young

14 Years: Scott Adams, James George, Gary Goodwin, James Taylor

15 Years: Sara Hanson

16 Years: Serafin Contreras, Bob Cunningham, Kevin Schoenhofer

17 Years: James Andrews, John Clark, Michael Rock, David Terry

18 Years: Thomas Shirey

19 Years: Daniel Jones

20 Years: Robert Williams

21 Years: Chad Rose, Troy Tracy

22 Years: Michael Sebecic

24 Years: Mark Hoskinson

30 Years: Bonita Perkins

37 Years: Geron Crotwell

Roses are red, violets are blue, if you love your Valentine, this is what you’ll do...

Stop Look Listen

See Tracks, Think Train
Mansfield Switching Team celebrates eight years injury-free

A big round of applause goes out to our Mansfield team who is celebrating being injury free for more than eight years—exactly the number of years since their start-up! The team contributes their success to a strong family atmosphere at the facility, and being very active in their local community.

The mill originally opened in 1980 and at one time was the largest paper mill in the world. Watco took over switching the facility on December 1, 2008, and operates 24/7 - 365 days a year. There are two 12-hour shifts and one eight-hour shift that serves the facility. The team switches different jobs at the plant, during various stages of production. They are responsible for switching tank cars which come in at the beginning of the paper making process. Another responsibility the team members take on is to switch out cars on the recycling side of the plant. Finally, the team switches out the cars and delivers them to Class 1 partners KCS and Union Pacific. On average they handle roughly forty to fifty outbound loads a day.

There have been five members that have been at the location since start up; Ernie Austin, Johnny Jones, Randy Canada, Robert Brown, and Wes Hamilton. Other team members include the following; Kelly Sanders, Derek Witsman, Willis “Cheez” Jones, Keith Austin, Brent Thomas, Jason Smith, Willie Green, Antonio Green, Antonio Woods, Rossi Drain, Ken Pitts, Ren Wilkins, Eddie “Fruity” Atkins, and Jonathan Hall.

Location Manager Ernie Austin is a bit superstitious about the anniversary, “I try not to focus on it too much and just keep going forward. It’s better to keep looking ahead and doing what we can to stay safe.”

Senior Vice President of Operations Keith LaCaze said, “I’m extremely proud of all of the Watco Team Members at the International Paper Mill in Mansfield. These men work daily to uphold Watco’s Customer First Foundation Principles of serving our Customer in a safe and efficient manner. To reach this milestone in a very difficult environment is an excellent achievement and sets the bar high for all of us to follow.”

- Molly Henneke, Contributing Writer

Paying it forward on the BLU

Paying it forward is a movement that started with the idea of not paying a favor back, but instead repaying it to others instead of the original benefactor. This has become a pretty common practice across the states, but in an unusual circumstance, an act of kindness towards an animal was paid forward.

It all started when a writer for Trains Magazine mentioned that the Blue Ridge Southern (BLU) Team Members would grab an apple as they headed out the door in order to give it to a train loving donkey named Jasper along the route.

Ryan Marsh, an 11-year-old from Knoxville, Tennessee, saw the article and wrote a letter to BLU General Manager Darl Farris. Along with the letter, Ryan also sent a box of apples for the team members to give to Jasper.

“We are a part of the community and we do care about our neighbors,” said Farris. “Operationally, there are a few reasons we stop at that location, Jasper is just a fortunate benefactor.”

- Tracie VanBecelaere, Managing Editor