Watco Supply Chain Services is a key partner in a newly-opened $6.8 million transload shipping hub site in Kansas that is a staging area for wind turbine components, and has wasted no time in filling acreage with those components.

“It’s a success story, said Commercial Manager Casey Harbour, for many reasons. “This is not only an incredible collaboration for all aspects of Watco — from rail, supply chain, everyone — it’s a project that illustrates the atmosphere that Mr. Webb created in our company,” Harbour said. “It’s all about creating a successful solution for our Customers. ”

“ And it’s a huge win for Watco as a whole.”

The facility, just outside Great Bend, Kansas, is an ideal location for wind turbine storage, as it’s near several developmental sites for future projects. And the timing, as renewable energy becomes a focus across the U.S., is perfect, Harbour said. “It’s an industry that’s really taken off over the past three to five years,” he said.

Watco’s relationships within the industry and its ability to serve in multiple facets, from transportation provider to mechanical inspections to repair work on railcar fleets, were considerations in landing the job.

“As a company, we were approached through various contacts we have and presented with the question as to whether we thought we could start our own wind distribution center,” Harbour said. “We had already begun working on an aggregate facility with KDOT and Sherwood Construction,” Harbour said. “We had additional land around it, and were presented with the opportunity to do wind components, to take advantage of safe harboring for PTC tax credits.”

Other partners include Fuller Industries, Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, the State of Kansas, and the City of Great Bend.

After conversations with wind component manufacturers, in early January Watco was awarded the first project with a wind company.

“From there, it’s snowballed into more,” Harbour said.

Paul Williams, on the Supply Chain side, Operations Manager, Railroad Logistics, said the project has filled about 24 acres as of the end of February, and Watco has just leased an additional 30.

“We have around 45,000 square feet of indoor storage and it will be full this month,” Williams said. “We have 204 tower sections on the ground, 35 hubs, 105 blades, and we’re expecting another 300 tower sections in April.”

Those components have been received via truck and rail, then have been offloaded and placed on fixtures on the ground where they will remain for a few months or years of storage until they’re assigned to a wind farm.

Then, Watco will reload them to truck or rail for delivery to those farms.

“It spills over into other industries,” Harbour noted. “You have to have cranes to lift them, a qualified team, and it utilizes both the trucking industry and rail industry.”

Meanwhile, Watco is continuing to be awarded more projects.

Harbour credits Williams and Barth West for their work on the project.

“They’ve taken the ball and run with it,” he said. “I’m just here to support them any way I can. They have the expertise and the relationships to make this thing go.”

Williams said it was “a real team effort.”

“I don’t think either one of us could have done it without the other,” he said. “And it’s an extremely big deal; for Supply Chain, we have almost made our complete plan for the entire year just in January and February.”

In order to get ready for the arrival of the components the city launched an awareness campaign to notify residents and to let them know that there would be an impact on local roads and railroad crossings.

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer
Larry Jensen wears a lot of hats in his off-time, from gardener to woodworker to traveler. So it figures that on the job, he’s worn a lot of hats, too.

Jensen, now 60, has been in the same position at Watco since he came on board March 1, 2007, but throughout his 40-year career in the railroad industry, he’s done it all. He retires this month as a senior vice president and chief mechanical officer.

Jensen started that career as a fireman/oiler in the steam engine days in North Platte, Nebraska, where the locomotive shop there held 68 locomotives indoors and Bailey Yard — the world’s largest classification yard — saw 120 trains a day.

By 1984, he had become an electrician. Furloughed when the Union Pacific and the Missouri Pacific merged, he headed to Omaha, where he landed a job as a linemen for the communications department with the UP.

In 1986, he started his shortline career with Kyle Railways, and in the years that followed, he spent 10 years in Arizona on railroads that served the copper mines, some time on the Kiamichi Railroad in Hugo, Oklahoma, and in Paris, Texas, where he was CMO and the director of locomotives for States Rail.

“I’ve been general manager, director, superintendent — I’ve worn a lot of hats over the years,” he said.

He noted that Watco’s fleet, which is approaching 470 locomotives, includes locomotives that he was on when they were brand new.

“They have an average life cycle of 100 years — it’s very important to take care of them,” he said.

Jensen was attracted to Watco, he said, because he wanted to become part of a company that was looking for growth, wanted to do things the right way, and focused on the Customer service side of things.

He counts among his accomplishments helping Watco to standardize locomotive care.

“When I came here, there wasn’t much rhyme or reason to it — everyone did it a bit different,” he said.

Jensen put together an extensive maintenance program that included monitoring those assets using internal technology and a tool that everyone uses now.

Today, Watco can track inventory and maintenance and has an online failure reporting process that is unique among short line companies.

When he arrived, locomotive availability was in the lower 80 percent, meaning that 20 percent were in need of repair. Now, Watco is the lower to mid-90 percent, a rank it’s held for the past eight years.

He is looking forward in retirement to spending more time with his family, though, which includes two daughters, three step-daughters, eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren, along with gardening, woodworking, and traveling with his wife, Denise, in their camper.

“In railroading, I’ve been all over the country, and I’ve been to Canada, Nova Scotia,” he said. “We want to go back to those places and dig deeper into the history of it.”

But it’s difficult to walk away from the industry, he said. The internal workings of his department at Watco is what he’ll miss the most in retirement.

“You build relationships with a lot of people, and I’ll miss feeling like part of a team,” he said.

“You just hope the legacy you leave behind sticks. I think for the most part, what me and my team accomplished was good and I think it will last. That’s what I hope, anyway.”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer
Supply Chain Services helps transport wooden "roads"

It pays to be diverse in transportation and to build lasting relationships with Customers: A new joint project between Watco Terminal Port Services and Watco Supply Chain Services that is already producing activity and revenue has roots in a joint project Watco did back in 2013.

Commercial Manager Ryan Krull (WTTPS) already had a relationship with a Customer and had stayed in close contact. When the Customer had a need that Branch Manager Shane Morris (WSCS) could service, Krull put them in touch.

"They were looking to ship by rail, but the timing didn't work out, and we saw the opportunity to bring the Supply Chain side in," Krull said. "As a result, we've successfully been awarded multiple lanes."

The product? Yak Mats — wooden mats, each made of 66x6 and 8x8 square pieces of lumber bolted together, that can be connected to form a "roadway" of sorts on a large construction site such as a pipeline project.

Their purpose? To allow heavy machinery to more easily navigate across the terrain without damaging it or creating erosion.

"These mats can provide several miles worth of roads, in and out of sites, wherever they need big cranes and equipment to go," Morris said.

Yak Mat manufactures and sources them, and Watco provides the transportation. With their size, that's a challenge.

"They are 18 feet long, 8 feet wide, and each unit weighs about 3,500 pounds," Morris said.

But Watco is up to the challenge.

"We load 17 of them onto a truck at a time, and we've been loading in a range of 600 to 700 truckloads a month, averaging 30 a day," he said. "They're a vital part of the project — without the mats, they aren't able to get the equipment to where it needs to be."

All told, there were 200,000 mats to be moved from one project to another several states away.

The future plan Watco is working on with the Customer is to establish a distribution network within our terminals and ports facilities to give them nationwide distribution.

"They'll be stored and ready to load out at any time and at many different points," Morris said.

"The interesting thing is, we do business with them on the Supply Chain side, the Terminal Port side, and we also service one of their plants from the rail side as well, so we touch them in three different aspects," Krull added.

This wasn't Watco's first experience at serving the Customer. In 2013, the WTPS traveled to Cherryvale, Kansas, daily from July through January 2014 to unload crane mats off of railcars, store them at the Cherryvale Mechanical Shop, and deliver them by truckload to Independence, for what was then called Dixie Mats.

The project then was a pipeline being built from the mid-point in Missouri to Cushing, Oklahoma.

All told, they unloaded 300 cars of 20,000 mats, inbound on the Kansas City Southern Railway to Pittsburg and then via the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad to Cherryvale.

At the time, Terminal Manager Adam Hanson predicted: "The ability to touch one Customer with several of our services helps build the relationships for future projects."

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

BBAY celebrates safety anniversary

Bogalusa was once called the Magic City due to how quickly the city was constructed, in just one short year, to house the workers at the local sawmill. There must still be some magic left as the team at the Bogalusa Bayou Railroad (BBAY) has had zero reportable injuries since it’s start-up two years ago.

The paper mill in the town of approximately 13,400 people is still the town’s largest employer and the BBAY Team of 12 serves three different divisions at the mill. There are two crews that work 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, seven days a week serving the board mill, the craft mill, and the box plant.

BBAY General Manager Brit Sonnier said, "We have a lot of good team members that enjoy being here, we’ve built a strong safety culture. They take a lot of pride in what they do and take safety seriously."

As a reward for their focus on safety, the team received jackets with the BBAY logo and their names on them along with a safety dinner for the entire team.

Art Capell, International Paper shipping mill manager said, "We're very pleased with their performance of having zero reportable injuries. That's a huge accomplishment."

BLU wins Community Pride Award

The Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) was recently recognized by the Haywood County Commission for a Clean County for their efforts in sprucing up the depot in Canton, North Carolina. The committee recognized the BLU for their leadership role in beautification and in inspiring other businesses to participate, mainly due to the face lift they gave the depot.

"We are situated along two of the busiest streets in Canton, so there are a lot of eyes on us," said General Manager Darl Farris. "We are proud to be among the honorees, the BLU was the only business that received such an award, all other awards were given to individuals for their community contributions."

Before the BLU took over operations, the Canton depot was a fairly drab looking place that served more in function than in form. Since then, the team has painted the roof and trim in their signature blue, cleaned up quite a bit of trash, planted some greenery, and generally organized things so there is more curb appeal. Several BLU Team Members and their families have devoted their time and efforts to this cause and continue to do so.

Farris added, "We make it a part of our job briefings to discuss the impact our housekeeping has not only on our safety, but also our image in the eyes of the communities we serve."

"I have to admit that my wife, Sally, probably the biggest fan of the BLU, is the brain child behind a lot of the modifications made to the depot. She also organizes efforts to decorate the depot for some of the more popular holidays, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, said Farris. "BLU team members and citizens alike, seem to really appreciate this extra effort to make the holidays more festive. Canton is a proud community with a rich heritage of hard working people at it's core. Blue Ridge Southern team members fit right into that heritage and are proud to do it with a little flare that we are happy to share with the rest of the community."

- Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Pictured above is the BBAY morning crew (l-r): Edward May, Cody Waller, Scott Davis, and Trainmaster Terence Snell. Not pictured are Andy Mitchell, Mike Miley, Jesse Bryant, Jeremy Lee, Marvin Quinn, Kenith Langsford, and Douglas Wayne Smith Jr.

Pictured above are the beautiful fall decorations by Sally Farris, wife of BLU general manager Darl Farris.

Art Capell, International Paper shipping mill manager said, "We're very pleased with their performance of having zero reportable injuries. That's a huge accomplishment."

- Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor
Pittsburg Team helps feed the hungry at the Lord's Diner

When the newly opened Lord’s Diner in Pittsburg, Kansas, asked businesses and organizations for volunteers to take turns serving guests one evening a month, there was no trouble getting a response from Watco.

Numerous team members offered to help. “The Lord’s Diner serves an evening meal 365 nights a year, just as the original Lord’s Diner in Wichita, Kansas, does. Operated by the Catholic Diocese, it relies on volunteers to serve food, pour drinks, bus tables, and clean up.”

Most of all, said Director Matt O’Malley, the volunteers should make those who seek a meal at the diner feel welcome. “There was no first start was referring to them as “guests,” and avoiding the term “soup kitchen.”

“When we served a meal, we want them to be able to help the people in our Community by giving of our time to make their lives better,” Kinyon said. “Teri Kinyon worked in the kitchen, and silverware, told each person that Watco was happy to see them there to eat, and arranged for assistance from another volunteer if they needed help carrying their tray or needed a cart.”

Engineering Administrative Assistant Teri Kinyon worked in the kitchen, and noted that guests there were "all smiles and excited for the meal that they were receiving.”

“It was a very moving experience to be able to help the people in our Community by giving of our time to make their lives better,” Kinyon said. AR/Treasury Coordinator Nancy Dickey said her experience was especially interesting.

“I made a connection with my first cousin who I have not seen in years,” she said. “He was a lot older than me and took a very different path in life. He did not know who I was until I introduced myself and then I sat down and talked about family he hadn’t seen in years. It felt good to help.”

Accounting Assistant Gwen Foster, who volunteered with her husband, also enjoyed the experience.

“It was heart touching to see the gratefulness in some eyes, and all were so nice,” she said. “But it was also sad to see the families that needed this, and the single older folks who were there alone.”

One older gentleman who had lost his wife was happy to have some place to go where there were other people, he told her.

“I was happy to listen to him. Sometimes that is all we need, someone to listen,” she said. “I felt very humble afterwards, and so thankful for my blessings that I have — sometimes we all forget how much we have and need to be reminded.”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer
Births

Maisie Grace Linville
Jeff Linville and Kirsten Burke are proud to announce the birth of their daughter Maisie Grace. Maisie was born on February 22, 2016. Maisie weighed 6 pounds, 1 ounce, and was 17.5 inches long.

Kaisley Mae Clifton
Josh and Ashley Clifton are proud to announce the birth of their daughter Kaisley Mae, who was born on December 22, 2016. Kaisley weighed 6 pounds, 2 ounces and was 19 inches long. Josh is a member of the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad Track Maintenance Team and has worked for the BLU since it’s start-up in July of 2014.

Graduation Announcements

As the school year’s end is quickly approaching, many family members of the Watco Team will be crossing stages across the continent (and ocean) to receive their diplomas. Watco would like to acknowledge their hard work and show how proud we are of all graduates from our families by listing them in the May edition of The Dispatch.

If you would like to have your, or a graduate’s information listed, send in the information in the following format:

• Graduates name and relationship to Watco team member
• Watco team member’s title and location
• The school graduate is attending and location of that school
• If the graduate is receiving a degree from a college, university or trade school list the graduate’s degree type

An example would be: Billy Doe: Son of John Doe, locomotive mechanic in Oklahoma City, OK; graduating from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK., with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting.

Email the information to tvan@watco.com and add Dispatch-May Graduation in the subject line.

Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating anniversaries this month.


2 Years: William Akers, Zachery Barajas, Christopher Blackman, Gavin Burrell, Corey Corrick, Michael Dally, Christopher Foxhuber, Jeremiah Foy, Joely Gath, Natalie Hammond, Timothy Henderson, Lindsay Johnson, William King, Benjamin Langan, Andrew Mann, Alishia Mitchell, Austin Norris, Gerald Robinson, Shannon Rodgers, William Schwalm, Jason Smith


4 Years: Chance Adair, Taylor Albert, Bryant Boatman, Jerry Bruce, Rene Cantu, Richard Carter, Ryan Gersanger, Tyler Haycock, Michael Hayden, Jerry Morris, Bryan Payne, Colen Pinson, Jeffrey Robertson, Joselito Santiago, Cory Trowe, John Vance

5 Years: Humza Abdul-Haqq, Anwar Aiken, Jacob Bagby, Andrew Boe, Jesse Crouse, Tammi Hambek, Brent Killian, Jeremy Madsen, Marc Massoglia, Timothy McLachlan, David Ontiveros, Brad Payne, Bradly Seideman, Donald Smith, Wesley Smith, Duane Stephenson, Jeffery White

6 Years: Cassie Bicknell, Taylor Carter, Evaristo Corona, Lori Cox, Richard Grant, Norman Jones, Daniel Paul, Nickolas Saunders, Franklin Waun, Kathleen Woods, Malcolm Young

7 Years: James Blevins, Dustin Coester, Brett Golz, Kyle Hittesdorf, Anthony Jones, Jesse Kolesik, Vicki Langford, Andrew McBride, Mickel Reeves, Shelly Rustad, Dean Schexnayder, Jason Stout, Angela Sylvia, Kenneth Thomas, Cesar Valentini, John Woods

8 Years: Kenneth Cathell, Richard Chadwell, Skip Hastings, Jimmie Huggins, Timothy Largent, Gerardo Martinez, Bernardino Osorio Vargas, Johnny Rankin, John Rood, John Rowland, Dan Smith, Cecil Traylor, Steven Williams

9 Years: Tina Castro, Sean Corr, Gwen Foster, Robert Gable, John Glover, James Maddux, Justin Moody, Brett Norris, Judson Rogers, Eva Rozezewski

10 Years: Kelvin Banks, Bruce Brewer, Lyman Brown, Mandi Favalora, Patrick Holden, Larry Jensen, Esteban Lechu, Paul Minnis, Danny Sims

11 Years: Frederick Blondiau, Stephen Brath, Michael Colburn, Vincent Frazier, Marlin Garcia, Michael Rogers, Joe Sandolav, Mark Tarr, Gary Westphal

12 Years: Patti Audet, Adelita Barajas, Tyler Batley, Robert Boyd, Michael Galla, Eric Sabatucci

13 Years: Kent Ainsworth, Brenda Caruthers, Charlene Huskey, Bartolome Marrero, Robert Martinez, Kevin Watkins

14 Years: David Bullion, Frank Davis, Roger Easterling, Kenneth Lucht, George Spencer

15 Years: Bernardo Cuevas, Walter Stromberg

16 Years: Joshua Kramer, Brad Snow

17 Years: Edward Garcia, Sonny Sweatman

18 Years: Sunil Bangari, Mark Krause, Ron Martin, John Smith, Robert Triebsch

19 Years: Micheal Davis, Bridget Liden

20 Years: Ronald Tapley

21 Years: William Carroll

22 Years: Fernando Almanza, Dick Fogliasso

23 Years: Mark Green, Steven Morgan, Billy Morris

24 Years: Mike Broussard, Herb Lamkin

27 Years: Sherri Leport

28 Years: James Crawford, Michael Howarth

29 Years: Bryan Benson

31 Years: Paul Oppel

33 Years: Jim Herman

36 Years: Steven Lang

42 Years: Jerry Brown

St. Paddy’s Day and every day - AVOID PINCH POINTS
When you pay attention to those around you, it’s amazing what rewards you will reap. Members of the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) have become the beneficiaries of such rewards in the form of a great friendship that was forged merely by paying attention to an elderly man who took the time to wave at the crews every day. That man, Charlie McCoyle, is now an honorary team member of the BLU.

For several months, the WWII Veteran cheerfully greeted the crews as they drove by, then they noticed he failed to show up for a couple of days and after checking on him, the team discovered that bad weather had not only kept him from his welcoming routine, but it kept him from getting provisions as well. They made sure he was stocked up and then, a bit later the team sadly helped him move to a retirement home where he could be around others and be better looked after.

Just recently they got back together again to celebrate the 90 year-old’s birthday with lunch and a cake. At his request, Charlie was also treated to trip on the train from Canton, North Carolina, to Asheville, North Carolina.

“It was the only birthday present he really asked for,” said BLU General Manager Darl Farris. “And we were more than happy to make his day a little more special.

“We were proud to be able to share his special day with him as a small token of our appreciation for his service to our country,” added Farris.

- Tracie VanBecelaere, Managing Editor

Blue Ridge Southern Railroad Team members helping WWII Veteran Charlie McCoyle celebrate his 90th birthday are (l-r): David Woody, track team, Brok Parham, track foreman, McCoyle, honorary team member, Brian Carnes, roadmaster, Roy Cooper, carman, Brad Hamlin, track team, and Cain Greene, trainmaster.