Watco railroads win short line safety awards

The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association’s (ASLRRA) Annual Convention held in late April provided railroaders and vendors opportunities to network and pick up valuable information. Safety was a big focus of this year’s event and many of the breakout sessions dealt with safety issues and solutions.

Safety was also a key part of the general session on April 25, with awards given out to short lines exhibiting that safety culture. Fourteen Watco railroads won Jake with Distinction Awards which means they had zero RPI’s for the year. These railroads were: Arkansas Southern Railroad, Autoa Northern Railroad, Baton Rouge Southern Railroad, Bogalusa Bayou Railroad, Boise Valley Railroad, Cicero Central Railroad, Great Northwest Railroad, Lubbock and Western Railway, Mississippi Southern Railroad, Pacific Sun Railroad, San Antonio Central Railroad, Stillwater Central Railroad, Swan Ranch Railroad, and the Vicksburg Southern Railroad.

Railroads who were named Jake Award winners beat the ASLRRA Group RPI Ratio with an RPI Ratio below 2.65. Jake Award winners were: Austin Western Railroad, Birmingham Terminal Railway, Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad, Timber Rock Railroad, and the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad.

The Jake with Distinction Award and the Jake Award were named for Lowell S. “Jake” Jacobson, a long-time advocate and leader in railroad safety. Jacobson serves as president and chief operating officer of the Copper Basin Railway in Arizona. He was the recipient of the Railway Age Railroad Engineer of the Year in 1994.

Travis Herod, Watco senior vice president safety and training, said, “It’s exciting to see 20 of our railroads being recognized for their safety records.”

Watco railroads win short line safety awards

Watco Matriarch takes trip down memory lane

Kaye Lynne Webb and her longtime friend, Bev Vogel, love to head out on a cross-country car trip once a year. When they can, they stop by one of the many operations now a part of Watco.

But a trip last month to New Orleans, Louisiana, was especially meaningful. On the way back home to Kansas, the pair decided to drop in on our Watco DeRidder Team. DeRidder is where Watco began in 1983, when Kaye Lynne’s husband, Dick Webb, started the first contract industrial switching operation west of the Mississippi River following the deregulation of the railroad industry in 1980.

“Being here brought back many memories of when and how Watco was started and how proud Dick would be of not only the DeRidder Team but also the entire Watco Team on the success achieved over the years,” Webb said. “Since DeRidder was our first location, Dick and the Team had to work very hard to make our only profit center a success. Almost 34 years later, with the same Customer and the same contract, I think you can say it worked out OK.”

Vogel said she had heard many stories about DeRidder for many years and was excited to see what all the “hoopla” was about. “Wow!” she wrote in a note to the Team about all that was done in DeRidder to serve our Customer, PCA.

However, both agreed the most impressive part of the trip was visiting with the part of the DeRidder Team they spent time with Keith LaCaze, Tony Clark, Danny Barrington, and Nicole Hicks — noting that their long tenure and enthusiasm for Watco speaks volumes. Collectively, the four have worked for Watco more than 100 years. In her own note to the Team, Webb said it was hard to realize just how big a company Watco has become.

“I’m so impressed with our Team. I finally understand how we have managed to grow from eight people to 4,500. It is unbelievable,” she said.

“It’s all because of good people like you who work hard every day to serve our Customers,” Webb said. “And you work hard because you have respect for yourself, your work, your fellow Team members, and most of all because you know how important each and every one of you is to our success.”

A second highlight was getting to eat at the Catfish Hut, a longtime institution in DeRidder of which Dick was especially fond.

“When we started in DeRidder, I thought there was only a Wal-Mart and the Catfish Hut,” she recalled. "It seemed like the only place to eat in town, and luckily Dick loved catfish. He ate at the Catfish Hut once again. And I’m glad both Watco and the Catfish Hut are still going strong in DeRidder!"

Webb summed up the experience: “Thank you all for the great trip down Memory Lane and the time you took with Bev and me. It meant a lot.”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer
KO delivers teamwork following washouts

Five inches of rain in three hours followed by intermittent rains several days later caused numerous washouts along a 20-mile stretch of track on the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (KO) in Central Kansas, putting a halt to 30 loaded grain cars headed to Abilene.

But General Manager Jimmy Patterson, Roadmaster Herb Lamkin, and Trainmaster Jeff White praised Team members and contractors alike for their hard work over several long days to make repairs.

"The call came in on Easter," Patterson said. "A citizen called to report water going over a rail, and rather than call Team members out on Easter, we went out to look on Monday morning."

Robin Combs rode the rails to locate the washouts and soon learned how widespread the problem was: Seventeen washouts occurred along the stretch east and west of Westfall.

"We got more rain than what the tubes could move under the tracks, so it backed up and started shoving on tracks and rail bed, and pushed out until dirt and rock gave way," Patterson said.

In some places, the washouts were 10 feet deep and 15 feet long.

That meant bringing in a lot of rock — nearly 2,000 tons of it.

To compound issues, vehicles with wheels couldn't be brought in, because in some places, there was no road access, and in most, sinking would have been an issue in the soft mud. That meant arranging for track hoes, track loaders, and track skid steers, as well as a rotary dump truck that rides the rails and can dump not only parallel to the track, but also perpendicular.

“We needed to backfill all the holes and realign the tracks, which meant throwing as many people at it as we could," Patterson said, even as more rain began to fall on the area at the end of the first week. "It's pouring buckets right now."

More equipment arrived the following week, including a tamper and regulator, to continue repairs. Six culverts will be added to the locations to help prevent issues in the future.

Lamkin said on the subdivision northwest of Salina, the major part that was hit was between Juneyeta and Lincoln, where bridges and culverts couldn’t handle the massive flow of water.

“There was even one bridge plugged up with straw from fields, and a couple hundred feet of track in one location washed out and was pushed completely off grade," he said.

Patterson, Lamkin, and White praised Team members who worked 12-hour days to get the tracks back in service, including Salina Section Gang Foreman Patrick Flower, and his Track.

The powerful force of the water in Central Kansas moved straw from the fields, piled it on the railroad tracks and pushed the tracks completely off grade.

Team Members Tyler Haycook and Jeff Robertson.

"We’ve really got a good group of guys who take pride in their work," Lamkin said. "They really pull through in these times of need."

Young Construction out of Cheney, Kansas, also provided valuable help.

Trainmaster Jeff White who heads up the Salina, Kansas, area, credited the Union Pacific Railroad (UP) for assistance.

“Our guys are working hard on it, but the UP also helped us by loaning power to service Customers out of Salina," he said. "It was a big help to keep things going on that end."

He praised Engineer Jim Lynn and Conductor Laramie Gahman for their contributions.

“They deserve a big shout-out," he said.

"I guess we’re like mailmen — we deal with every scope of weather. Hot, cold, snow, rain. We’ve got to get through," Lamkin said. "Our Customers depend on us."

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

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Student journalists question new principal’s credentials

Maddie Baden, daughter of Watco President and Chief Financial Officer Rick Baden and his wife, Susan, made national news in April as one of four editors-in-chief of the Pittsburg High School Booster Redux. She and her team of student journalists investigated and reported a story about the credentials of an incoming new principal; their story ultimately led to the principal’s resignation before she started. The students were the first reporters in the area to break the story.

Baden and her fellow editors were featured in the New York Times, live on Good Morning America, NPR, the Washington Post, and many other media outlets.

The group, dubbed the Pittsburg Six, were also invited to attend the annual White House Correspondents’ Dinner on April 29, in Washington, DC, as the guests of Huffington Post with all expenses paid.

"Everything we have accomplished has been a whirlwind, from the media attention to the White House Correspondents Dinner invitation," Baden said. "I am so proud of everyone who worked on this story. Even though we encountered hardships, we went with what we believed. We were pushed out of our comfort zones, which made us better writers and provided us with opportunities that are once in a lifetime."

They received advice and assistance through the reporting process from Dispatch Contributing Writer Andra Stefanoni, a longtime journalist. PHS student advisor Emily Smith recused herself because she was on the selection committee.

"It was when I was at Pittsburg High School as the editor of the Booster that I decided to become a journalist, so I was happy to step in and help advise this next generation of writers and pass on some of what I’ve learned in the field the past 25 years," Stefanoni said. "Maddie and her fellow students are top-notch young people, and I’m so proud of them and what they achieved.”

- Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer
Product: Aggregate
Used for: Highways, parking lots, buildings
Location: Texas

"You drive on it, walk on it, are in buildings made of it," says Watco Commercial Manager Chuck Carr of the Austin-Western. "It’s a big part of everyday life in Texas."

Carr is referring to aggregate — sand, gravel, crushed stone — used in producing concrete and asphalt. Mined and produced by Oldcastle Materials at a quarry in Marble Falls, Texas, it must be shipped by rail across the state to major cities including Austin, Corpus Christi, and Houston, for use in constructing highways, parking lots, and industrial, commercial, and residential buildings.

That’s where Watco comes in.

Oldcastle, using heavy machinery, moves the aggregate from the quarry to crushers and blasters, which convert it into various sizes of rock — from boulders to sand. More heavy machinery loads it into railcars and the Team on the Austin Western then moves it. All told, that’s about 40,000 railcars per year, a number that speaks to the tremendous growth occurring in Texas, said Carr, who is a native of the Lonestar State.

Recent projects for Oldcastle products include the Circuit of the Americas track in Austin, the Grand Parkway in Houston and, the Cheniere LNG export facility in Corpus Christi.

Oldcastle was founded in 1978 as the North American arm of CRH, a global building materials producer in Ireland. Oldcastle Texas President Eric Bailey said the company follows a unique business model: acquire small local materials businesses and enable them to maintain their core brand identity and leadership while bringing value to their operations with the resources of a large, multinational corporation.

Watco’s partnership with Oldcastle began in May 2014. Bailey credited Watco’s willingness to dedicate resources and to be flexible with being an important part of Oldcastle’s ability to grow the business.

"From the start, Watco has always been helpful and willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done, and has partnered consistently with us in tackling any obstacles that arise," he said. "In our business, the capacity to respond quickly and flexibly to changing circumstances is key, and Watco has proven its ability to do this through superb customer service."

Bailey noted that on several occasions, Watco retooled its fleet and added locomotives to help keep up with increased volume.

"We’ve been incredibly pleased with the customer service we have received, and look forward to our continued partnership," he said.

"Oldcastle is an aggressive company, a very forward-thinking company, and we enjoy serving them."

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

WSOR Team Members complete Watco U Primary Values Class

A group of 60 Team members from the Wisconsin Southern Railroad (WSOR) recently participated in Watco’s Primary Values Class, a class that focuses on leadership as well as the culture of Watco and the direction we’re headed as a company.

The WSOR is a fairly new addition to Watco Companies; we welcomed it to our family of short lines on Jan. 1, 2012. The WSOR is a Class II regional railroad company that operates on 800 miles of track in the southern half of Wisconsin and a small portion of northeastern Illinois.

It’s headquartered in Madison, has branch offices in Janesville and Horicon, and maintains several transload sites within its system. The WSOR transports a variety of commodities, including forest products, grain, plastics, consumer foods, paper, aggregates, chemicals, fertilizer, and liquid petroleum.

The Primary Values Class, taught at the WSOR by Angela Bunker, Nick Weber, and Amanda Whetzel, was what Bunker described as “a deep dive into the foundation principles” of Watco.

But the class wasn’t taught at desks — it was a class with hands-on activities.

“We used a ‘Team building approach that got participants up and moving,” said Bunker, who is a People Services Manager at the Madison Depot.

By the end of April, Watco U presented the Primary Values Class to three WSOR groups, with about 200 Team members completing it.

Andra Bryan Stefanoni, Contributing Writer

Gorillas in Your Midst, a group of Pittsburg State University peer health educators, worked on team building skills and concepts with Watco U trainer Nick Weber at the Watco Support Services Center in Pittsburg, Kansas.
Editor’s note: This year, we began sharing in print the #WhyWatco stories we’ve been also sharing in video via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Team Member: George Yanas
Title: Trainmaster
Location: Austin Western Railroad

Trainmaster George Yanas with the Austin Western Railroad, has been railroading for 18 years. Since 2007, he’s been with Watco. During that time, he said he’s come to realize that being a part of the Watco Team has meant the chance to see and do many things he ordinarily wouldn’t have had the chance to.

“T’ve gotten to meet new people, and there’s been an opportunity for advancement,” he said. He also has appreciated the Teamwork, he said, no matter which property he’s on or which role he’s working in.

“You’re not just a number, you’re really part of something,” he said. “I’m glad to work for a company that really cares for people who make it what it is every day.”

The AWRR operates 181 miles of track from Llano, Texas, to Giddings, Texas, with a 6.4-mile branch extending from Fairland to Marble Falls. The line dates to 1871, when the Houston and Texas Central Railroad built the Giddings to the Austin Line.

Yanas plays a role in moving nearly 49,000 carloads of commodities like aggregate, crushed limestone, calcium bicarbonate, lumber, beer, chemicals, plastics, and paper annually.

Thanks for being part of the Team, George!

To hear more #WhyWatco stories, follow us on social media! If you have a #WhyWatco story to share, email astefanoni@watco-companies.com.

George Yanas

May and June rail festivals celebrated nationally

May 6 – 7, Railroad Days in Fullerton, Fullerton, California

Once a year rail fans from all over the country come together at the Fullerton railroad depot for a weekend filled with railroad history and unique opportunities. Organized by the Southern California Railway Plaza Association since 1999, it seeks to preserve rail heritage through education and entertainment. A fully-restored and operational Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe steam engine is brought in for the festivities, and other railroad memorabilia usually is on display. Vendors sell toy trains, train t-shirts, collectibles, and model railroads abound. Details: www.scrpa.net/scrrdays.htm

Katy Days, May 26-28, Parsons, Kansas

In 1870, the first Missouri-Kansas-Texas train rolled into a new town in Southeast Kansas that would become Parsons, and the railroad would be remembered as the Katy! One-hundred forty-six years later, Parsons celebrates its railroad heritage and town history with the Katy Days Festival. It includes track building demonstrations, the High Striker Contest, a history zone, a railroad reunion, locomotive tours and passenger train rides, a tour of the Iron Horse Museum and rail yard, as well as the usual festival activities like fun runs, food vendors, sports tournaments, petting zoo, and more. Details: http://www.katydays.com/

June 3, Bradford Railroad Heritage Festival, Bradford, Ohio

The railroad was once a significant part of Bradford’s economy, employing many who manned the trains and worked in the switching yards and in the roundhouse where steam locomotives were kept and serviced between runs. This celebration of 130 years of railroad history features Penn Central, Pennsylvania Railroad and Conrail artifacts on display, historical exhibits, children’s train games and a puppet show, train videos and train vendors, model train displays, and a Thomas the Train ride. Details: http://www.ohio.org/events/bradford-railroad-heritage-festival

June 22-25, The 40th Annual Galesburg Railroad Days, Galesburg, Illinois

The railroad industry was integral in the growth of Galesburg and remains a proud symbol of the town’s heritage. The slate of events includes historical tours, flea markets, food, crafts, a toy show, and historical steam engines rolling down the track. Visitors may explore the Galesburg Railroad Museum, take a Railyard Bus Tour, watch a firemen’s water fight, hear live music, and see an antique tractor display. Details: http://www.galesburgrailroad-days.org/
WSOR wins Marketing Award

It was an exciting moment for Watco Team Members when the name of one of our short lines, the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR), was announced as a winner of a 2017 Marketing Award at the annual American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRA) conference in Grapevine, Texas. Brad Peot, WSOR Commercial Manager submitted the entry and was on hand to accept the award on behalf of the WSOR.

The award was given for two projects involving the movement of military vehicles to and from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, that were non-traditional in nature and required large amounts of pre-planning, preparation, and quick adaptation in the field. What was unique about this project was the number of Watco Teams that played a part in making everything fall into place.

The first project involved a shipment of vehicles to the Port of Baltimore for a foreign military sale which required many months of planning and negotiation to move forward with a trial move. The trial ended up proving the value of rail, and shortly thereafter the WSOR car department was installing updated chains on a fleet of cars to handle the business. The Norfolk Southern was a key ally in capturing this business and they stepped up to the plate by supplying additional cars and investing in the required chains for the fleet. This project is still ongoing, and the WSOR Operations Team makes special runs to the ramp on off-service days to expedite the movement of these cars. Building on the success of the project, the WSOR Team formulated a plan to compete on another portion of business that was currently moving entirely via truck.

The second project associated with the award was for capturing a movement of inbound vehicles to Oshkosh that were to be rebuilt. This project morphed from a manifest carload opportunity to one that would have to move in a unit train consist instead. When a final word was conveyed on the initiation of a move, the Watco Team had less than three weeks to prepare and poor winter weather required some additional prep work to make the unloading site usable. In short, the unit train was brought to Oshkosh in sections where the vehicles were craned off one-by-one with moving the train for each lift. Once on the ground, a fleet of heavy-duty tow trucks shuttled the vehicles across town to the Customer’s holding lot.

In the end, the project required an immense amount of coordination from various Watco Teams, connecting railroads, outside crane and towing contractors, and the final Customer. Watco had Team members from not only the Oshkosh Terminal and the WSOR, but also from the Omaha, Nebraska, terminal and the Pittsburg, Kansas, office to assist on the project. The Watco Team had encountered numerous hurdles on this project as well, but overcame them all. The Watco Team will be unloading another unit train the first week of May and the plan is to move one more train early this summer.

The movement of miliary vehicles to and from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, resulted in creating a ongoing move in conjunction with Watco partner, the Norfolk Southern Railway.

Career Connections

The WSOR recently hosted about 50 high school students at Career Connections at Lakeshore Technical College in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The students, representing several area high schools, were interested in potential careers in the transportation industry. Watco Team members Preston Nelson, Joe Via, and Angela Bunker were happy to help inform them.

Retirement

Above: Watco Team members Shellee Currier, Zee VanBecelaere, Dustin Coester, and Lee Waun recently helped Carol Bauer (left) celebrate her retirement after four decades with Monarch Cement, a Kansas Customer that Watco has served on the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad for many years.

Brad Peot (center) accepted a Marketing Award on behalf of the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad last month from the ASLRA at their national convention in Grapevine, Texas.
2017 Graduations

Congratulations to the following graduates

- Layci Adcock: Daughter of Kevin Adcock; 167 gang surface and line foreman Twin Falls, Idaho; graduating from Boise State University, Boise, Idaho, with a Bachelor degree in History.
- Rayleigh Barnes: Daughter of Tom Barnes; Business Development Associate for Aspen Transportation LLC in Jonesboro, AR; graduating from West Side High School, Jonesboro, AR.
- Joshyln Y. Belk: Daughter of Larry M. Belk, Supervisor of Field Operations-CHB at Ascend Materials in Alvin, TX; graduating from Alvin Community College, Alvin TX with an Associate of Applied Science in Diagnostic Cardiovascular Sonography - Pediatric Echocardiography.
- Ethan Burke: Son of Ryan Burke, Information Technology Helpdesk Analyst in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from Parsons High School, Parsons, KS.
- Dawson Chenoweth: Son of Michelle Fellers, Assistant Chief Dispatcher in Wichita, KS; graduating from Maize High School, Maize, KS.
- Noah Collier: Nephew of Jonathan Hamm, Locomotive Engineer in Prattville, AL; graduating from Prattville High School, Prattville, AL.
- Thomas Coward: Son of Ben Coward, CMO in Houston, TX; graduating from Goose Creek Memorial High School, Baytown, TX.
- Leah Gogniat: Daughter of John Gogniat, VP Commercial in Monroeville, PA; graduating from University of Dayton, Dayton, OH with a BS in Marketing and a Minor in Communications.
- Madeline Goldsberry: Daughter of Bill Goldsberry, VP of Operations, Division 1 and 2 in Birmingham, AL; graduating from Kingman Academy of Learning, Kingman, AZ.
- Joshua Hayes: Son of Thomas Hayes, Assistant General Counsel in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from St. Mary’s Colgan High School, Pittsburg, KS.
- Cameron Alexander Johns: Son of Todd Johns, Manager of Safety and Operating Practices in Tuscaloosa, AL; graduating from Tuscaloosa Christian School, Tuscaloosa, AL.
- Graham Marc Massoglia: Son of Marc Massoglia, Senior Vice President Marketing & Sales; graduating from The University of Florida with a Bachelor Science in Statistic and a Minor in Business.
- Ryan Eric Neal: Son of Norman Neal, Switchman and TSIC Leader from the PCA location in DeRidder, LA; graduating from Anacoco High School, Anacoco, LA.
- Carly Rayne: Daughter of Kim Bourgeois, Sr., CSR in Baton Rouge, LA; graduating from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a concentration in Scientific Inquiry and a Minor in Biology.
- Connor Thomas Smith: Son of Rob Smith, Business Solutions Analyst in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from St. Mary’s Colgan High School, Pittsburg, KS.
- Kathryn Elizabeth Smith: Daughter of Rob Smith, Business Solutions Analyst in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from Truman State University, Kirksville, MO, with a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science.
- Gabrielle Shea VanBeccelaere: Daughter of Tracie VanBeccelaere, Communications Director in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from St. Mary’s Colgan High School, Pittsburg, KS.
- Garrett Gerard VanBeccelaere: Son of Tracie VanBeccelaere, Communications Director in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from St. Mary’s Colgan High School, Pittsburg, KS.
- Heather Amber Villarreal: Daughter of Hilda Morin, Assistant General Manager-WTPS in Refugio, TX; graduating from Texas AM College Station with a Bachelor’s of Science in Biomedical Sciences and a Minor in Neuroscience.
- Keyth Waltrip: Son of Jamie Wilson, Risk Management Claims & Insurance Compliance Manager in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from Pittsburg High School, Pittsburg, KS.
- Jake Webb: Son of Watco CEO Rick and Stacey Webb and grandson of Kaye Lynne Webb and the late Watco Founder Dick Webb, Pittsburg, KS; graduating from Pittsburg High School, Pittsburg, KS.
- Jacob Wiebelhaus: Son of John Wiebelhaus, Terminal Manager in Refugio, TX; graduating from Victoria East High School, Victoria, TX.
- Madison Williams: Daughter of Gina Williams, Executive Assistant in Pittsburg, KS; graduating from Liberal High School, Liberal, MO.

Alabama Southern and Blue Ridge Southern Team Members take Watco 101 course

Nick Weber and I, representing the Watco U Team, recently hosted a 101 Course at our operation in Asheville, N.C., designed to reinforce the learning experience through Teamwork and engagement.

On the docket: Watco’s history, culture, fundamentals of leadership, our On the docket: Watco’s history, culture, fundamentals of leadership, our foundation principles of Customer First, setting SMART goals, discovering personality types and communication styles, group dynamics and Team dysfunction, motivation and rewards, the utilization of TSIC Teams, interviewing, and personal development.

Sounds like a lot to absorb in three days, doesn’t it! We strived to make it hands-on and engaging with a variety of teaching and training techniques, including instructor presentations, Team member presentations, and activities that reinforce the learning experience through Teamwork.

Following up the course was a Friday morning session on CPR taught by Nick Weber.

When the class began, many of the participants were from the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) with just two from the Alabama Southern Railroad (ABS) and you could tell the BLU Team had worked together and had a good working relationship. By the end of the training that relationship had spread to the others and you couldn’t even tell they were from different locations.

BLU General Manager Darl Farris sent an email with the following note: “Thank you very much for traveling to Asheville to hold the Watco 101, First Aid, and CPR classes. The group from the BLU spoke highly of your many talents and wanted me to make sure I expressed their appreciation for your efforts. They are still talking about several items they gleaned from both courses, especially Watco 101.”

Congratulations to all who completed the course: Roadmaster Josh Wil- liams (ABS), Trainmaster Brian Ezell (ABS), Locomotive Mechanic-TSIC Jorden Johnson (BLU), Conductor/Engineer-TSIC Josh Smiley (BLU), Track Laborer David Woody (BLU), and Trainmasters Nathan Higgins and Cain Greene (BLU).

-Cris Hatcher, Sr. Manager, Training & Development

Team members who attended the Watco 101 course in Asheville, North Carolina were (l-r): Alabama Southern Railroad’s Josh Williams, Roadmaster, and Brian Ezell, Trainmaster. The Blue Ridge Southern Railroad’s Jorden Johnson, Locomotive Mechanic-TSIC, Josh Smiley, Conductor/Engineer-TSIC; David Woody, Track Laborer; Nathan Higgins, Trainmaster; and Cain Greene, Trainmaster.
**Anniversaries**

Congratulations to the following Team members celebrating anniversaries this month.

**1 YEAR:** Parker Atkins, Colby Button, Jorge Castaneda, Nicholas Cole, Roy Cooper, Christian Daniels, Donna Eder, Brandon Eli, James Fossett, Dallas Frantzen, Blake Gadbury, Aaron Garcia, Jeremy Gibson, Santonio Goins, Joshua Golight-ley, Tony Herman, Michael Hoops, Shay Hyatt, Matthew Magee, Chris Martin, Diego Muniz, Thomas Power, James Ramsey, Ryan Rawlinson, Katherine Richey, Mitchell Samuel, Tyler Sessions, Amanda Thomas, Fred Thompson, Shane Thompson, Douglas Toller, Scott Young

**2 YEARS:** Jason Abbott, Cameron Allen, Ansil Antoine, Joshua Armel, Brandon Austin, Lucas Bellamy, John Biddle, Miguel Cantu, Miguel Adrian Cantu, Gardner Chad, Shanna Damessworth, Robert Garza, Gerald Harrison, Zachary Hilton, Garrett Hoover, Melissa Hunt, Adam Johnson, Andrew Johnson, Dennis Johnson, Taylor Johnston, Tecoreece King, Johnni Lawrence, Pedro Luna, Cameron Macmeil, Paul Martin, Michael Miley, Omar Reyes, Corey Ritterhouse, Michael Robert, Kelly Schumann, Adrian Serrano, Jennifer Simpson, Matthew Spraberry, Hunter West

**3 YEARS:** Ryan Albracht, David Alvarado, Marques Anderson, Robert Blevins, Pamela Canan, William Chamberlain, Lloyd Christen, Marcus Connelly, Aaron Davis, Derrick Davis, Caleb Dellesega, Christine Flanagan, Gabriel Gonzales, Sharon Hansen, Kevin Hedrick, Gerald Hoffman, Michael Holland, Christopher Kleeman, Scott Korth, Dave Kunes, Chad Lanford, Robert Leeper, Brandon Lockley, Matthew Lunn, Christopher Maxwell, John McRae, Marcos Nunez, Christopher Nunelley, Adam Oveson, Sherman Owens, Jerry Quintana, John Ray, Pamela Reidel, Joseph Ryder, Ryan Shockley, Jacob Short, Dwayne Smith, TraQuiesha Swan, Karrie Torina, Jerry Waun, Jason Weber

**4 YEARS:** Jay Anderson, Jordan Brown, Dino Candillas, Teresa Coleman, Gary Doxtator, Thomas Fabis, Melissa Gardner, Tabitha Hansen, Kris Hemby, Jeff Huser, Willis Jones, Roy Lanthorn, Mal Moland, Floyd Russell, Henry Sanchez, Cole Schulz, Lawrence Shinavar, Michael Smith, Jessica Swafford, Zachary Woolridge

**5 YEARS:** Timothy Boyd, Trinity Campbell, Colton Carr, John Davis, Tim Enayati, Daniel Farr, Mickey Goodney, Denon Green, Robert Groth, Tashata Jackson, Jerome Lawson, Raul Lazo, Jerry Lowe, Marcus McCalman, William Patterson, Daniel Perez, Tyler Pruitt, Matthew Tarwater, Christopher Thomas, Christopher Thayer, Meri Webb

**6 YEARS:** Joseph Bradley, Michael Corbell, Wesley Dale, Robert Dixon, David Harris, Wesley Lindell, Christopher Miller, Frank Nickowski, Kenneth Powell, James Richards, Gary Roberts, Robby Rodriguez, Samuel Rodriguez, Jack Scott, Terence Snell, Jeremy Stegner, Eric Thurlow, Alan Wilmouth

**7 YEARS:** Mario Bretado, Kristopher Colley, Matthew Collins, Alejandro Fonseca, Adam Hall, Timothy Herbert, Joshua Holt, Gerald LaBrec, Derek Penner, Latonya Smith, Jerri Titus, Terry Wall, Kyle Whitman

**8 YEARS:** Kevin Anselmi, John Matteucci

**9 YEARS:** Randal Barrios, Nalia Jenkins, Melanie Miller

**10 YEARS:** Michael Hubbs, Ricardo Leija, Kenneth McGarity, Danyale Norman, Jeffrey Raker, Matthew Smith, Chris Spear, George Yamas

**11 YEARS:** Jason Danz, Charles Davidson, Nancy Kibow, Matthew Kose, Hugh Pea, Dan Sanger, Keith Schlotman, Nicholas Zerebny

**12 YEARS:** Aaron Coester, Steven Conrad, Douglas Corbin, John Gaither, Evan Groth, Timothy Groth, Ken Keiji, John Macc Sed, Jason Noll, Ron Willman

**13 YEARS:** Aaron Hawkins, Amy Parady, Melissa Rose, Bradley Walker, Lance Williams

**14 YEARS:** Matthew Feter

**15 YEARS:** Michael Greenwald, John Johnson, James Lilly

**16 YEARS:** Enrique Castillo, Richard Kelly, Duane Spurrier, Neil Waguespack, Mark Williams

**17 YEARS:** Ed McKeenhe, Chuck Shaffer

**18 YEARS:** Robert Corneh, Vicky Crook, Terrence Reid, Casey Thrall

**19 YEARS:** Stanley Bryant, Thomas Lipp, Douglas Marshall, David Muth, Jay Parsons

**20 YEARS:** Irmeo Basotto, Scott Davis, Douglas Falker, Calvin Jiles, Sean Nally

**21 YEARS:** John Snow

**22 YEARS:** Barbara Cady, Cesar Gutierrez

**25 YEARS:** Birdie Thomas, Walter Tisher

**27 YEARS:** Terry Schiska

**28 YEARS:** Michael Brown, William Gray

**29 YEARS:** Randall McPherson, Todd Mulrooney

**30 YEARS:** Terry Market

**31 YEARS:** Mark McClellan, Jay Przewuiki

**32 YEARS:** Danny Barrington, Patrick Ray

**34 YEARS:** Kathleen Kabay

**38 YEARS:** Michael Roberts, Donald Walston

**39 YEARS:** Jose Acosta, Frank Jones

**44 YEARS:** Braden Seese

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**Deaths**

James Ether Ferrin

James Ether Ferrin, entered into eternal life Monday Feb. 27, 2017, at the Scottsdale Osborn Medical Center, following a brief illness. Jimmy was 37. Jimmy was the son of Watco Team Member Ivan Ferrin, a driver at the Glendale, Arizona, Terminal.

Jimmy came into this world on Christmas morning of 1979 in Phoenix, born to Carolyn Whitcotton Ferrin and Ivan Ferrin. He grew up and obtained his formal education there. Following high school, Jimmy obtained work with Fry's Food Stores as a customer service associate, cashiering and a deli clerk. Jimmy's work ethic soon became very evident as he applied for and was promoted to pharmacy technician, which became his calling in life.

Jimmy leaves to mourn: his father and stepmother, Ivan and Clara Ferrin; his siblings, Chuck (Gaby), Derrick, Jason, Jennifer Davis (John) and Jonathan (Sharynn); three step sisters, Cress, Clarissa and Stephanie; his maternal grandmother, Dorothy Whitcotton; nine nieces and nephews, and numerous stepnieces and nephews.

Jimmy was welcomed into Heaven by: his mother, Carolyn; a sister, Sharla Hightower; his paternal grandparents, Ramona and Ray Ferrin; and his maternal grandfather, Norace Whitcotton.

Jimmy's funeral services were held March 10, 2017.

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**Births**

Thomas Vladimir White

Jarred White and Meghan Whalen are proud to announce the birth of a son, Thomas Vladimir White. Thomas was born on April 4, 2017, and he weighed 6 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 18 inches long.

Jarred is a conductor at the Austin Western Railroad.

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**Magnolia Claire Holland**

Michael and Natalie Holland are proud to announce the birth of a daughter, Magnolia Claire Holland. Magnolia was born on April 5, 2017, and weighed 7 lbs., 13 oz., and was 19.5 inches long.

Michael is an engineer with the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad working out of Winfield, Kansas.

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Michael Hayes named Weigand Scholar

Michael Hayes, the son of Watco Associate General Counsel Tom Hayes, has been named a Weigand Trust Scholar. Michael, a native of Pittsburg, Kansas, who worked as an intern at Watco, graduated summa cum laude from the University of Dallas then began work on a Ph.D. at the University of Kansas. Last summer, he began law school at KU and has received numerous awards.

His wife, Erin, just completed her master’s degree in education from Pittsburg State University. They are the parents of twin girls, born last fall. They live in Overland Park, Kansas.
Buoyed by participation in three blood drives to date, Team members at Watco’s Houston Division plan to make it a permanent part of their efforts to make a positive impact beyond work.

On Feb. 20, we hosted our third blood drive in partnership with the American Red Cross. During this event, whole blood and red cell plasma donations were collected. The opportunity to become a part of helping to save or prolong a life is one that cannot be sufficiently described with only words. Whole blood and red cell plasma donations were collected. The donations will be processed, tested, stored, and distributed. The samples collected might help in the process of treating patients with various diseases and conditions.

Blood samples help to affect not only the lives of recipients, but the families and friends of those who are a part of the lives of those recipients. Blood donations not only help to sustain a life, but aid in allowing the recipient to strive, as well. The samples given by the participants are a growing part of the realization of transforming hope into action.

We are proud to have been a catalyst in moving steps closer to empowering and saving lives. We look forward to our next blood drive, and are encouraged by the momentum to making the blood drive a continuous part of the Houston Division’s effort to making a mark in communities around us and beyond.

- Jennifer Sévère, Greens Port Industrial Park Operations Admin Analyst