by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

A prevalent item in the news recently has been the Union Pacific 4141 locomotive, which carried President George H.W. Bush to his final resting place in College Station, Texas. What many people don’t know, is that the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad had the honor of painting the unit that was named after the former president. Although it was all over the news when the locomotive pulled the funeral train, back in 2005 when it was being painted, it was all very undercover.

Gerald Tjepkema has been a painter at the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad’s paint shop in Horicon, Wisconsin, since 1999. He said in 2005, when the unit was painted, it was kept under the radar. When the unit was completed, it was sent down the tracks covered by tarps to keep the design secret until it reached its destination in College Station.

“It was pretty secretive on that part of it. We had meetings on the side here – it was very top secret,” said Tjepkema.

He said it took a mere two weeks for the six-man team to paint the locomotive, with another week of touch-ups and finishing work. The locomotive was painted in the Air Force One color scheme with George Bush 41 painted on the side. It was painted in honor of the President and the George Bush Presidential Library.

Of all the locomotives that Tjepkema has painted in his career, the 4141 has by far been the most recognized, but others have had a large following as well. In 2002, two locomotives were painted by the Team at the Horicon shop to commemorate the Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The locomotives carried the Olympic flame on four separate trips, promoting the spirit of the Winter Games. The train traveled more than 3,200 miles through 11 states. There were ten modes of transportation carrying the flame including a dogsled, horse-drawn sleigh, and a covered wagon.

Tjepkema and his coworkers also painted what are called the Heritage units. Union Pacific had six SD70ACe’s painted to commemorate different rail lines that they acquired throughout the years. The lines include the Missouri Pacific, Missouri-Kansas, Denver and Rio Grande, Southern Pacific, Western Pacific, and Chicago & North Western. Like the 4141, they were also sent out covered in tarps until reaching their final destination.

Tjepkema said the heritage-type units were the easiest ones to paint. They were new and came in primed and ready to go. It was the refurbished units like the WSOR business cars that were a little harder to complete.

Mark Krause, car shop leadman, said, “We had to do a lot of work on those on the car repair side and then the paint shop crews completed all the interior and exterior work.”

The painting team also painted several of the WSOR’s red and white locomotives, as well as some for other short line railroads.

“I was working with a good group of guys that we had here, and I enjoyed working with them,” said Tjepkema.
Watco's Ithaca Central Railroad begins operations

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Watco received an early Christmas present on December 8, the startup of the Ithaca Central Railroad (ITHR). The ITHR is Watco's first short line to operate in the state of New York.

General manager Michael Cooper was excited to be back in New York after being in Oklahoma for the past few years. “I had been looking at some different opportunities within the company and when they said they were starting up a railroad in Ithaca, I jumped at the chance to manage it,” said Cooper. “When I was growing up, I lived in both New York and Pennsylvania so it’s nice to be back in the area and closer to family.”

The railroad's first move was delivering cars to the Cargill plant and switching cars for them. After they completed switching the cars, an employee from Cargill congratulated them on their work and how efficiently they performed the job.

Bill Goldsberry, vice president of operations, was there for the start-up and said it was cold and windy, but things went really well.

“Thomas (Nicholson) and Mike (Cooper) took the first train on Monday carrying 29 loads and one empty. They had a 1.62% grade, which is steep, considering it was 4 miles long with curves, and they were able to keep it going at no less than 12 mph. We were told it couldn’t be done, but we made it happen.”

Watco leases the railroad from the Norfolk Southern Railway. The ITHR consists of 48.8 miles of track running north from Sayre, Penn., to Ludlowville, N.Y.

The ITHR interchanges with the Norfolk Southern Railway at Sayre and will ship approximately 12,000 carloads of product annually. Commodities shipped on the line include salt, coal, plastics, and magnesium chloride.

The Ithaca Central Railroad on day one of startup running through Spencer, New York, to Lansing New York.

The Ithaca Central Railroad arrives in Sayre, Pennsylvania, on the old Lehigh Valley east bound main.

Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad Team Members go back to school

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Two Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (KO) Team Members went back to school in December, but not as students, this go-around they filled the role of guest speaker. Enterprise Elementary School in Wichita, Kansas, contacted the railroad and asked if anyone would be interested in visiting the school to read to the classes and talk about what they did.

General manager Jason Danz talked to Team Safety and Improvement Committee (TS&IC), and chairman, Drew Otto, and committee member, Kraig Blackwelder, volunteered to be guest speakers. They entertained three second grade classes, a total of 75 students, by reading them "The Polar Express." "The Polar Express" is a story about a Christmas Eve adventure to the North Pole on a train called the Polar Express. Afterwards, the Team Members talked about railroading and answered questions from the students.

“They asked a lot of questions about railroading in general, since we read “The Polar Express,” they wanted to know if we drank hot chocolate on the train like they did in the story,” said Otto. “I told them that I did because I don’t like coffee and coffee’s what most of the other railroaders drink when it’s cold outside.”

Otto said he would definitely do it again and that he’s already been volunteered by his mom, who teaches at another Wichita school, to go to that school and provide his services as a guest speaker.

They finished off their time with the students by handing out Christmas stockings filled with a wooden train whistle, a candy cane, and a couple of other KO and Watco goodies.
The Vicksburg Southern Railroad (VSOR) is pleased to welcome a new Customer, Vicksburg Forest Products. Vicksburg Forest purchased the former Anderson-Tully Lumber mill back in May of 2018. Since then, they have been diligently working to retool the mill from a hard wood mill to the yellow pine mill that it is now.

The VSOR spotted Vicksburg Forest's first car on November 29, 2018, and sent it on its way to Michigan to be treated. Each month, the company expects to receive approximately 12-15 empty center beam cars and send outbounds loaded with the yellow pine.

VSOR and the Kansas City Southern Railroad teamed up to help train and coach the new Customer on processes such as loading, billing, and ordering new cars.

“It took a great partnership and teamwork between VSOR and KCS to bring this to fruition and we look forward to being a part of growing the Vicksburg Forest Product business here on the VSOR,” said Jeff Buck, VSOR general manager.

Pittsburg area first graders treated to Christmas train ride

"Jingle Bells" played on the speakers as train cars from the 1950’s era rolled through rural Southeast Kansas on a cold December morning. The cargo aboard the cars was the most precious that could be carried on any train, approximately 300 giggling first graders.

Watco’s All Aboard Foundation and The Heart of the Heartlands joined forces to not only teach area kids about railroad safety, but to give them the opportunity to create a memory of a train ride that many will never experience again.

Children were encouraged to wear their pajamas to create an experience similar to the children in the story, "The Polar Express", a movie about the magic of Christmas. Heart of the Heartland members dressed in period train conductor uniforms punched special tickets the children were given as they enjoyed sugar cookies and water provided by Ron's Supermarket.

Watco "Elves" handed out bells to each of the children as they got off the Christmas Train. Santa could wave at the kids as they rode by.

When the children disembarked, Watco Team Members handed each one a jingle bell with a tag that said, "the bell still rings for those who truly believe," another reference to the Christmas movie.

Solutions for a healthier new year

With the New Year, we are usually inspired to set resolutions for ourselves that don’t always last. The fear of failure or the thought of how much work will be required can be overwhelming, but if you have a strategic plan, you can break those goals into small, daily achievements that will lead to success over time.

There are many resources available to help you come up with a plan, one of those being the company that wants to keep us healthy as much as anyone, Watco’s insurance provider, Blue Cross and Blue Shield. It’s more cost effective to prevent health issues than it is to resolve them once they occur and have possibly already done damage.

You can get information on the Watco website using the Careers/Team Members tab and the Health Benefits link. Click on that link, then on the Check HRA Balances and Claims tab, and select Blue Cross and Blue Shield. When you get to that page, there is a link for Member Discounts and Health & Wellness. The Member Discounts page offers discounts that can help you lead a healthier lifestyle. There are links to wellness practitioners (chiropractors, massage therapists, fitness centers, and more).

The Health and Wellness link has food and nutrition information which offers cooking tips and recipes, and a diet center with numerous links to diet plans and creating healthier eating habits.

Starting a healthier lifestyle does take time, but the benefits are worth it and once you get going it will all become second nature.
Ann Arbor Railroad Team celebrates Christmas with toys and a trip to the zoo

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

The Ann Arbor Railroad’s Team celebrated Christmas the way many kids would want to, with toys and a trip to the zoo. The toy portion of the celebration was conducted by the location’s Team Safety and Improvement Committee, who conducted their third annual Toys for Tots Drive this December. The donated toys were delivered to a drop-off site and then distributed to area children in need for the Christmas holiday. The event received a great amount of support from the Ann Arbor Team, who were excited to help provide a better Christmas for children who might not have had anything at all.

John Vance, Ann Arbor general manager, said, “The generosity and selflessness of our Team and their dedication in always looking for ways to give back, makes the Ann Arbor Railroad a special place to work.”

The Ann Arbor Team did something a little different for their third annual Ann Arbor Company Christmas Party; they went to the Toledo Zoo. The zoo’s display, called the Lights Before Christmas, has been voted best zoo lights in the nation. Approximately 115 Team Members and guests were treated to a night of zoo Christmas lights, dinner, and Santa came by and brought presents to those who were on the good list.

Vance said, “It was refreshing to be able to push the pause button and show our appreciation to the men and women who bring their best to work every day. We are very blessed to work for a company such as Watco where everyone counts, and hard work is recognized. We cannot thank our Team Members enough!”

GO GREEN
SAVE GREEN

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

The thing to remember is it all adds up. Take for instance, the Watco newsletter. There are approximately 4,500 copies printed and mailed out each month. Not only does the financial cost add up but the cost to our environment is impacted as well. Most copies are thrown away after reading and hopefully recycled, but most likely not.

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

If you have any questions about going green you can contact tvan@watco.com.

Sunset on the VSOR

The Vicksburg Southern Railroad (VSOR) was one of the Watco locations who had the opportunity to host the Kansas City Southern Railway Holiday Express on their line. VSOR General manager Jeff Buck took this picturesque photo of the special train at sunset as guests lined up to view the festive six-car train.

KAW Customer provides Christmas luncheon

At Watco, we appreciate our Customers for letting us provide service to them, but on the Kawk River Railroad (KAW), we have a great Customer who continues to go out of his way to make our team feel special.

Joe Weigel, with Advantage Metals, stopped by the KAW office the week before Christmas with an entire lunch spread to wish the Team a Merry Christmas and thank them for the service they provide. Joe has done this more than once and the Team at the KAW enjoy having him visit their office.

“I like to let them know how much they are appreciated,” said Weigel. “It was a great day with our friends at Watco.”

The KAW’s track maintenance provider, Mike Guthrie, from Musselman & Hall, was also able to join the Team in their celebration.

Ann Arbor Railroad Team celebrates Christmas with toys and a trip to the zoo

Top photo: Team members got to see the beautiful light display at the Toledo Zoo before they enjoyed a dinner together (bottom photo).
Ann Arbor wins outbound carrier award

Commodity: Automobiles
Customer: Chrysler, General Motors, Nissan, Volkswagen
Location: Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Ann Arbor Railroad has an interesting history of starting out as a Class I railroad with railcar ferries, but now, the line’s main focus is moving finished vehicles. The Ann Arbor, or Annie, as some affectionately call it, specializes in finished vehicle logistics for major U.S. automotive manufacturers.

The line’s general manager, John Vance, said his team is responsible for the inventory, loading, storing, and shipping of automobiles for FCA (Fiat Chrysler Automobiles), General Motors, Nissan, and Volkswagen. They also deliver special order cars to the contractors responsible for adding nerf bars, pinstriping, specialty wheel covers, and other extras. The Team blocks railcars and provides air testing for more efficient delivery to their three Class I partners: Canadian National, Norfolk Southern, and CSXT.

The Ann Arbor provides service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Vance said the automotive manufacturers used to shut down operations in July and December to prepare for the new models coming out, but he said with the economy being so good and sales strong the business has been steady throughout the year.

“Jeep Wranglers are a flagship vehicle for FCA and there’s always a high demand, so we handle that one more than any other,” said Vance. “They’re introducing the Gladiator in April, which is the truck version of the Wrangler, and we believe that it will be very popular as well.”

The Ann Arbor also provides creative logistics solutions to the manufacturers at times when network capacity becomes strained. In situations where the number of vehicles to be shipped exceeds current network capacity, the Ann Arbor provides additional distribution locations able to accommodate surges within the network, providing the Customers with a reliable and efficient solution by keeping vehicles close to the shipping origin.

Because of their ability to provide Customer-specific solutions like the one above, the Ann Arbor recently received the FCA 2018 Innovative Outbound Carrier of the Year award at FCA’s annual Logistics Carrier Conference. The award was presented to the Team for their exceptional performance in creating quick and effective supply chains solutions for vehicle launches, maintenance programs, and other logistics challenges aiding FCA in getting their products to market in an efficient and safe manner.

“The ‘Whatever it Takes’ and ‘Can do’ attitude we at the Ann Arbor Railroad have always responded to our Customer with has not gone unnoticed. FCA knows that if they have a problem, we will go the extra mile to ensure there are no disruptions in the ultimate goal of getting their products out to the customer,” said Chris Boatman, automotive director.

Vance added, “It took the teamwork, flexibility, and dedication of the entire Ann Arbor Team in coming together to support and help our Customer grow. This flexibility with our Team also helps improve internal relations as well helping us adapt to the changing market. This has been a great example of an entire Team living out the Customer First Foundation Principals both on the good and bad days.”
Watco Team Member flies the flag as he works his way through the States

By Jay Benedict
Digital Communication and Social Media Specialist

Engineer/conductor Elvin Rivera likes to stay on the move. In the three-plus years he’s been with Watco, he’s held several different positions and been stationed in states all across the central U.S. His most recent stop is on one of Watco’s newest startups, the Decatur & Eastern Illinois Railroad (DREI).

Elvin got into railroading with Railserve in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He worked with them for about a year when he saw an opportunity open up on the South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (SKOL). He started as a conductor and about a year later he went to engineer school and became certified to run locomotives. Being based in the Tulsa area, he ran on both the SKOL and the Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC), which he enjoyed.

Looking for something a little different, in January 2018, Elvin became a Watco Go Teamer. Go Teamers travel to locations all across the Watco network where extra help is needed. His first assignment was on the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (KO), in the Scott City, Kansas area, where he spent 45 days.

“That was definitely a good experience. It was something very, very different. I got to see a different territory and learn some new things. That was pretty exciting,” said Elvin. “They haul a lot more grain on the KO than they do on the SKOL. Every town had those big silos right on the track and they were all our Customers. It wasn’t like anything I’d ever seen before.”

Then, when the acquisition of the DREI was announced, Elvin talked it over with his family and decided to apply. The rest, as they say, is history. Elvin was engineer on the day of the DREI’s startup, September 8, and he was the first Watco Team Member to move cars on the line from Decatur to Paris, Ill.

“We went up to start preparing in the summer, and the family was excited,” Elvin said. “We were looking for something different, some change. My wife wanted to move out of state and wanted some change, and when the opportunity popped up I went for it.”

The family, his wife, Janee, and three kids, Nikoli, eight months, Aiden, three, and Kamille, seven, now live outside Decatur, Ill., where the DREI is headquartered. Before moving there, they spent about ten years in Oklahoma and were originally from Texas.

“I think the three year old might follow in dad’s footsteps. He loves trains. I call him a little rail roamer with how much loves trains. And he loves to come up and watch dad drive his train any chance he gets,” Elvin said.

You can always tell when Elvin’s driving too, because he always has his American flag attached to the lead locomotive, blowing in the wind. He’s become a bit of a local celebrity.

Railfans from all across the area regularly share the great photos they’ve taken of Elvin’s trains and his flag.

“I’ve gotten to know some of them and gotten close with a few. The railfans are pretty big up here. I saw them on the Stillwater Central side, but not like up here,” Elvin said. “They’ll talk to you and tell you the history of the line. That’s pretty cool to get that information from the locals and you can tell they’re glad we’re here.”

Elvin started flying his flag in 2017, just as something different, and it’s been all over the place. It’s run on the SKOL and SLWC, but it didn’t make it for his time on the KO. Now, it’s been all over Eastern Illinois and Western Indiana.

“You don’t see that a lot on train. UP (Union Pacific) has their flags painted on the side but I wanted to do something different to show that I’m proud of where I’m at and proud to represent it,” Elvin said. “I thought it would be something eye-catching and something that people would enjoy, and gives the company good representation.”

As a kid, Elvin always liked trains, but didn’t originally have the railroad career path in mind. He originally went to an aviation school and was certified as an aircraft mechanic. After working different jobs, the railroad came into his life and he hasn’t looked back especially, since joining Watco.

“It just feels like family, not corporate. You know, we help each other out. The safety culture is great too,” Elvin said. “I think compared to other railroads, we have a great safety culture. What we do is dangerous but we take care of each other.”

Several Watco Team Members were able to get into the Christmas spirit railroad style. Kansas City Southern’s Holiday Express and the Canadian Pacific Holiday Train both traveled through many Watco locations as they made their way throughout their networks. Watco was a sponsor of the KCS Holiday Express, which provides gift cards to the Salvation Army at the communities they stop in.
Congratulations to the following Team Members celebrating anniversaries this month.

1 Year: Tyler Ackerson, Jonathan Audsley, Michael Barajas, Robert Campbell, John Dellinger, Alvaro Diaz, Gregory Ferguson, Jonathan Hamm, Matthew Hayes, Jaime Henry, James Young, James Carter, Jorge Gonzalez, Michael Beatty, John Falk, John Pond

2 Years: Jennifer Alons, Derek Batterton, Justin Cole, Cooper Cose, Stephen Dominguez, Kyle Gilchrist, Tyler Hamilton, Clyde Harris, Esteban Hernandez, Isaac Jaramillo, Kathleen Lankey, Leslie Liberty, Shawna Mateo, Dean Matuska, Laura McNichol, Joel Meyer, Efrain Padilla, James Riggs, Timothy Stahlhut, Jake Thomson, Shaun Toopes, Chancellor Trice, J Bonifacio Vieyra, Earl Walter, Shayne Wood, Oscar Zarazua

3 Years: Michael Aleknewicus, Mitchell Alfred, Danny Breazeale, Joshua Breth, Jeremy Cazes, William Ethridge, Brady Hutching, Joseph Johnson, Sue King, Charles March, Justin Marr, Lance McHan, Ryan Moore, Tung Nguyen, Adam Pope, Daniel Roth, Joe Valle, Richard Wampler, Neal Ward, Kolab Winkler, Ryan Yanez

4 Years: Melissa Amaya, Amanda Baker, Paul Blankenship, Jason Broadway, Nathaniel Burke, Jesus Carlos, Jacquelin Chavis, Daniel Coiner, Michael Cooper, Corey Crutchfield, Edis Cruz, Alexander Cruz-Oyola, Rodney Davidson, Jorge Dela Torre, Archie Fields, PJ Forbes, David Fugge, Lezli Hicks, Brittany Hodge, Jesus Ibarra, Amy Iori, George Johnson, Ian Johnson, Keith Lacaze, Robert Rios, Timothy Shelley, Thomas Shilling, Jeffery Stebbins, Bryan Stewart, Jeremie Sullivan, Jordan Vazquez, Solomon Watkins, Cameron Wiles, Marcus Wiley

5 Years: Luther Booth, Robert Cefarelli, Nick Coomes, Joshua Drawdy, Richard James Drummond, Joel Garcia, Lance Gates, Amanda Hagerty, William Hancock, Darvis Hicks, Andrew Jones, Richard Lee, Casey Lobiecki, Laura McKinney, Juan Moreno, Jessica Nielson, Buddy Olvera, Brad Peot, Theodore Savage, Perry Thomas, Jose Torres

6 Years: Michael Barajas, Robert Campbell, John Dellinger, Alvaro Diaz, Gregory Ferguson, Jonathan Hamm, Matthew Hayes, Jaime Henry, Kenneth Hogarth, Travis Luinstra, Kevin Martin, Morgan Speer, Tina Swallow, Todd Trammell, Gregory Weatherwalk, Joseph Whitaker, Cyle Windsor, Michael Yoger

7 Years: Kenneth Brown, Carlos Cruz, Justin Haisch, Kris Hawley, Danelle Kenny, Russell Koczur, Preston McNew, Curtis Nobis, Efrain Ortiz, Oscar Ruelas, Lee Smith, Marcos Soto

8 Years: John Anderson, Daniel Caine, Nathan Champion, Israel Garza, Angela Gilmer, Bill Goldsberry, Daniel Harkness, Miranda Kichler, James Lanier, Benjamin Murphy, Steve Rodriguez, Todd Vaughan

9 Years: Eric Bowlin, Seth Morris, Keith Owens, Angel Vazquez

10 Years: James Carter, Jorge Gonzalez, Michael Kertz, Joe Martinez, James McCoy, Servando Mendez, Abram Silva, Raymond Warrington

11 Years: Ricky Carter, Scot Clark, David Garcia, John King, Charles Lambert, Jon Mihallic, Michael Ward, Robert Ward

12 Years: Jason Ankeny, Ronald Close, Melissa Faugh, Kevin Gonzales, Jean Guerrier, Steve Iseli, Herman Lewis, Amy Miori, Frank Nichols, Jack Wananda, Doug Whalen, Jason Wood

13 Years: Thomas Addison, Derek Brown, Frank Diaz, Johnny Fields, Michael Gray, Robert Gray, Anthony Kirkland, Eddie Lapine, Joshua Leslie, Steven ONeal, Donnell Rhone

14 Years: Matt Heeren, Jimmie Miller, Santos Polanco, Timothy Watson

15 Years: Gary Griswold, Brian Pflughoeft

16 Years: Fallyne Deao, James Goodyear, Patrick Peabody

17 Years: Jonathan Evans, Michael McGee, Leon Odom, Kenneth Parkin, Mendina VanBuren

18 Years: James Brewer, Kenneth Parkin, Melinda VanBuren

19 Years: Leon Abercrombia, Aaron Guerrero

20 Years: Michael Antoine

21 Years: Justin Cox

22 Years: Roger Kelley, Artis Smith

23 Years: Dennis Gaddis

24 Years: Paul Cain, Clarence Kinzeler, Shannon Kisley, Brady Rogers, Rob Thrall

25 Years: Gregory Hoffman

26 Years: Sherlyn Graham, Santiago Montoya, Milburn Stewart

27 Years: Michael Beatty, John Falk, John Pond

28 Years: Kirk Hawley

29 Years: William Gast

30 Years: James Young

31 Years: Melvin Davis, Paul Swanson

34 Years: Dewayne Dockens

39 Years: Fredrick Burrell

42 Years: Tex Imman

43 Years: Steve Rhodes

54 Years: Earl Bowser

John Joseph Weber, IV
John and Madison Weber are proud to announce the birth of their son, John Joseph.
John was born on October 24, 2018. He weighed 8 lbs., 12 oz., and was 20.5 inches long.
John’s dad is a carman apprentice at the Ann Arbor Railroad and his granddad is John Vance, general manager of the Ann Arbor Railroad.

Owen Andrew Denton
Justin and Holly Denton are proud to announce the birth of their son, Owen Andrew.
Owen was born on November 12, 2018. He weighed 8 lbs., 5 oz., and was 20.5 inches long.
Owen was welcomed home by his sisters, Abbygail, 6, and Kinlee, 4.
Justin maintains the facilities at the Coffeyville mechanical shop in Kansas.

Calli Ramona Nugent
Jeff and Meagan Nugent are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Calli Ramona.
Calli was born on November 17, 2018. She weighed 6 lbs., 13 oz., and was 18 3/4 inches long.
Jeff is the plant manager at the Fitzgerald, Georgia, mechanical shop.
PTRA hosts open house

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Team Members from the Greens Port Industrial Terminals (GPIT) attended an open house in December hosted by Houston’s Port Terminal Railroad Association (PTRA).

Robert Hutchinson, general manager-GPIT, Amy Parady, commercial director, and Duane Stephenson, VP rail operations - Houston, attended the event to celebrate the holiday and the end of a successful year.

The PTRA was formed in 1924 to provide rail access to the various industries along the Houston Ship Channel. They provide GPIT with access to three Class I railroads: the BNSF, KCS, and the UP.

Neodesha Team corners Christmas

The town of Neodesha, Kansas, asked for volunteers to decorate “Christmas Corners” in the city’s downtown and the Team at our Watco Mechanical Services shop jumped at the chance to participate. The Team decorated a tree and added a locomotive with the location and the Watco W on it. Pictured are William Newport (l) and Jackie Lowry (r).

Guntersville Team donates to Christmas Coalition

by Jay Benedict
Digital Communication & Social Media Specialist

For the seventh year running, the Watco Team at the Guntersville, Alabama Terminal has sponsored children through the Marshall County Christmas Coalition by donating their time and money to buy presents.

“We love doing this for the kids every year, because there are so many kids that wouldn’t have a Christmas without it. This is really dear and close to our hearts to make two special kids happy at Christmas,” said customer service representative Kristi Nunnelley.

The Coalition has over 1,500 children needing Christmas sponsors each year.