Watco Switching invades Husker territory

Watco’s Switching Team has invaded Big Red Country. On May 16, the team began switching railcars at the Preferred Sands facility in Genoa, Nebraska. The Preferred Sands plant produces filtration, frac, and other silica sand grades. The mine is approximately two hours west of Omaha and has the capacity to process two million tons of silica sand and 250,000 tons of resin-coated products every year. The plant has the largest sand reserve of its kind in the country. The company focuses on being good stewards of the land and the plant runs partially on hydroelectric power. They are also involved in the conservation of the endangered piping plover, a small shorebird that breeds in only three regions in North America.

Shipping by rail is another way the company is focusing on being environmentally friendly. Trains have less emissions and use less fuel than other forms of transporting goods.

The plant’s unit trains are brought in on the Nebraska Central Railroad and then delivered to the plant where the Watco Team manages the switching. Team members at the location are: Steven Niles, location manager; Eric Johnson, assistant manager; Marcus Connelly, mechanic, and switchmen Ryan Albracht, Scott Korth, Dave Kunes, Christopher Moore, Anthony Steensnes, Nicole Drozd, Tracy Mitchell, Lance Malin, Patrick Russell, Trevor Twohig, Jason Wehr, Johnathan Moore, and Ryan Shockley.

“We’re very excited to expand our switching services into Nebraska and build a relationship as we did with our first switching operation in DeRidder, Louisiana,” said Tony Clark, regional switching manager. “This was an opportunity that we heard about and went in and made it happen in just a few weeks. The human resources, finance and operations teams all did a great job in bringing this together and making it a reality in such a short amount of time.”

Stillwater Central Railroad awarded right to purchase Sooner Sub

The hour lasted a lifetime for Watco and Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC) Teams as they waited to hear the fate of the Sooner Subdivision, a 97.5 mile stretch of track owned by the State of Oklahoma and operated by the SLWC. The Oklahoma Transportation Commission listed the proposed sale of the Sooner Subdivision as the final agenda item at their May 5 meeting. An hour and a half later, the teams were able to breathe a sigh of relief when it was announced that it was awarded to the SLWC.

A 180-day process began in January to determine to whom the Oklahoma Transportation Commission would award the sale. Originally four parties were interested in the line, but by January 31 it was short-listed to just two: BNSF and SLWC. Both parties submitted final binding offers within the deadline on April 21. Cabinet Secretaries from Transportation, Finance, Commerce, Agriculture and Energy made up the selection committee and were required to prepare a recommendation to the Transportation Commission based on their evaluations of the proposals. An economic impact and activity study was prepared by the Department of Commerce and presented to the committee for consideration as well. The proposals were scored on 40% of the offer price and 60% of the business plan and projected economic activity. The final tally was 48.38 for BNSF and 99.0 for SLWC.

“We are extremely pleased with the state’s decision to sell the Sooner Sub to the Stillwater Central Railroad. The support we have had from our Customers and interchange partners throughout this entire process was extremely humbling,” said Ed McKechnie, Watco’s chief commercial officer.

When the SLWC first started operating the rail line there was no running traffic. The marketing and operations team worked together to build traffic, and by 2012 there were more than 29,000 carloads moving on the line annually. In addition, almost $3 million was paid to the state for lease of the line for a grand total of approximately $14 million spent on rails, ties and ballast to improve the line.

“We look forward to working with our customers to meet Oklahoma’s freight and passenger rail needs in the years ahead. We very much appreciate the support we have received from so many people and are committed to going to work to surpass expectations,” added McKechnie.

The SLWC interchanges with Class 1 railroads BNSF, Union Pacific Railroad and Kansas City Southern Railway, as well as shortline partners including the AOK Railroad, Farmrail System and Watco’s South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad.

Malin, Patrick Russell, Trevor Twohig, Jason Wehr, Johnathan Moore, Michael Moore, Anthony Steensnes, Nicole Drozd, Tracy Mitchell, Lance Mitchell, and Ryan Shockley.

The Stillwater Central Railroad locomotive crossing the Oklahoma River in Oklahoma City.
Any shipper handling hazardous materials can tell you that the amount of product shipped is secondary to how safe it is being shipped. The Watco Tioga/Hess Rail Terminal was awarded the CSX Chemical Safety Excellence Award on May 5th. The award celebrates the commitment of shippers and customers to safe hazardous material rail car loading and maintenance.

Recipients of the award understand the best practices of chemical safety, and demonstrate a commitment to those practices and strong industry leadership among their peers. They are present to qualified customers who ship more than 600 carloads of hazardous materials or hazardous waste without experiencing a non-accident release during the entire year.

Team members at the facility are: Benjamin Lowin, Bradley Seideman, Brandon Christenson, Brent Nettleton, Brice Willis, Chris Wright, Christopher Corpe, Christopher Walther, Clay LaRocque, Coln Gribling, Courtney LaRocque, Daniel Gorseth, Daniel Griffin, Daniel Harkness, Daron Scobee, Dennis Jensen, Denise Sundsbak, Dexter Cahill, Dusty Anderson, Eric Turner, Gabriel Grad, Guy Sery, Jacob Cahill, Jacob Welsch, James Kapp, Jared Vandal, Jason Calhoun, Jay Anderson, Jeffrey Lien, Jeffrey Szilagyi, Joseph Abrahamson, Joshua Gillmore, Justin Haish, Justin Phillips, Keith Schepp, Kris Winkels, Manuel Mendez, Mark Jackson, McKenzie Green, Michael Urness, Michael Yanish, Nicholas Desjarlais, Noelyn Meckle, Peter Bercier, Quentin Jones, Randy Reisenauer, Ronald Solander, Ronda Rustad, Russell Kocurz, Ryan Johnson, Ryan Schweitzer, Samuel Savelkoul, Sean Benzmiller, Sean Roche, Shane Bengston, Stacy Willis, Terry McCloud, Thomas Allard, Todd Peterson, Wendell Held and William White.

RACHAEL PETERSON, SVP HUMAN RESOURCES

Unlike shooting stars, rising stars aren’t here and gone, they’re up and coming. Rachael Peterson, Watco’s senior vice president of human resources has been identified as a rising star by Progressive Railroading, a leading industry magazine. Progressive Railroading has been reporting on workforce development in the railroad industry for the past several years and in 2013 they set out to discover not only how rail businesses are trying to recruit and retain new railroaders, but who some of the industry’s up-and-comers might be.

As a result, the “Rising Stars” program was launched to identify individuals under the age of 40 who already are making a difference in the rail industry. The magazine defines a “Rising Star” as someone under 40 years of age who has made, or is making, a positive impact on his or her company, organization, department or team, and is viewed by others — peers, colleagues, supervisors, clients or associates — as an up-and-coming leader in the rail industry.

Rick Baden, president and chief operating officer, nominated Peterson for the award and was pleased that she was selected as one of the recipients for the prestigious award. ’Rachael has done an outstanding job here at Watco and it’s fitting that the industry is recognizing her for all her accomplishments and contributions. Rachael’s vision and dedication to going above and beyond Watco’s Customer First Principles is an example of why she deserves the award.’

Peterson said, ’I’m honored that leaders within Watco would nominate me for this award. It’s very humbling to be recognized as someone who is making contributions to the Watco organization. Since I started with Watco in 2006, I’ve been blessed with the opportunity to contribute in various roles. I am most excited about my current role as I get to directly work with all of our great team members and managers to help improve Watco each day. It’s exciting to be a part of the best team in the industry. I always brag about Watco to family, friends, peers, and others in the community and industry. We are a company that focuses on safety, taking care of our Customers, and taking care of our team members. This focus is what makes Watco successful and I’m grateful to be a small part of the continued success.’

Twenty “Rising Stars” were chosen based on their contributions to railroading, career achievements, education, demonstrated leadership, professional association activity and/or community involvement. The 2014 honorees will be profiled in Progressive Railroading’s September issue and will be honored at the American Association of Railroad Superintendents Annual Meeting in Chicago. Honorees named in addition to Peterson include the following: Chuck Baker, President, National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association; Josh Bendyk, Transit Engineer, VHB; Jennifer Bergener, Director, Rail & Facilities, Orange County Transportation Authority; Jesse Chalich, Executive Vice President, Northern Plains Railroad; Roquita Coleman, Solutions Manager, CN; Elisa Davies, Counsel Franchise Access, Union Pacific Railroad; Kevin Day, Assistant Chief Engineer, Technology, Testing and Standards, CN; Kari Gonzales, Manager Equipment Engineering, TTTI; Jessica Hawkins Allen, Director, Process Engineering, Amtrak; Jesse Heimowitz, Project Manager, Long Island Rail road; Christine Howard, Business Manager, Marketing and Sales, UP; Mark Kelahan, Sr. Vice President, Wolfe Research Securities; Jessica Kramer Havens, President, President, Diesel Supply Inc.; John Manutes, Chief Inspector/Passenger Rail, Federal Railroad Administration; Petra Todorovich Messick, Principal Officer, New York and New Jersey Development, Amtrak - NEC Infrastructure and Investment Development; Michael Nicoletti, Director of Purchasing, Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad; Adam Nordstrom, Partner, Chambers, Conlon & Hartwell; Kristine Storm, Assistant Vice President Purchasing, Genesee & Wyoming Railroad; and Daniel Stout, Vice President, STX Railroad Construction Services. GO GREEN - If you would like to conserve paper, e-mail chuskey@watcocompanies.com and let her know that you wish to receive the newsletter in electronic format only. If you have more than one team member in your household and only want one copy mailed to your house she can take care of that as well. Thanks for doing your part to preserve our environment.
Refugio Team Members help kids have a memorable Easter

by John Wiebelhaus
Refugio, Texas Terminal Manager

Most of us can remember as a child waking up Easter Morning to an Easter basket full of candy and how much fun it was to have an Easter egg hunt! Well not all children have the same opportunity of growing up in a typical family setting and the joys of the holidays which we remember from our childhood.

Near Refugio Texas is a home for disadvantaged children called The Devereux Foundation. At Devereux the children are prepared for living in a foster home. We first contacted the administrators of the home at Christmas time and asked what could we do to help. We were told that the children often come to the home with nothing more than the clothes on their backs and they really needed socks and blankets. The Refugio Team pulled together and filled boxes with the requested items and delivered at Christmas. Our team has decided we want to continue to support the children and over the past few months have been selling raffle tickets to raise money to put together Easter baskets for the 84 children under their care.

The winning raffle ticket was drawn on April 1st and Ray Tucker was the winner! Ray very generously donated his winnings back to the cause. We were able to put together 85 Easter baskets filled with treats and hundreds of artificial eggs stuffed with toys and candy for an Easter egg hunt. Our crews filled the baskets and stuffed the eggs on Good Friday and our Team Safety and Improvement Committee members delivered them that Friday afternoon so the children could enjoy the surprise when they woke up on Easter morning.

Sandy Neely, Devereux Foundation senior development officer, said, "Many of our children only know holidays from TV or possibly school mates... the homes they came from did not celebrate at all. Any donated supplies through social services were sold on street corners or on-line to supply the parents drug habits. Holidays are for children! Your organization was the first one to step forward and embrace our abused and neglected children for Easter. Egg hunts were repeated several times throughout the day and there was general mayhem for several hours... it was wonderful!!"

Team members at the Refugio, Texas, terminal helped kids have a "hoppin'" Easter.

FISHING FOR FUNDS

The Coffeyville, Kansas Mechanical Shop's Team Safety and Improvement Committee (TS&IC) held their First Annual Watco Catfishing Tournament on April 25, 26 and 27th. The tournament was open to the public and entrants could fish anywhere they wanted, with the top spots being the Oologah Lake, Grand Lake, and the Verdigris River.

The TS&IC Team of Jeremy Veley (Committee Leader), Terry Parsons, David Perry, and Mike Misgades along with Plant Manager Dion Wilkens and Supervisor Kyle Mansfield worked hard prior to the tournament making flyers, advertising and collecting sponsorship money.

First place winners were Clint McGee and Jake Renfro with 135 lbs., and a 41 lb., big fish.

A total of $380 was earned after prizes were paid out and the money will be set aside for future use by the TS&IC to help with a team member in need in the future or for a community project.

It’s official - the team members who perform switching duties at the Wyoming Solvay facility in Green River, Wyo., have been certified. Or at least they’ve received a certificate of safety. On April 15, 2014 they received a certificate of achievement Wyoming State Mine Inspector for a perfect safety record for the year 2013. The team went a total of 28,159 man-hours injury free. This is the second year in a row that the team has received the certificate of safety.

The general manager, Jason Lloyd, cooked T-bone steaks to celebrate the great achievement and as the team enjoyed the steaks they discussed how they made this possible. They also talked about what they planned to do to keep their record of staying injury free.

Casey Ivran, Team Safety and Improvement Committee leader, had his first meeting as committee leader and discussed the plans for the team’s six year injury-free celebration. He spoke to the team letting them know that their accomplishments wouldn’t have been possible without good communication and the awesome job they do of watching out for each other.

Irvan said, “Our team leaders and managers are always coaching for safety, about being our brother’s keeper and holding each other personally accountable for the actions we take. I believe this, along with positive reinforcement, more than anything is the biggest contributor to our great safety record.”

Team members from the Green River, Wyo., switching location are: Angelo Barrera, Casey Ivran, Rich Carter, Cory Montoya, Jordan Christensen, John Barrera, Jim Price and Jake Petit. Not pictured, Michael Murphy, Robert McMullan, Thomas McMullan, Travis Starnes, Michael Kertz, Cory Case and Jason Lloyd.
KO hosts Operation Lifesaver Law Enforcement Safety Train

Law Enforcement officials got a shocking ride on the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (KO) last month and it wasn’t because the Wooo Shock was leading the way. Approximately 25 law enforcement officers from cities and counties surrounding Wichita, Kan., boarded the Kansas Operation Lifesaver Law Enforcement Safety Train which traveled from Wichita to Colwich and back.

Ironically, during the trip, the train had to make an unexpected stop in Wichita because of a motor vehicle being parked too close to the tracks. The conductor had to get off the train and go into a local business and ask them to move the car. Later in the trip, the train had to slow down due to children running alongside the train. Both were eye opening experiences for the police officers on board who said they never realized people would be that oblivious to railroad tracks and park on top of them or get too close.

During the trip Julie La Combe, executive director of Operation Lifesaver Kansas, spoke about rail trespassing and crossing safety. The train stopped in Colwich for lunch, during which Travis Herod, Watco’s vice president of transportation safety and compliance, and Jimmy Patterson, KO general manager, both spoke about the relationships between law enforcement and railroads and the importance of working together. Attendees included members of police departments in Wichita, Valley Center, Clearwater and Newton, officers from the Sedgwick County Sheriff’s Department and a few other officials. Watco Team Members who helped were Herod, Patterson; Jason Cathey, director of safety; trainmaster Aaron Doyle, as engineer; and trainmaster Travis Schnelle as conductor.

Patterson said, "It was a really good opportunity for the law enforcement officials to get a behind the scenes look at some the challenges and obstacles the railroads face every day with trespassers. They walked away knowing what they could do to help us make things even more safe for the community."

Wisconsin & Southern Railroad hosts Chicago Superintendent’s Trip

When you’re running trains through the country’s busiest railroad hub, it’s always a good idea to keep the lines of communication open. That was the purpose of the Chicago Superintendent’s Trip hosted by the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) last month.

The Iowa Pacific Holding Company provided a beautifully restored Pullman railcar set for the high-profile rail event. The train left Chicago’s Union Station with a Metra pilot operating the train to Fox Lake, Ill., then a WSOR engineer took over to operate the train to Janesville, Wisc., and back.

Among the 120 guests aboard the train were current and retired executives from our railroad partners including Metra, Union Pacific Railroad, BNSF, Beltway Railway of Chicago, CN, CP, and others. Stefan Loeb, Watco’s senior vice president of marketing and strategic development, and Don Pingel, WSOR trainmaster, worked together to organize the trip for the group. With the support of WSOR Janesville yardmaster Dan Giacalone, train crew members Paul Swanson, Kyle Hittesdorf, Anthony Tillman, and Adam Weddle provided an excellent ride while keeping the train ahead of or on schedule. Not only did the group get to see the view the countryside from the observation and dome cars, they were also served a meal on a 1947 Dining Car. It was a great opportunity for those gathered to network and discuss upcoming opportunities and solutions to the ever-present challenges of operating trains into and out of Chicago.

Loeb said, “The entire Wisconsin & Southern Team involved with the Chicago Superintendent’s Trip should be extremely proud. They conveyed to the attendees the professionalism our organization displays on a daily basis while showcasing the impressive WSOR infrastructure. Several riders pulled me aside to congratulate us for the effortless and enjoyable round-trip ride between Fox Lake and Janesville.”

Top photo: The Iowa Pacific rolls over the Rock River on its way through the Illinois and Wisconsin area for the Chicago Superintendent’s Trip. Bottom: Some of the passengers and crew of the Chicago Superintendent's Trip.
Births
Laurel Joan and Milly Laine White

Drew and Kathryn White are proud to announce the birth of twin daughters on April 28th. Laurel Joan weighed 5 lbs., 7 oz., and 21.5” long. Milly Laine weighed 5 lbs., 6 oz., and was 19 inches long.

Drew is the director of engineering for the Project Management Team.

Graduations
Dr. Katelyn Merando Falk, granddaughter of Dick and Modestyne Fogliasso, graduated from Kansas University School of Medicine on May 17th. She begins her Family Medicine residency at Research Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo., in June. Dick is a facilities team member at the Pittsburg, Kan., location.

Dean William Chinowith, son of James C. Chinowith Jr., Utility Department in Refugio, Texas; graduating from Victoria Collage, Victoria, Texas, with a certificate in Advanced Welding with a 4.0 GPA.

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!


2 Years: Matthew Andrade, Cody Avery, Derek Beck, Jose Belmontes, Sean Benzimiller, Thomas Bolton, Susan Buffington, Christopher Bumbarger, Tara Carpenter, Sean Cox, James Degano, Adolphus Dibia, David Elizalde, Ty Gatlin, Lee Hawkins, Thomas Hearst, Curtiss Hemby, Jess Hempel, Ricky Herron, Carol Kefauver, Jeff Kelly, Morgan Losey, Kevin Lyons, Cody Midkiff, Jacob Parker, Trevor Pool, Barry Pruitt, Kristen Quiros, Jacob Renfroe, Steven Renn, Joshua Rucker, Angela Schaefer, Amanda Shanholzer, Glenn Shipley, Matthew Staudinger, Derrick Thomas, Mashaela Thrall, Christopher Varno, Duff Wagnon, Ordia Webster, Dana Wilkerson, Brandon Williams, Scott Winther, Jeremy Worm, Lloyd Young

3 Years: James Ballard, Logan Falletti, Felicia Fearmonti, Andre Howard, Jeremy Hund, Cynthia Johnson, Jeremy Jones, Tyler Jones, Brian Keithan, Nathan Kime, Nathaniel Madi, Benjamin May, Alfred Pope, Dustin Ramos, James Stallings, Michael Stotts, Paul Waltland, Joshua Womack, Michael Yanish

4 Years: Richard Antill, William Ascanio, Robert Betts, Jeff Everitt, Paul Goins, Brian Kraus, Bobby Mathis, Melissa Pennington, Jose Ramirez, Andrew Rouch, Tom Scheidemantel, Kenneth Smith, Nathan Smith, Douglas Steed, Robert Treadway, Brady Whipple

5 Years: Sean Crowe, Daniel Garrett, Brent Marsh, John Neet, Eliah Nick, Christopher Tigner, Richard Welsh, Derek Witsman

6 Years: Darrious Colley, Douglas Cook, Derrick DeFoor, Adam Jones, William Nash, Richard Smith, Rendall Thompson, Matt Troth

7 Years: Tony Cox, Michelle Hubbard, Casey Miller, Gary Richardson, Justin Ring, Gregg Scoggins, Chuck Stephens, Curtis Testerman

8 Years: Mikkel Canterbury, Randall Chaney, Ivan Etherton, Phillip Forrest, Armando Jimenez, Timothy Ragsdale, Pete Tavernaro

9 Years: Frankie Carpio, Rodger Gibson, David Gonzales, Nicholas Hanson, Jeremy Hollis, Bubba Lundy, Randall McIntyre, Misael Olguin, Martin Phillips, Angelina Pridemore

10 Years: Cheryl Correll, Nolan Darthard, Steven Hebel, Otis Jackson, Billy Mott, Ruben Rodriguez, Larry Shavers, David Young

11 Years: Clint Chestnut, Donnie Creed, Shawn Eller, Ron Isaacs, Wade Lunt, James Wait

12 Years: Jean Camphort, Matthew Diestler, Carl Silcox, Mark St Aubin

14 Years: Anthony Allender, Jennifer Baconn, Barbara Crawford, Jesse Gage, Jamie Haybers, Nancy Newbery

15 Years: Anthony Jones, Pamela Lyday Banks

16 Years: Gabriel Carrizales, Robert Eneke, Christopher Jacobson, Randy Jacobson, Lee King, William Miller, Jason Rossman, Thomas Rutt, Richard Shomo, Daniel Tank, Kaye Lynne Webb

17 Years: Matthew Meekma, Chad Wilson

18 Years: Ronald Beach, Vickie Craig

21 Years: Sally Berkstresser, Steven Bruce, Willis Iverson

22 Years: Teodoro Arellano

23 Years: Gary Lundy, Jeffrey Osmer

24 Years: David Buechel

25 Years: Jesse Green, Gary Harville, Michael Pollard, Shane Stallford

26 Years: Jerry Elliott, Barry Jack, Jerry Twitchell

27 Years: Todd Mesnell, Jack Sepulvado

28 Years: Jason Ford

31 Years: Debbie Moody

33 Years: David Cherry

37 Years: Kenneth Socie

38 Years: Harold Fites

39 Years: Ronald Crissman

41 Years: Richard Bauman

44 Years: Joe Duncan

July marks the half-way point of the year. Don’t let it slip away without getting your well-check and biometrics completed.
Watco Team Members are taught that safety isn’t just a personal choice, but one that can positively or negatively affect those around you. Team members Ben Lowin and Ryan Johnson at the Tioga, N.D., terminal decided to be proactive when they encountered a safety issue that could’ve possibly turned into a dangerous situation.

The two men were inspecting railcars at the facility and as they were walking down the train they noticed an odor and heard bubbling water. They determined that the smell and water indicated a gas leak and the two notified their supervisor and the Customer was notified of the issue.

Lowin said, “Situational awareness training provided by the environmental, health and safety group enabled me to identify an out of the ordinary noise and smell in my work area and what actions to take when it happened.”

The Customer was pleased with how Ben and Ryan addressed the situation and made sure the leak was taken care of. As a token of their appreciation both Ben and Ryan were given Visa Gift Cards and thank you notes from the Customer. Ben and Ryan weren’t looking to get rewarded when they brought the issue up, they were looking to keep the area safe for the Customer and for fellow team members.

Gabriel Grad, Tioga Terminal general manager, said, “I’m proud of Ben and Ryan for taking care of the Customer by following the steps that were provided in the training to take care of the situation. They were really focusing on maintaining a safe work environment.”

The West Region lost a valued team member on May 17 when Jay Setser, West Region operations specialist, was killed in a UTV accident near Jackpot, Nev. He was pronounced dead at the scene and fellow team member Jereud Uscola, Eastern Idaho Railroad trainmaster, was injured in the accident as well.

Jay was born in Rupert, Idaho to Ron and Robbyn Setser. He grew up in Rupert and graduated from Minico High School. Following graduation Jay went to work for the Eastern Idaho Railroad in the maintenance of way department and then became a conductor/engineer. Two years ago he was promoted to the position of West Region operations specialist.

Rob Thrall, vice president of operations West Region, said, “Jay was a very caring person. He had a heart of gold and valued friendship and loyalty. He was positive, always smiling and loved nothing better than to gather friends and family and spend time together. He was a person that you always felt better when you were around him.”

Among his accomplishments was serving as interim General Manager at the Pacific Sun Railroad near San Diego where he taught others about track, operations, and he improved communications to our Customer. Jay was very patient when it came to working with others. He enjoyed training and helping others to improve. Most recently he served at Wallula Switching. According to team members, Jay made an impact by training and developing both engineers and conductors, teaching and expanding the knowledge at the locations. Jay made many friends across the company and will truly be missed.”

Jay loved outside sports, fishing, hunting, baseball, family gatherings, and being a volunteer fireman.

Services were held on May 23, 2014 at the First Baptist Church with burial at the Shoshone Cemetery.