It’s hard to say who was more excited to board the “Polar Express” train - the kids or the adults. The excursion, based on the 1985 book by the same name, takes passengers from the Bristow, Oklahoma, depot on a magical hour-long train ride to meet Santa at the North Pole. Passengers, not just the kids, don their pajamas and robes for the special holiday ride and are treated to a reading of the holiday story. Along with the reading, dancing chefs serve cookies and coca to all on board.

There will be a total of 29 “Polar Express” rides which started on November 22nd and will be continuing on until December 28th. The Eastern Flyer is bringing the “Polar Express” to Oklahoma and the cars are pulled by Watco’s Stillwater Central (SLWC) locomotives. The trains will run on the rails of the SLWC. Many of the weekend trips are sold out but there are still seats available. The Eastern Flyer ran excursion trains early in the year to gauge the interest of the communities in passenger rail and the rides sold out within a few days.

Top right photo: Santa and one of his elves visit with a passenger on the “Polar Express”. Bottom photo: Three of the dancing chefs on the “Polar Express” show off their cookies before they start their show.
Alabama’s Birmingham Terminal Railway (BHRR) Team celebrated their one year injury-free mark on October 22. There are currently 128 team members at the BHRR and that one year consisted of 295,000 man-hours.

General Manager David Tarwater, said, “That’s a huge accomplishment by all of our team members. We will continue to push towards our goal of being injury-free.”

To celebrate the occasion, a cookout was held for the team members with Tarwater and East Region Director of Operations Bill Richmond manning the grill.

The BHRR began operations of the 75.9 mile line in February of 2002. The main commodities shipped on the line are iron ore, coal, and steel sheets and pipe. The railway hooks up with the Port of Birmingham Terminal which barges shipments to the Black Warrior River. The line dates back to 1878 when it was used to transport coal from the fields to the blasting furnaces in Ensley, Ala., and Birmingham.

Team members at the location who helped reach this goal are: Aaron Greene, Andre Williams, Andrea Harville, Antonio Green, Arthur Bradford, Austin Osborn, Benjamin Tarran, Bobby Garmon Jr, Bobby McFadden, Brad Payne, Brandon Williams, Brent Aycock, Carlton Young Jr, Cedric Graham, Charles Layfield, Charles McCarty, Christopher Hammond, Christopher Preuc, Cody Gilliland, Damien Cantrell, Daniel Caine, Daniel Farr, Darrious Colley, Darryl Marshall, David Caffee, David Stott, David Tarwater, Derek Brown, Donald Mixon Jr, Donald Myrick, Dwight Browning, Dylan Hoggle, Eric Caine, Eugene Stevens, Gary Harville Sr, George Freeman, George King, Gilbert Spencer, Howard Green Jr, Jace Fisher, Jacob Bagby, JaCorey Murray, James Brown, James Crawford, James Latham III, James Mobley, Jared Humphrey, Jeffery Cargill, Jeremiah Williams Jr, Jeremy Hollis, Jeremy Williams, Jerome Lawson, Jerry Lowe, Joe Fells, John Castleberry, John Davis, John Gaither, John Gaither II, John Herron, Joseph Bristow, Joseph Free-

Smashing records is what Watco’s Western Australia Rail (WWAR) team and the CBH Group are all about. Although some wet weather is putting a damper on the harvest, WWAR is estimated to move 8,100,000 tonnes of grain and they are pushing for more. The total crop estimate finishing in 2015 is about 12,100,000 tonnes.

Jim Griffiths, WWAR chief operating officer was able to visit CBH Group Board of Directors Chairman Wally Newman at his farm in the Newdegate area in early November to witness to the cutting of the record canola crop. Newdegate is in Western Australia’s grainbelt and located in what is called the Albany Zone.

The record canola crop follows up a year of records for both CBH and WWAR. WWAR moved more grain to port than ever before. Griffiths is hoping to break that record again this spring!

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Team members at the Birmingham Terminal Railway celebrated their one year injury-free anniversary on October 22.
WINTER FREEZE SAFETY PROGRAM UNDERWAY

Watco Team Members need to be very careful this winter; they might get ticketed. And if they do get ticketed, it can lead to good things. The Winter FREEZE Safety Program kicked off November 24th and runs through March 31st. In an effort to keep team members focused on safety, “I Did It Right” ticket cards will be handed out when they are caught in the act of performing their duties correctly during efficiency testing. Not only does this reward team members for their performance, but it also reminds managers to praise correct actions as well as correct errors. Team members will get their tickets punched and can then trade in their tickets for rewards.

The “FREEZE” (Following the Rules Everyday Ensures Zero Errors) program was started to help promote awareness and focus team member concentration to the job at hand. It is critical that everyone be aware of the consequences of our actions or inactions while on the job. Errors on the job can lead to serious, even fatal consequences. We must stay focused and make good decisions at work to ensure our families still have us coming home to them each and every day. They depend on us to provide for their well-being and an injury to any of us will certainly affect our families, our ability to provide, the company we work for, the Customers we serve, and our co-workers who have to “fill the gap” left by an out-of-work or injured team member.

We must all “FREEZE out” injuries to keep ourselves and our families’ safe – especially through these hectic winter months.

In addition to the cold weather being a distraction, it’s easy to lose focus at this time of year worrying and thinking about family issues, holiday bills, gift purchasing and increased family time together. The kids will be home from school more often, there are decorations to put up, household bills seem to increase, and there is more focus on issues of faith, family, and home. It’s easy to let your attention drift a bit, thinking of all those things. The last thing anyone wants is for an accident to happen and turn a joyous season into a tragic one that is forever etched in a family’s memory.

By identifying, recognizing, and rewarding excellence, we are aiming to meet the ultimate goal of eliminating injuries and accidents. Success of this program relies on active and enthusiastic participation, so Watco Team Members get on board and get your ticket punched!

Wooo Shock locomotive gives Santa a lift

When Santa visited Wichita, Kansas, on November 28th he left the reindeer at home so they could rest up for the big day and instead, arrived in railroad style. Santa rode into the Prairie Pines Christmas Tree Farm aboard the Wooo Shock locomotive to officially kick off the Christmas season. There were hundreds of families that came out to pick out Christmas trees, take pictures with Santa, and go for hay rides at the farm.

“The kids loved it,” said Jimmy Patterson, Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (KO) general manager. “They were lined up an hour before the train even arrived to get a good view.”

Although Santa arriving on Wooo Shock was the highlight of the day, other activities kept the crowd at the tree farm in the Christmas spirit. Other events that day included tree cutting, a live string and brass band playing Christmas music, hay wagon rides, and a small train for the kids to ride on within the tree farm. The farm’s barn is filled with ornaments, fresh green floral baskets and custom made wreaths of different shapes and sizes. The only thing missing to complete the total Christmas package was the snow.

“Think of a Norman Rockwell painting – it really was like an old time Christmas you’d see in black and white movies,” said Patterson.

The tree farm was celebrating their 40th anniversary of providing this unique Christmas experience. In the past Santa has arrived via fire truck, sleigh, and he has even sky-dived in. Just as the drought affected the Kansas wheat harvest, it also had an impact on the farm’s tree production. They were only able to grow about 400 trees on site, and so they had to have some more shipped in to keep up with demand.

Patterson, said, “When the KO dedicated the Wooo Shock Locomotive last March, we committed to using it to not only serve our Customers but also as a tool to become better neighbors and partners with the communities we work in. This is just another way of fulfilling that commitment.”
Watco’s Terminal Team just expanded their footprint into yet another state. On November 17th, the team unloaded their first unit train of crude oil in Ferndale, Washington.

Ferndale is located in the northwest corner of Washington near the Nooksack River but the terminal operations are on the west side of the city, closer to the Rosario Straight which leads to the Pacific Ocean.

“Both the train crews and the transloading crews performed flawlessly and with the professionalism Watco Teams display everywhere,” said Sam Ricci, manager of facility support.

Ricci added, "We want to thank everyone that assisted in the safe start up. From the Business Development Team, who led us to this opportunity to Human Resources, who conducted interviews and screening and helped us find the right team members. Watco’s Purchasing Team worked closely with us to make sure we had the right equipment to do the job and the EHS (Environmental Health & Safety) Team not only provided training, but kept the team engaged throughout the four week training period. And last, but not least, the “Go Team” for taking the lead with hands-on training and working with the new team members throughout the unload process.”

The Go Team was instrumental in facilitating the start-up. The group consisted of several team members from different locations who shared their knowledge and safety practices.

Please welcome the following new team members to our Watco Team: Alexis Pierson, Andrew Ross, Bryan Meyer, Charles Staley, Charles Warner, Christian McVickers, Cody Treloar, Cory Stevenson, Daniel Bradon, Erik Failoa, Harold Duncan Jr, Jered Ruback, John Shoup, Jordan Williams, Justin Bos, Michael Blusiewicz, Michael Parker, Michael Pecovish, Parker Helland, Patrick Russell, Quina Wiebe, Richard Bost, Robert House, Sheldon Gudde, and Thomas Frey.

Watco U holds classes and team building exercises

While many universities are getting ready for finals week and December graduation ceremonies, Watco U instructors will continue their usual course schedule. In November, Watco 101 and TS&IC courses were held along with team building exercises.

December’s schedule includes a Watco 101 class being held in Refugio, Texas, and a Primary Values Class in Birmingham, Alabama. Team building exercises will also be offered at different times throughout the month.

Top photo: Recruiting Team Members (l-r) Becky Beaudry, recruiter for WSOR, GDLK, and AA railroads; Amy Miori, recruiting director; Amanda Smardo, South Region recruiter; Susan Quanstrom, West Region recruiter; and Kylie Collier, Central Region recruiter, take part in a team building exercise.

Bottom photo: November 2014 Watco 101 graduates (l-r) Stacey Dawson, payroll manager; Brian Spiller, PES terminal manager; James Gibson, Watco Dock and Rail manager; John Harrigan, IT SAP director; and Shane Smith, Pittsburg terminal manager.

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WINTER HEALTH

The mention of winter evokes images of sparkling snowflakes and skaters gracefully gliding across the ice. But winter can also be a time of illness and one of those that often hits is the “common” cold. More than 100 viruses can cause colds so few people escape being exposed, most people in the U.S. average about three colds per year. Once it enters the body through the nose or throat, the cold virus begins to multiply, causing any of a number of symptoms: sore throat, sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, aches and pains, mild fever, nasal congestion and coughing. A cold can usually last a week or two.

The best way to treat a cold is to take a mild pain reliever, get as much bed rest as possible and drink plenty of fluids, especially fruit juices. Over-the-counter cough and cold remedies may relieve some of the symptoms, but they will not prevent, cure or even shorten the course of the illness.

Keep up your natural resistance through good nutrition and getting enough sleep and exercise. Turn your thermostat down and keep the humidity up in your home. Avoid direct contact with those who have colds and wash your hands frequently.
Graduations

Raquel Aida Hernandez, granddaughter of Jose Hernandez, team member at the Jack- sonville, Florida, mechanical shop; graduating Summa Cum Laude from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology

Logan Dawn Falletti, Watco Communications Intern, graduating from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, with Bachelor of Arts in Communications/Public Relations with a Minor in Sociology.

12 year-old rolls for ring

Twelve year-old Michael J. Turiano, Jr., son of Terri Turiano, team member at the Hollidaysburg GBW shop, recently bowled his first 300 game.

Michael has been bowling since he was two years old and will be presented a ring commemorating his perfect score.

Michael’s dad, John, is a former pro bowler and said he didn’t bowl his first perfect game until he was 20. Michael is the youngest ever bowler to hit 300 in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Michael says now that he’s reached this milestone he can relax.

“I’ve proved to myself I can do it,” he said. “I don’t think that I have to try to hit the 300 mark any more.”
The Arkansas Razorback football team has had some pretty exciting wins lately. Beating Louisiana State University and Ole Miss were huge accomplishments for the Fayetteville team.

Another Arkansas team with an amazing accomplishment is the Arkansas Southern Railroad Team. The team recently celebrated going nine years injury-free. The short line began operations in 2005 so you can do the math and conclude that they have not had an injury since taking over operations from the Kansas City Southern Railway.

The ARS is made up of two separate lines, the 32-mile northern branch runs east from Heaven-er, Oklahoma to Waldron, Arkansas. The 30-mile southern line runs from Ashdown, Arkansas to Nashville, Arkansas. Tyson is the largest Customer on the ARS and ships in corn and soybeans.

One unique aspect of this team is that most of them have worked together for several years. Thomas Williams and Steve Westfall have been with the ARS since the start. Billy Barton joined them in 2007 and in 2008 Rendall Thompson and Guy Evans Jr., joined the group. Michael Corbell is the new kid on the block and he’s been with them since 2011. Michael is the trainmaster and Cory Smith was named general manager of the team in 2012.

Six years ago Watco began operating it’s first short line railroad in California. Not only does the state have a reputation for being sunny, it’s also proving to be a safe place as well. Since the first day of start-up the PSRR Team hasn’t had an injury. The team celebrated this great milestone on October 24th. There are currently four team members on the PSRR Team: Cesar Oglesby, Matthew Hinojosa, Tyler Pruitt, and James Moore. Cesar has been a long-time engineer and is known for his great relationships with the Customers. Matt has done a great job as chief mechanical officer, right now the PSRR is at a zero failure rate on the locomotives thanks to Matt’s expertise. Tyler is the team’s peer trainer and is responsible for ensuring all team members are aware of, and following, the safety rules. Another team member is in training and should be joining the group soon.

General Manager James Moore, said, “It takes dedication from all team members for us to reach this milestone. Each team member must put safety first, from when they come on duty to when they go home.”

The trains are a little different than most short lines in the Watco system. Their average speed clocks in at about 55 mph. This is due to the fact that the line is shared with commuter trains which go even faster down the line, around 90 mph. The PSRR Team works on a short time schedule, running on a 6.5 hour window two nights a week when traveling to Miramar, Calif., and a five hour window three nights a week on the trips to Escondido, Calif.

The PSRR main commodities shipped on the line are corn and plastics.

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