The trip of a lifetime

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

There are many events in our lives that we call life-changing - marriage, the birth of a child, a particular career choice - and there are once in a lifetime opportunities. That’s what Watco Team Members Chad Taylor and John Peek called their recent trip to Australia. The two men were the winners of a trip from our Customer CBH Group to the Rail Fleet Launch in Perth, Western Australia. Chad is a trainmaster for the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad and John serves as an engineer for the Louisiana Southern Railroad. Chad and John were both able to take along their wives to share in their great adventure.

Chad and Sarah Taylor’s adventures began even before they had the chance to leave their hometown of Wichita, Kan. They were nervous about meeting the group that was flying out of Los Angles, Calif., after they received word of their flights being delayed. Finally they received word that they had a flight and needed to head to the airport. However, on the way to the airport they were in a car accident and since Sarah is expecting their first child in November, a trip to the doctor was necessary as a precaution to be sure everything was okay. They missed their flight that day but were able to leave the next morning and caught a flight from Wichita to Dallas, Texas, to Brisbane, Australia and from Brisbane to their destination of Perth, Australia.

While Chad and Sarah were dealing with their flight issues in Wichita, John and his wife Ivana were sadly saying goodbye to their nine year-old son Evan. They flew from Monroe, La., to Houston, Texas and then from Houston to Los Angeles, Calif. When they arrived in L.A. at the LAX airport they met up with a group from Motive Power to Houston, Texas and then from Houston to Los Angles, Calif. When they arrived in L.A. they then hopped on a five hour flight to Perth. While Chad and Sarah were dealing with their flight issues in Wichita, John and his wife Ivana were sadly saying goodbye to their nine year-old son Evan. They flew from Monroe, La., to Houston, Texas and then from Houston to Los Angles, Calif. When they arrived in L.A. at the LAX airport they met up with a group from Motive Power to Houston, Texas, then from Houston to Los Angles, Calif. When they arrived in L.A., they then hopped on a five hour flight to Perth. Although sleep is recommended on the flights, Ivana said the excitement made it very difficult to do. When they arrived at the airport they were met by Christie McMillis, CBH’s rail interface lead, who would be their guide for the trip. She drove them the Crown Metropol, which would be their home for the next two weeks. After some shopping, dinner and an internet chat with their son it was time to rest up for their first full day in Western Australia.

When Chad and Sarah finally made it to Perth on August 17th, Colin Tutt’s executive assistant Amy Hardick delivered them to the Crown Metropol and once they got checked in they left for the CBH building. (Continued on page 2)

Birmingham heroes

by Kereese Carrier
Communications Intern

August 24th was not a typical Friday for the Birmingham Terminal Railway (BHRR) Team at the 34th Street yard office. Around seven that morning Danny Grimes, Norfolk Southern engineer, came off his locomotive calling for help while holding his chest. BHRR team member, Cain Greene, heard his call and quickly ran to the office telling Damien Cantrell, yardmaster, and Jason Goolsby, trainmaster, to dial 911. After speaking with 911 representatives, Goolsby joined Norman Jones, Damien Cantrell and Cain Greene with helping Danny into the lunchroom. After they successfully got him in and laid down, Norman pulled two aspirins out of a bag he was carrying and placed them under Danny’s tongue.

Jason returned to the locomotive gate and waited for the EMTs to arrive to open the gate and to make sure the railroad tracks were cleared. Six minutes later Birmingham Fire and Rescue arrived. After a quick but precise examination they concluded that the NS engineer was having a heart attack. Danny was then taken to the University of Alabama Birmingham hospital where he made a good recovery. He is currently at home on medical leave and feeling much better.

David Tarwater, BHRR general manager, said his team member’s quick actions may have saved the engineer’s life. “These team members showed that they truly live by the Customer First Foundation Principles when they went above and beyond their call of duty to take care of their Customer” said Tarwater.

An added twist to the story - Chris Grimes is the general manager of the Watco’s Alabama Warrior Railroad and is also the brother of the NS engineer. Chris was contacted shortly after the incident to let him know what had happened. Chris said “I just want to thank everyone for their quick response and attention to my brother to ensure his safety and good health.”

He and his brother are currently making plans to go to the BHRR to visit the team members who played a major role in the incident.

Danny was seen occasionally by BHRR Team Members when they would be working but some of the team members, like Jason, didn’t know him on a personal level. Helping Danny was the most time Jason and other team members had ever spent with him.

“We didn’t do much but we would’ve done it for anybody,” said Goolsby. “I think the aspirin played a key role in providing assistance to Danny. To prepare for the next emergency BHRR Team Members want to be supplied with different types of medicine just in case it would be needed.” (Continued on page 3)
The trip of a lifetime

(Continued from page 1) which included a cafeteria, gym and bar. They got to meet many of the CBH group including general manager of operations Colin Tutt, Motive Power’s Dan Sullivan and his wife Marcie and Karl Knight as well as their Watco counterparts John and Ivana. After the tour the group dined at a popular restaurant, the Witches Cauldron and met Watco WA Rail’s CEO Jim Griffiths and his wife Kathleen.

John and Ivana toured the Kwinana terminal and CBH museum on Friday while Chad and Sarah were playing catch-up and visited the location on Saturday. They viewed the locos and wagons and watched them unload the wagons and then visited the grain jetty (where the ship loads.) The CBH team is especially careful at the elevators to pick up fallen grain as it can grow out of control very quickly. They also visited the mussel farms outside CBH and saw seal enjoying his mussel meal.

They drove up the coast to the town of Fremantle and stopped for fish and chips and crab croquettes at a place near Cottesloe beach. After they got back to the hotel, they took a walk by Swan River and saw some beautiful black swans.

On Sunday they awoke to a chilly and cloudy day, which is a bit expected since it is winter over there. The group went to Hilary’s Harbor and did some souvenir shopping and visited the AQWA Aquarium. They got to view a variety of Australian sea life including sharks, eel, lion fish and crocodiles. In the open tank they were allowed to touch the sharks, sting rays and starfish.

“The was a round tank in the middle that went from the floor to the ceiling, with different colored lights and it was filled with huge jellyfish. As they swam around the lights would reflect off of them, it was beautiful,” said Ivana. “Of course, being in Australia and in an aquarium, we had to find Nemo and the rest of his friends they’d met but excited to return home to see see wild kangaroo and emu. We also drove to Cape Le Grand National Park and stopped at Lucky Bay. Lucky Bay had white, pristine beaches where the sand is so pure it squeaks when you walk on it - by far the prettiest beach I have ever seen! We enjoyed a picnic on the beach made by Mary, Neil’s wife. We were introduced to Tim Tams, a delicious Australian chocolate biscuit.”

Ivana added, “The water was so clear and blue, it was one of the most amazing things we’ve seen. Everybody took their shoes off and got in the water (except me, it was too cold) but I got a kick out of watching them running out of the water because it was so cold.”

Afterwards they visited Neil’s property where he grows crops of wheat, barley canola, and faba beans. Then they toured his son’s farm to see his farm equipment and the lambs he raises. The last stop was to check the jilgie traps, which are like crawdads. The jilgies they retrieved from the traps became appetizers that night for dinner.

On Tuesday they drove to Albany, stopping along the coastline for pictures on a cliff by the ocean and they passed Pink Lake but since it was overcast the lake didn’t take on the normal pink hue that it usually does. They also stopped at Mt. Clarence Park - home of the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial. In Albany they purchased tins of Tim Tams to take home and met newly engaged Darrell Thompson and his fiance Susan. Darrell moved to Albany last December to serve as Operations Manager and was the former general manager of Watco’s Arkansas, Mississippi and Vicksburg Southern Railroads. Darrell offered some advice on the Australian culture.

Wednesday included a trip to the Valley of the Giants where they walked through the hollowed out bottoms of the gigantic red tingle trees. After leaving they drove to Calvary Memorial and the Natural Bridge. The Natural Bridge is a stone bridge cliff overlooking the ocean. The waves crashed and sprayed up over the rocks creating double rainbows and, in the process, soaking the group. After warm showers at the hotel, they enjoyed another amazing dinner and headed to bed to rest for their trip back to Perth.

Although much of Thursday was taken up by the drive they did visit Caversham Wildlife Park when they got back. Among the animals at the park were kangaroo, albino kangaroo, emu, dingo, koalas, peacocks, wombats, and quokkas. Some of the parrots even said hello, with their Australian accent, of course.

Friday was the big day, the CBH Rail Fleet Launch. The new locomotives and wagons were unveiled and there were several speeches given and interviews on camera. The winners of the competition to name the locomotives were revealed and a very delicious lunch was provided. CBH took special care to ensure that the menu consisted of items from the growers of Western Australia. Included were lamb sandwiches, breads and banana tiramisu. The ladies then had to do some quick shopping to prepare for the 80’s themed after party. The group danced to 80’s music and enjoyed their last night together.

On Saturday they flew out to Sydney and checked into Shangri-La Hotel, located in The Rocks, a historical part of Sydney near the harbour. After a late arrival they went to bed to rest up for their last free day in Australia.

Sarah said, “On Sunday, we walked around the Circular Quay in the Sydney Harbour with John and Ivana. We saw the Opera House, Harbour Bridge and an aborigine playing the digeridoo (a long tube without holes you blow through that makes a unique musical sound.) The highlight of the day was when we went on a whale watching tour. We saw two humpback whales and even got to see them breach or jump out of the water! Afterwards we stopped in to the Australian McDonald’s which was featuring lamb burgers, and did some souvenir shopping. That night we had dinner at the hotel with the U.S. group.”

The group awoke Monday with mixed emotions, sad to leave the country and friends they’d met but excited to return home to see (Continued on page 3)
What’s old is new again

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

There is a renaissance going on constantly: things that were loved in the past but disappeared make a reappearance once again, to the delight of many. Currently some things making a comeback include; hip huggers, neon clothes, vintage baby names and peasant skirts. The resurgence also happens in business settings as well and Ferro Steel could be the Watco version. The team at Port Birmingham Terminal is excited to have Ferro Steel back as a Watco Customer.

Ferro Steel initially did business at Watco’s Rockford, Ill., facility where Watco provided transloading services and storage of steel products for local distribution a few years ago. The service was provided for a short term project that was going on in the area. Ferro is a distributor of steel plates and handles many different sizes from 1 inch thick to 60 foot in length.

Ferro Steel had been looking for a distribution center in the southeast and when Birmingham, Ala., Ferro Steel representative Brian Berryhill heard that Watco had purchased the Birmingham Southern Railroad and the Port, he thought it would be good time to start working together again. He contacted Watco in March of this year to inquire about our interest in providing service similar to what we did in Rockford at Port Birmingham Terminal (PBT), namely to start-up a steel service center.

Ferro representatives came and toured the Port with Kelly King, operations manager, and Jason Ford, general manager. They liked the location and the services the Port was able to offer. These services included unloading cars, storage, banding, and reloading onto trucks, and inventory management.

Ferro wanted to run a few test shipments and after a couple of months of negotiations and planning, PBT received a trial set of nine rail shipments in August. The steel plates are arriving in railcars from locations all over the country.

The Port Team prepared an area for the storage of the plates by clearing the brush moving dirt to allow for better drainage of the entire area.

The plates are stored until the team receives a call letting them know a truck is on the way and then the PBT Team pulls the order and loads the trailer.

The test shipments have turned into a steady stream of loads coming to PBT and business for the Port.

“We’re looking forward to working with Watco and the additional opportunities that being on the water will bring,” said Berryhill. “In the past we’ve shipped via truck and rail, barges will give us another method of shipping when possible.”

Ferro Steel has established a permanent footprint at PBT. So permanent in fact, that they’re moving their offices to the Port area to be closer to the operations.

Ford said, “We talked about many different possibilities and Ferro seems eager to grow - what better time for us to grow together.”

Christopher Slasinski, BHRR marketing manager, said, “Many thanks go to Jason Ford, Kelly King, and the entire PBT team for successfully turning a “trial run” into a growing business.”

Trip of a lifetime

(Continued from page 2) their loved ones and share their stories of the sites they’d seen. On the way out of the hotel Sarah and Ivana stopped at a shop selling UGG boots and since they were on sale, both had to get a pair of the Australian made boots as a memento of their trip.

Chad, Sarah, John, and Ivana arrived in Los Angeles weary after the 13-hour flight. There they parted, leaving behind new friends who they shared a very special experience with. Chad and Sarah headed for Wichita and John and Ivana were greeted with the news that a hurricane was heading to Louisiana. It hadn’t hit land yet but many flights were delayed because of the impending storm. They finally reached Monroe at 9:30 pm and were greeted by their parents and a special little boy whom they had missed very much.

*Special thanks to Watco wives Sarah Taylor and Ivana Neel for so graciously keeping a daily journal and pictures of their experiences from their Australia trip to share with us.


Birmingham Terminal Railway

(Continued from page 1) Safety first has been a key virtue that Rick Webb has challenged team members to abide by, “Safety is about being the best at what you do. Safety is about caring for yourself, your loved ones and those who work around you. Safety is a requirement to be on the Watco Team.”

The commitment to the requirement was definitely displayed by Jason Goolsby, Normal Jones, Damien Cantrell, and Cain Greene and one that will be remembered forever by the Grimes family.

The Port Birmingham Terminal Team unloads the steel plates from the railcars to be stored and then loaded and shipped out by truck when the Customer sends in an order.
Kids helping kids with cancer

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

There are so many life lessons that are learned by watching the actions of our children and many times the path they choose is one we should follow as well. Such is the case of Houston Rhodes. Seven year-old Houston is the son of Justin Rhodes, general manager of the Arkansas Southern, Mississippi Southern and the Vicksburg Southern Railroads. Last year, Houston set out on his own to have a bake sale to raise money for the Seth Harris Childhood Cancer Foundation (SHCCF). Houston was quite successful in this endeavor and ended up raising a few hundred dollars to donate to the organization.

Last month, the SHCCF hosted Wings of Hope Day and the “Houston & Friends Bake Sale” collected more than $1,000 from selling donated baked goods. This year Preston Sims, 5, son of Danny Sims, Mississippi Southern Railroad engineer, helped out as well. From the amount they raised, it appears that few people could pass up buying a treat from such hard working young men.

Justin Rhodes said, “I’m proud of Houston and what he’s done for the SHCCF. When he first said he wanted to do this I never would’ve thought that he would end up raising more than $1,000. He said it was hard work but worth it. It’s tragic to lose a child to cancer and the Harris family is doing a great thing by offering this support and resources to other families.”

Seth Harris lived in Bay Springs, Miss., and was diagnosed with T-cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia when he was just 10 years old. Sixteen days after turning 12 Seth died from complications from veno occlusive disease (VOD), a disease of the liver from too much chemotherapy/radiation treatment.

The Seth Harris Childhood Cancer Foundation was organized after Seth lost his battle to T-Cell Lymphoblastic Leukemia on May 31, 2009. Seth was diagnosed July 25, 2007 and fought a very courageous and inspirational fight. The foundation’s mission is to celebrate the life of Seth Harris and to honor his memory, to raise awareness for childhood cancer and to provide informational and emotional support for families of children with cancer, so that no family feels alone during this life changing journey.

The Harris’ found during their cancer journey with Seth, that childhood cancer is the least funded, least recognized but yet the most devastating cancer in families. Their mission does not end at awareness but also with the hopes that the support they give children and families during their cancer journey, will provide the strength they need to keep up the fight, emotionally and spiritually.

You can find out more about the SHCCF by going to their web site at http://www.shccf.org.

Watco Team keeps giving the gift of life

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Many people will say they put their blood, sweat and tears into their work but on September 27th, blood was what was being given - and maybe a little sweat. Thirteen team members at the Pittsburg, Kan., location signed up to give a pint of blood at the Watco Blood Drive. There were five team members who were unable to give blood but helped out by providing snacks and drinks for those who could donate. “I’ve donated for several years, ever since high school,” said Brent Allen, chief engineer of structures. “They had another drive right after I started working here but when I called to sign up all the spots were filled so this was my first Watco donation.”

The American Red Cross set up their station in the basement so that team members could easily slip away for their “appointment”. It usually takes approximately 30 minutes to give blood and a television was set up to keep the donors entertained.

Carlita Guiles, accounting manager for mechanical services, said, “It doesn’t bother me a bit to give blood, I know there are a lot of people that have a hard time with it so it’s the least I can do.”

Tara Carpentier, revenue account specialist, was one of the team members who brought snacks to the drive. “I’m unable to give blood but wanted to help by bringing cookies,” she said.

When donating blood it is important to drink plenty of fluids 2 to 3 days prior to giving blood. Getting a good nights sleep is also important in order to bounce back quickly.

Watco has had four blood drives so far this year with an average of 15 donors per drive.

Thanks to everyone who was able to donate.

Random facts about blood drives

1. If all blood donors gave 2 to 4 times a year, it would help prevent blood shortages.

2. If you began donating blood at age 17 and donated every 56 days until you reached 76, you would have donated 48 gallons of blood.

3. About three gallons of blood supports the entire nation’s blood needs for one minute.

4. 60% of the US population is eligible to donate - only 5% do on a yearly basis.

5. Since a pint is a pound, you lose a pound every time you donate blood.

6. Approximately 32,000 pints of blood are used each day in the United States.

7. Every three seconds someone needs blood.

Carlitia Guiles, accounting manager for mechanical services, and Brent Allen, chief engineer of structures, relax as they participate in the Watco Blood Drive held in Pittsburg, Kan.
Sometimes the best way to tell a story is to let someone else do it. Larry Steiner, a railfan from Kentwood, Michigan, was on a quest to video tape the arrival of the circus train in Grand Rapids via Watco’s Grand Elk Railroad. Below is his letter to Watco CEO Rick Webb explaining the service he received from Jonathan Tavernaro, Grand Elk Customer Service Representative and Kim DePratt, Customer Service Receptionist.

Dear Mr. Webb;

In today’s busy world it appears to be common practice to complain when things are not as we expect or when people do not meet our expectations. However, when people do a good job and go beyond what is expected of them, we unfortunately are conspicuously silent in our praise and thanks. I’d like to take a moment to relate to you a recent experience I had in dealing with a couple employees in your organization, Mr. Jonathan Tavernaro and his receptionist, Kim.

I am a lifelong rail fan, or what many of you in the railroad industry call a “foamer”, as in one who foams at the mouth at the sight of a train. A couple weeks ago I read in our local paper that the Ringling Bros. Barnum Bailey Circus was coming to Grand Rapids and that it would be coming from a performance in St Louis, Mo. The circus typically plays here in GR every year around September 22 they couldn’t have shown up at a better time and date, and which line it would indeed be coming from the south and that the old NS tracks were now leased by the Grand Elk Railroad. With that information in hand, I decided to call Grand Elk Customer Service to see if I could learn the time and date. Not being a customer and from past experience in dealing with companies in this day and age, I fully expected to either get blown off or hooked up with some robotic answering service that tied you up for five minutes before disconnecting.

Imagine my surprise when, instead of either of the above, I received a very pleasant and courteous greeting from a young lady named Kim. Not only did this young lady not blow me off like I expected, she took the time to listen to my request and then politely told me to “Hold on a moment and I’ll see what I can find out.” Already I was impressed. I wasn’t used to this happening - not in 2012, and especially since I wasn’t a customer of the railroad. Less than a minute later she was back and informed me that Mr. Jon Tavernaro might be able to help me.

Mr. Tavernaro didn’t know either, but he took my phone number and told me he’d see what he could find out. Fully expecting that was the end and I wouldn’t hear from him again, I was literally shocked when he returned my call within ten minutes and informed me he’d called the trainmaster here in Grand Rapids and was able to give me the exact time the train was scheduled to arrive in GR. Believe me, at this point all I could think of was “WOW! I don’t believe this!”

Mr. Webb, in my opinion these two people are a major asset to your organization. You have no idea how refreshing and yes, even delightful it is to find people who are as dedicated and as good at their profession as these folks are. I’m a retired Electrical Engineer and know very well the importance of maintaining a good relationship with customers. In this day and age, to find two members of any organization who would go out of their way to help me with what I needed like Jon and Kim did, is unusual and surprising - and extremely gratifying! When I find someone who excels at their position, it’s not only my duty, but my extreme pleasure as well, to let their superiors know. If this is any indication as to how the rest of your company treats your customers - or in this case, the general public, I see nothing but success for you in the future.

If there is ever anything I can do for you or your company in the future, I would be more than glad to repay the courtesy I was given. And oh yes, thanks to Kim and Jon, I was able to not only meet the circus train on its way into GR, I got an excellent video of the entire train. It was all I could do to keep from foaming at the mouth!

Sincerely,
Larry Steiner
Watco family in Houston triples

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

If you don’t see Kelly Frazier for a while it’s with good reason, he’s going to be busy helping his wife Marisa feed and change the diapers on their three new babies. When not busy with his three new additions, Kelly is a driver at Watco’s Dow Chemical switching location in Houston, Texas.

Marisa said it was quite comical when they found out they would have three new members joining their family.

“The room was dark, but when the sonogram technician said she saw three babies his eyes popped wide open, she asked if he was okay,” said Marisa.

Marisa gave birth to the triplets on September 8. Twyla weighed 4 lbs., 8 oz., Gracilyn, 4 lbs., 3 oz., and Darren weighed in at 4 lbs., 12 oz. Marisa was 34 weeks and three days into her pregnancy when the babies were delivered by C-section.

“The average for triplets is 32 weeks. The room was dark, but when the sonogram technician said she saw three babies his eyes popped wide open, she asked if he was okay,” said Marisa.

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“The average for triplets is 32 weeks. The hospital administrator even asked what I did to go that long. I just listened to my body and rested when I felt like I needed to,” she said.

Going 34 weeks is even more amazing considering that Marisa is 41, had high blood pressure and diabetes. When the babies arrived they were all tiny but healthy. Each one had to stay in the neonatal unit until they had gained a little more weight and their lungs developed more fully. Gracilyn and Darren were released after a week. Twyla was there for two weeks and made it home on September 26.

“We’ve been very blessed, lots of friends and family have come by to help out - and each one of them is handed a diaper and a bottle,” laughed Marisa.

Bubbly Marisa was a different person last year though. The couple had lost a baby girl on February 3 of 2011.

“I was so angry and mad after that happened, I asked God how could he do that to me. I was on my knees praying, saying how badly I wanted a little girl. When I got up I heard the name Twyla. I wondered about that until I looked it up, it meant double woven, double-strength. I figured that meant that God was going to give me another little girl who would be twice as strong as the one I lost, that I would have double the strength to deal with what life handed me, or maybe that I would get two girls.”

On February 3 2012, Kelly and Marisa got good news, they were expecting again. Not only did they get two girls, but a little boy to boot. And hopefully, she and Kelly will both have not only double the strength, but triple because there will be triple the work but triple the joy as well.

SKOL Team goes on Summer Spike safari

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Darci Spear nervously watched as the giant albino python slowly wrapped itself around her husband Chris’ neck. This scary scenario didn’t happen in the jungles of South America but on the Kansas plains in the small town of Caney. Darci, Chris and their children Jack and Norah were at the Safari Zoological Park with the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Team celebrating their successful Summer Spike program.

Chris is the Central Region Transportation HR manager and Darci is the operations systems analyst at the Pittsburg, Kan., location.

A total of 75 people were on hand to celebrate the safe practices the team displayed throughout the summer months. The team and their families met at the park and had a catered BBQ dinner in the tri-level Sarengeti Tree House. After lunch they broke into groups and were taken on 1 1/2 hour tours of the zoo. They saw animals such as alligators, bears, kangaroos, reptiles, monkeys, baboons, and many types of cats.

The zoo almost had to shut down in 2008. The country was hit with a slower economy and higher fuel prices greatly effecting tourism. Then an amazing thing happened, a Siberian tiger gave birth to three cubs but refused to nurse them, when they took the cubs to the house to bottle feed them the resident golden retriever, who had given birth a few weeks earlier, took over and started nursing them. News started spreading about the amazing retriever and they ended up on the Today Show, The Early Show and Fox News Network.

The SKOL Team got to see the famous tigers who are quite a lot bigger now. The staff at the park throws raw chicken over a pond and the tigers will leap off a dock and snatch them up before they hit the water.

The team also got hop around with the kangaroos, pet the baby baboon, feed the animals, and of course, hold the python.

“It was a great day for the SKOL team to celebrate their outstanding achievements during the Summer Spike program, and to share that success with their families, one of the most important reasons we work safe every day, said Robert Balzar, SKOL assistant general manager.

Anyone wanting to find out more about the Safari Zoological Park in Caney can go to their web site at www.safaripark.org.

Top photo: Jimmy & Jake Horner and Chris and Jack Spear are brave enough to pose with the albino python at the Safari Zoological Park in Caney, Kan.
Laylee Paige Wagerle

Danny and Kimberly Anderes are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Laylee Paige. Laylee was born on August 22 and weighed 7 lbs., 8 oz., and was 21.5 inches long.

Eric is the chief mechanical officer for the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad out of Wichita, Kan.

Laylee Paige Wagerle

Tessa Autumn Slimp

Eric and Thea Slimp are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Tessa Autumn. Tessa was born on September 7 and weighed 3 lbs., 7 oz., and was 16 inches long.

Tessa Autumn Slimp

Don't Forget . . .

Can you believe it's already October? Don't forget to get your wellness exam for the 2012 plan year.

Wellness exams are a yearly requirement if you are in the UMR Medical Plan. If you are unsure whether or not you has completed, you can contact Coordinated Health Care at 877-498-1382. The deadline is January 31, 2013.

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!


3 Years: Chet Ackerman, Bryan Anderson, Rebekah Bolton, Merlin Bridge, Edward Brien, Earl Bruce, Joseph Carlucci, Lynn Clark, Chad Davis, Joseph Degenstein, Tommy Dervin, Mark Dryer, Dale Dunn, Kevin Flamming, Chad Holland, Donovan Hudson, Chad Jasmin, Elvis Johns, Todd Johnson, Gerry Knutson, Craig Long, William Nash, Dennis Neufeld, Peter Pappas, Melissa Parker, Aaron Pattee, Brian Pitt, Joel Reeder, Larry Richardson, Jeremy Sepulvado, Stephen Smith, Stephen Swaf ford, Verlan Tastegad, Michael Toler, James Walker, Ray Watson, Dion Weichel

4 Years: Sherrie Baykowski, Mark Bowen, David Cain, Bert Clover, Lucas Conrad, James Culbertson, Clinton Dansby, Guy Evans, Guy Evans III, Troy Forbis, Karl Fuchs, Michael Harris, David Heller, Justin Huguenin, Jon Johnson, Sharon Novotni, Justin Ray, Donald Savage, James Shoop, Bryan Welker, Douglas Wolnik

5 Years: Jana Austerman, Billy Barton, Gumaro Castillo, Larry Goolsby, Ryan Gordon, Roger Howard, Richard Johnson, Dennis Newson, Bradley Peck, Rikki Rainville, Steven Roland, Amanda Santana, Jason Seger, Joseph Skitz, Sterling Teague

6 Years: Gregory Baker, Nathaniel Degraff, Jocelyn Gates, Curtis Hanna, Christopher Henning, Cody Johnson, Teri Kinyon, Jesse Lambert, Karl Meyer, Michael Minnich, Valerie Powell, Keith Reed, Michael Richardson, Matthew Stover, Asa Walker

7 Years: William Bouse, Christopher Brotzman, Brandon Hammons, Annette Lane, Scotty Presley, Jose Saavedra, Diana Scheffel, Delia Winegarner

8 Years: Venson Bell, Galen Dyck, Bo Fox, Travis Herod, Christopher Nielsen, Christian Reid, Jereud Uscola

9 Years: Marvin Albrighton, Jeff Baum, David Hambrick, Charles McGinn, Michael Welch, Ricky Wilcox

10 Years: William Czapla, Earl Holt, Kevin Nugent

11 Years: Scott Lynam, James Wren

12 Years: David Clapper

13 Years: Lisa Berry

14 Years: Norman Neal

15 Years: Donald Brau, Becky Fearmonti, Heath Morgan, Brian Oleske

16 Years: Ivan Ferrin, Phillip Lee, Edward Moore

17 Years: Rodney Daughertry, Johnny Guthrie, Steven Korell, Michael Moore, Roosevelt Robinson, Steve Sommers

18 Years: Dave Carr, Richard Heverly, Lori Magee, Christopher Smith

19 Years: Cirilo Bueno, Albin Harris, Michael Lavo lender, James Lombard

20 Years: Brian Daentl, Bruce Hueter, Craig Stansbury

21 Years: Anthony Clark, Jamie Swaynos

22 Years: Kevin Welshans

23 Years: Eddie Bennatt, Kelvin Matthews, Rogers Waddy

24 Years: Michael Allen, James Filegar, Franklin Miller

25 Years: Jesse Lynch, Michael Tappy, Paul Tickner

26 Years: Jim Moore

27 Years: Keith Lacaze

28 Years: James Nichols, Clarence Parrie, Mark Turner

29 Years: Phil Penner

30 Years: Lonnie Joyce, David Turner

32 Years: Bernard Meighan

37 Years: Robert Parker

30 Years: Ricky Hicks

This section is dedicated to the Watco Team members to give you a chance to share what’s happening in your corner of the Watco World.
Pittsburg Team Member retires after 18 years

by Kersee Currier
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When Jeri Miorandi walked through the doors of a little short line railroad operating out of Coffeyville, Kan., for her first day of work little did she know the changes she would see over the next 18 years.

Jeri stated, “We went from just one railroad to twenty-nine now and over to Australia, it’s just amazing how things have changed.”

Jeri started her career with Watco in Coffeyville for the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (SKOL) when there were just a handful of people running the operations. When in Coffeyville, Jeri served as the receptionist, worked on payroll, data entry and auditing. Jeri was at the location for a year when they decided to move to Mindenmines, Mo., and Jeri was saddened that she wasn’t able to go with them. The crew found a way though to make her feel a little better about leaving.

“Dave Gromer, Dan Linden and Jimmy Horner (all still Watco Team Members) told me that I needed to come in my jeans and boots the next day but they wouldn’t tell me why. When I showed up Dave handed me a round railroad crossing badge that said ‘Honoray Engineer’ and then they let me “drive” the locomotive a bit, with proper assistance, of course,” said Jeri.

A year after the move to Pittsburg, Watco founder Dick Webb called Jeri and asked her if she would like to help out at the Coffeyville, Kan., mechanical shop. Some of the duties that Jeri performed at the shop included car repair billing for our Customer, Cleco and wreck repair billing. Jeri also did the program AEI tags for a company called Millennium Rail, which has since been acquired by Watco. Jeri stayed at the Coffeyville shop for seven years before joining the SKOL Team again.

When back at the SKOL Jeri worked as a receptionist, invoicing, filing, and a variety of other office work. Jeri stayed there for two years and then made the move to Pittsburg.

“I drove over from our farm near Coffeyville the first day and then was going to try find a hotel to stay in. Dick (Webb) was concerned about me driving back and forth and at the time he had a rental only a block away from the offices so that’s where I ended up,” said Jeri. “Dick was always watching out for his people. And Kaye Lynne (Dick’s wife) was great too.”

“It took about nine months for my husband Gary to sell the farm and then another year to find us a house here in Pittsburg,” she said. “As soon as I left Dick had another Watco Team Member, Randall Lewis move in to the rental.”

In Pittsburg Jeri has worn many hats as the company has grown and needs have changed. She started out working on billing from 2002 to 2007 and then she helped out as a car hire and fleet specialist and recording track repairs.

“Technology has changed things so much, we used to print so much of the information and we had to fax it to everyone, now with just a click on the keyboard they have what they need,” said Jeri. “I can’t imagine running 29 railroads the way we used to, the paperwork would be impossible.”

In 2008 Jeri began working as a receptionist for Customer Service. Jeri routes the calls coming in for the various railroads to the proper Customer Service Representative.

“I love talking to the Customers and helping them get what they want” said Jeri, this being one of her favorite jobs she has been able to do at Watco.

Ron Spencer, manager of Customer Service, said, “Jeri is the front line of Customer Service for both our internal and external Customers. Over the years numerous Customers have expressed to me how friendly and happy Jeri always is when they call our Customer Service center in Pittsburg. Our Customers really appreciate the fact that we have an actual person answering the phones and not an automated system. We are very fortunate to have someone with such a great attitude and friendly voice speaking with our Customers over the years. Jeri will definitely be missed by all of the Watco family and we wish her best as she moves on to enjoy her retirement.”

Retirement will entail more family time with husband Gary, her son, Doug, his fiancé Heather and two granddaughters, Mita and Ella who live in Phoenix, Ariz., and her daughter, Shelli, her husband Doug and grandson, Jared, who live in Parsons, Kan. She will also have more time for sewing and remodeling her house.

Jeri said, “I couldn’t have asked for better bosses and it’s been a pleasure to work here. I hope Watco will continue to grow and that Dick is looking down saying good job!”

Kirk Hawley, Dave Gromer and Jeri Miorandi talk about the days when they all worked in Coffeyville, Kan.