Mississippi railroad pulls for charity

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Santa Claus took some time out of his busy schedule on December 15 to help out with a very good cause. The jolly man in the red suit rode into Bay Springs, Miss., aboard the Mississippi Southern Railroad’s (MSR) locomotive WAMX 7025 to help raise money for the Seth Harris Childhood Cancer Foundation (SHCCF). The locomotive was dubbed the Seth Harris Express for the event.

Santa arrived at 10 a.m. via the Mississippi Southern to be greeted by a crowd of approximately 400 parents and children. Children were able to munch on cookies served with milk donated by Sunflower as they listened to a special Christmas story read by Santa Claus. Four special families of young cancer patients were able to attend the event and enjoy the visit from Santa.

“My family got involved in this charity when my son decided to raise money selling cookies for the foundation this past September,” said MSR general manager Justin Rhodes. “It’s a great cause and the MSR family really wanted to find a way to help the families and children that are affected by cancer. The kids all loved seeing Santa come in on the black and gold locomotive, he made quite the entrance!”

Photography services were donated by Bobby Harvison Photography from Laurel, Miss., to give the kids a keepsake of their special day. The kids also got to make reindeer food and families were able to purchase items at the cake sale, which featured cakes made by the finest bakers in the area. The cake sale raised a total of $900 and the event raised a total of more than $3,800, all to benefit the Seth Harris Childhood Cancer Foundation and the outdoor project at Blair E. Batson Children’s Hospital, Mississippi’s only children’s hospital. The money raised was from a combination of admission, the cake sales, t-shirt sales, photos with Santa and the trackless train.

A book drive was also held and more than 200 new and gently used books were donated to the Blair E. Baston volunteer services for patients.

SHCCF’s goal for the event was to raise funds and awareness and to help families of children going through the battle of cancer. Their wish was to have everyone see the magic of Christmas through the eyes of a child.

The Seth Harris Childhood Cancer Foundation was organized after Seth, from Bay Springs, Miss., lost his battle to T-Cell Lymphoblastic Leukemia in May 2009 when he was just 12 years old. 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. The Harris’ found 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.

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Wisconsin Teams enjoy outing

by Roger Miller
Administrator of Mechanical Training - Car

It was a cool overcast morning when team members from Wisconsin and Southern Railroad’s Janesville and Madison car shops met for their first Annual Team Outing at Whalen’s Oak Ridge Hunting Preserve, in Brodhead, Wisc.

The day started out with a morning hunt which only a few birds were bagged. The hunt was followed by a pot luck lunch. During the lunch the Chicago Bears and the Green Bay Packers game was on which led to some friendly rivalry as the group was split between Bear and Packer fans.

After lunch there was an afternoon hunt in which the group bagged 13 birds. The day ended with the group shooting clays.

Team member Derek Nyman said “Thanks to WSOR for allowing us to have this event, thanks to Larry Whalen for putting it together. We all hope this continues to be an annual team building experience!”

All who attended agreed that it was a fun day with a great time had by all and everybody is looking forward to doing it again next year. A similar event is being coordinated for the Northern group as well.

Record numbers visit the KCS Holiday Express in Pittsburg

When the KCS Holiday Express pulled out of Pittsburg on December 12 after a four-hour visit, the crew was pleased with the crowd that showed up. What they didn’t know at the time was that the crowd had hit record numbers. The attendance of 2,190 people beat last year’s number by 735 and exceeded all other years since the train has been using Watco’s South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad for the Pittsburg stop.

“Everyone was very pleased with the turn-out,” said John Chambers, Watco Team Member and volunteer. “The Salvation Army thanked everyone for making the event happen and were on hand serving hot chocolate to chilly bystanders. There were nine Heart of the Heartlands volunteers to help out as well.”

While at each stop the KCS, with the help of sponsors such as Watco, present the local Salvation Army with gift cards to help families out during the holidays. When the holiday train rolls into town it’s a treat for both the young and old alike.

Team member coaches back-to-back Big South Super Bowl champs

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

As the NFL season goes into playoffs and begins to wind down, the hiring and firing of coaches begins, each owner and manager intent on getting that special coach who will take the team all the way to the Super Bowl. One of Watco’s very own has done just that - taken his team to the Super Bowl, not once, but twice!

Danyale (Peanut) Norman, manager of the El Dorado switching location in El Dorado, Ark., is celebrating the second consecutive Super Bowl win by his third/fourth grade Soaring Eagles football team. The Eagles won the 2012 Big South Super Bowl Championship.

Seven of the young men from the Eagles team were selected to play in the All-Star game. Jerry Green, son of team member Micheal Harris, was one of the boys chosen. The Eagle’s coaching staff coached the All-Star team, leading them in a 20-0 victory.

Norman said he enjoys coaching and is proud of the players he coaches. “They’re a great group of kids who play with their heart and soul each and every down of the game. They’ve earned the right to be called champions and I enjoy working with them.”

The Soaring Eagles had better hold their breath, since a more famous Eagle team fired their coach they may go looking in Arkansas to find a proven Super Bowl winner.

Seven members of the Super Bowl Champions Soaring Eagles were selected for the All-Star team. Pictured (l-r) are: Camario Marshall, Justin Scott, Amuryae Juniel, Jaleel Welch, Kevin Tate, Javion Clemmer and #34 Jerry Green, who is the son of El Dorado conductor Micheal Harris. The Soaring Eagles coaching staff helped coach the All-Star game, which their group won 20-0.
Cherryvale locomotive shop ready for business

by Larry Jensen
SVP, Chief Mechanical Officer

For many years the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (SKOL), like many others, performed all maintenance on locomotives outdoors in extreme weather conditions. Maintenance was performed whether it was sunny or cloudy, raining or snowing, temperatures ranging from over 100 degrees to well below zero when the wind blows. Working on a locomotive in below freezing weather is very difficult, your hands get numb, your feet get cold and your ears hurt from sleet raining down, but our dedicated team members do this each day and always manage to get the job done.

Over the past few years Watco has been improving facilities across the system. We have installed inspection pits at all but a few locations and roof structures to work under at the Alabama Southern, the Louisiana Southern and the Stillwater Central Railroads.

With help from many sources of our team including Business Development, Purchasing, Track, Accounting, SKOL and the State of Kansas we submitted an application for a Tiger II Grant in 2010 for federal funds to build a new locomotive repair facility in conjunction with the yard expansion in Cherryvale, track improvements to the Neodesha Sub, Chanute Sub, Gorilla Sub; all in Kansas and bridge improvements on the Tulsa Sub. in Oklahoma.

A portion of the project entailed building a modern locomotive repair facility located next to our new rail yard located approximately four miles north of Cherryvale. Engineering was completed in late 2011 and funding was approved in early 2012. The contract was awarded to Crossland Construction Company out of Columbus, Kan.

The locomotive shop is a modern facility capable of holding four SD40-2 locomotives on two tracks at one time with a 25 ton multi-direction overhead crane spanning the interior of the building, a single axle drop pit table capable of removing one traction motor/wheel combo assembly from underneath the locomotive at one time, and a full length inspection pit providing clear access to the undercarriage of two locomotives while performing periodic inspections that are required by the FRA. The second track will provide an area to perform heavier repairs and component replacement like traction motor/wheel combo assemblies, power assemblies, generators, etc.

The shop has many features including fire protection, electricity, lighting, water, ventilation and heat. Plans call for an interior structure containing two offices, a break room and locker/bathrooms.

Moving forward we will continue to improve safety and working conditions for our team members under Watco’s foundation principals to improve service to our Customers, implement efficiencies to improve profitability and do them all over the long term.

Section 45G Tax Credit extended

In a dramatic late night session the House of Representatives voted on January 1 to pass a bill averting the fiscal cliff. The bill has many items that some consider positive or negative, depending on political views, but one positive result of the legislation for the rail industry is the extension of the Section 45G tax credit for years 2012 and 2013.

This tax credit gives shortline railroads the ability to fund infrastructure maintenance that is key in providing service to the factories, grain elevators, power plants, refineries, mines, and transload facilities that employ over one million Americans. Not only does the maintenance of the shortline infrastructure affect shortline customers but every taxpayer benefits as they are saved $1.3 billion per year caused by wear and tear on roads from large trucks. Railroads also ease congestion on roadways and provide an environmental benefit.

Although this battle has been won, the fight isn’t over, in the coming weeks legislation to extend section 45G at the end of the 2013 tax year will be introduced in the 113th Congress. Shortline supporters and customers must once again gear up to present their case in this tough economic climate. We ask that you to write your Senators and Representatives and encourage them to support this legislation.

Double treats for Texas locomotive mechanic

It was no trick but quite a treat when Austin Western Railroad locomotive mechanic Maurice Jones and his wife Latonya were recently blessed with twin baby boys.

Jayden and Bryden were born on October 31st. Jayden weighed 5 lbs., 6 oz., and was 19 inches long. Bryden was a bit smaller and weighed 5 lbs., 2 oz., and was 18.5 inches long.

The boys were born at Seaton Northwest Hospital in Austin, Texas at 6:31 p.m.

The boys are Maurice and Latonya’s first children and mom Latonya says the Halloween babies are a handful but that they’re loving every moment of it!

Congratulations Maurice and Latonya on the arrival of your beautiful boys.
Managing for Success
by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

President Dwight Eisenhower said, “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

Looking at successful leaders throughout history that’s exactly what they did. They didn’t force people to follow them, their actions made others want to follow them and as a result achieve successful results as a team. The Human Resource Department is directly supporting Watco managers by coordinating courses to teach our managers how to be effective, people oriented leaders.

The two day course, the Management Process Training Program, provides managers with the tools to coach and teach their team members to achieve success in their work. The managers attending the course learn to use a six step management process in conjunction with an interaction strategy supported by a variety of tools designed to coach the team members effectively. The process is primarily learned through role playing “real life” examples to help them understand what makes an effective manager and leader.

James Faught, transportation accounting manager, attended the training and said, “The management process course helped me learn how each interaction I have with my team is so important. It also helped me understand that my team is not limited to those working right around me, but our entire organization.”

In addition to teaching managers to become leaders, the course also teaches them to become good teachers as well. It shows them how to create an optimum learning environment, how to create learning sessions, course design and course delivery. Managers are given detailed information about how to present the information and provided with tips on speaking to groups to get their message across clearly.

Curtiss Hemby, Human Resources manager, is one of many that teaches the course and said the response to the training has been very positive.

“Managers want to be great leaders and they want to generate great results,” said Hemby. “This course provides them the tools to learn how to set expectations, and then coach for improvement and success - how they use the tools will determine the results.”

At the Pittsburg, Kan., location, there have been 39 managers who have taken the course and additional classes are scheduled for 2013. If you have not yet attended, please contact your Regional Human Resource Manager to find out when a course will be available. The courses will be held in a multitude of locations across the country to accommodate the managers needs.

EIRR helps with Thanksgiving boxes

Team members from the Eastern Idaho Railroad’s (EIRR) Twin Falls location helped make Thanksgiving possible for some local families. Thor Steen, Team Safety & Improvement Leader (TS&IC) and EIRR conductor, arranged to help with the distribution of birds received during the 13th annual 60 Hours to Fight Hunger turkey drive.

Team members arrived at the location and helped hand out more than 1,700 food boxes to individuals and families who needed assistance throughout the holiday season. The food boxes contained all the items needed to fix a complete Thanksgiving dinner, including dessert.

Ken Robinette, executive director of the South Central Community Action Partnership, said, “With the help of donations (time and funds) from supporters such as the EIRR, we will continue to see our community grow. We wish to extend our gratitude for their support of our effort.”

Bill Goldsberry, EIRR general manager, and Steen braved the rain and cold as they loaded up boxes for the families who arrived to collect their Thanksgiving boxes.

Despite the weather, Steen said he was more than happy to participate.

“As a TS&IC leader we are encouraged to find a local charity to help out with so we can be involved with the community. Just from being in the area I’ve heard a lot about the South Central CAP and wanted to build a connection between them and the EIRR Team,” said Steen. “I was grateful to be able to help out during the holidays.”

Thanks Watco veterans

In November we posted the names of the Watco veterans in The Dispatch to honor all the team members who have served in the military to preserve our freedom. There were some names missing from the data base and if your name wasn’t listed please notify our human resource department so that we can have an accurate listing of those who have served our country.


SKOL’s track truck

The South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad recently had a new hy-rail truck built to replace one of their aging vehicles. The new truck is state-of-the-art with more electronic track monitoring equipment, and more on-board tool capability to allow our MOW team to identify and repair track defects more efficiently, to keep our trains moving, and ultimately providing the best service to our Customers.

Team members pictured with the new SKOL hy-rail truck are (l-r) Brandon Craddock, track inspector, Zach Collingsworth, SKOL assistant roadmaster, and Theron Pope, SKOL clerk.
Marlin Ray Hughes

Watco Team member Marlin Ray Hughes, 51, died December 3, 2012 in Barton County, Kansas, as a result of a motorcycle accident. Marlin was an engineer for the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad since it’s start in 2001. He was born March 14, 1961 at Norton, Kansas, the son of Howard and Marian (Bennett) Hughes. He married Alicia Day Rodriguez May 1, 2010 at Ulysses, Kansas. She survives. A Great Bend and Hoisington, Kansas, resident since 1983, he served in the United States Army. Survivors include his wife, Alicia Hughes, of the home; one son: Dalton Ray Hughes, Great Bend; one daughter: Stephanie Renee Keenan and husband Matt of San Angelo, Texas; stepdaughter: Jessica Lauren Robertson, Great Bend; one grandchild: Ransom Justice Bennett, Meridian, Iowa and Sharon Bennett, Boulder, Colorado; two aunts: Martha Bennett, Spearville, Kansas; foster mother: Phyllis Parsons, Great Bend; two cousins: Ron Bennett, Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Sherri Bennett, Boulder, Colorado; two aunts: Martha Bennett, Spearville, Kansas; foster father: Larry Parsons, Great Bend; foster mother: Phyllis Parsons, Great Bend; two cousins: Ron Bennett, Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Sherri Bennett, Boulder, Colorado. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Funeral services were held on December 6, 2012 at Bryant Funeral Home with Pastor Roy Savage officiating. Cremation followed the service with a private family inurnment to be held at a later date.

Memorials are requested to Barton County Boys Club, 638 SW Ave. Meridian, KS 67660 in gratitude for the foundation that was laid during Marlin’s youth.

Jan 8

Marlin Ray Hughes

Deaths

Marlin Ray Hughes

Jan 7

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!

1 Year:
- Gretchen Ankeny
- Philip Beynon
- Ron Bird
- Kenneth Brown
- Joseph Caldwell
- Robert Campbell
- Bryan Castellano
- Matthew Clark
- Carlos Cruz
- Anthony Davies
- Jeffery Edmondson
- Christopher Ellis
- Luis Escobedo
- Jarrett Finn
- Edward Garza
- Paul Green
- Barry Griffen
- Russell Griffiths
- Justin Haisch
- Dean Harris
- Jeffrey Hart
- Chey Hartley
- Kris Hawley
- Benjamin Hiltner
- Clifford Hogan
- Bryan House
- Doug Howard
- Troy Johnson
- Russell Koczur
- Douglas Krattiger
- Jacob Langford
- John Luis
- Brian Maky
- Ursula Mathiasson
- Peter Matjuszzenko
- Luis Mendoza
- Dale Merbach
- Joseph Meredith
- Stephen Monger
- Michael Ocampo
- Efrain Ortiz
- Todd Peterson
- Michael Ramirez
- Raul Ramos
- Angela Routledge
- Oscar Ruelas
- Johnnie Ruiz
- Timothy Schaffer
- Brenda Shirah
- Lee Smith
- Michelle Smith
- Mark Soots
- Zachary Starling
- Devin Sundsabak
- Rosalio Torres
- Steven William Welch
- Stephen Young

2 Years:
- John Anderson
- Miranda Anselmi
- Raymond Bachtal
- Raymond Bowen
- Jacob Burns
- Andrea Burrow
- Nicholas Busshardt
- Jeremy Byford
- Daniel Caine
- Nathan Champion
- Lucas Cummings
- Stacey Faison
- Joseph Freitas
- Jakob Gable
- Israel Garza
- Bill Goldsberry
- Nathan Gooch
- Daniel Harkness
- Benjamin Immel
- Dyllan Jerome
- Juan Jimenez
- David Justiss
- Rob McDaniel
- Benjamin Murphy
- Thearan Page
- Travis Pashek
- Robert Ruyle
- Steven Schrum
- Jeff Smith
- Curtis Terry
- Todd Vaughn

3 Years:
- William Casselman
- Ricky Hollis
- Dale Krause
- Seth Morris
- Jerry Noble
- Keith Owens
- Clinton Schipper

4 Years:
- Michael Kertz
- James McCoy
- Brent Shepherd
- Abram Silva
- Steve Smardzo
- Chad Taylor
- Raymond Warrington

5 Years:
- Ricky Carter
- David Garcia
- Jeffrey Hall
- Jody Hyndshaw
- Donald Lake
- Reginald Portivent
- Darcy Spear
- Gina Williams

6 Years:
- Jason Ankeny
- Joshua Beaudy
- Ron Close
- Tomas Deleon
- Jean Guerrier
- Douglas Hartman
- Steve Iseli
- Leland Lott
- Amy Miioni
- Frank Nichols
- Jered Ramsey
- Ronald Rathgeb
- Robert Schwalbe
- Doug Whalen
- Jason Wood

7 Years:
- Thomas Addison
- Derek Brown
- James Brown
- Lewis Burlison
- William Chase
- Carol Cook
- Carlos Diaz
- Johnny Fields
- Michael Gray
- Josh Jacobs
- Anthony Kirkland
- Eddie Lapine
- Joshua Leslie
- Steven O’Neal
- Alexander Valles
- Jason Welch
- George Yellott

8 Years:
- Roy Apperson
- Shasta Duffey
- David Fontaine
- Nathan Harlow
- Matt Heeren
- Alan Light
- Pieter Michels
- Jimmie Miller
- David Noonan
- Eric Strait

9 Years:
- Clint Allen
- Gary Griswold
- Josh Gwillim
- Terry Olin
- Brian Pfugheoef

10 Years:
- Fallyne Dece
- David Fowler
- Mitchell Smith

11 Years:
- Edward Davis
- Jonathan Evans
- Jim Fearmonti
- Michael McGee
- Macaulley Morse
- Leon Odom
- Kenneth Schulze
- Samuel Winegarner

12 Years:
- James Brewer
- Kenneth Parkin
- Mindy VanBuren

13 Years:
- Leon Abercrombia
- Aaron Guerrero

14 Years:
- Darrel Claibourn
- Clarence Collins

15 Years:
- Justin Cox
- Mark Walker

16 Years:
- Roger Kelley
- Artis Smith

17 Years:
- Robert Heckmann
- Kelly King

18 Years:
- Shannon Kisley
- Brady Rogers
- Rob Thrall

19 Years:
- Bonnie Baldwin

20 Years:
- Sheryll Graham
- Randy Hervey
- Santiago Montoya
- Charles Shope
- Milburn Stewart

21 Years:
- John Falk

22 Years:
- Kirk Hawley

23 Years:
- Robert McKinnon

24 Years:
- James Young

25 Years:
- Paul Swanson

26 Years:
- John Beloffs
- Tony Harper
- Michael Roknich
- John Smet

28 Years:
- Ken Clemmons
- Dewayne Dockens

34 Years:
- Darryl Dyess
- Charles Watkins

35 Years:
- Jeffery Yon

36 Years:
- Tex Inman

37 Years:
- Steve Rhodes

48 Years:
- Earl Bowser
Wisconsin & Southern Railroad hosts Customer train ride

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

The perfect way to top off a freight summit would be to ride one of the modes of transportation discussed at the summit, and if the meetings were in Madison, Wisc., the perfect “vehicle” would be the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad’s (WSOR) executive passenger cars. Following the Wisconsin Freight Summit on November 28, WSOR Customers were invited to board the train for a two and a half hour ride beginning and ending in the Madison terminal yard.

The ride served as an opportunity to thank Customers for their business and support. The event began with introductory remarks by Watco’s Chief Operating Officer Rick Baden and Chief Commercial Officer Ed McKechnie. The two expressed their appreciation to the Customers for letting the WSOR take care of their shipping needs and how the WSOR is committed to work as their partner to assist in naturally and organically growing their business and presence in the southern Wisconsin market place.

Twenty plus Customers along with their guests, WSOR and Watco Team Members made up the group of 60 that left Madison’s Johnson Street yard shortly after sunset. The group primarily from Wisconsin and Illinois were treated to a leisurely ride through Madison and southeastern Dane County.

Katie Sackett, WSOR director of sales and marketing said, “This was a great opportunity to network and learn more about the opportunities and challenges facing our Customers throughout the geographic region that we operate over in Wisconsin as well as Illinois. Our reach is tremendous as we have direct connections with every Class I except for one which is truly spectacular and our Customers recognize the benefit of our multiple interchanges through every shipment they move.”

Once the train arrived back at the Madison yard guests were given a WSOR/Watco candy jar filled with sweet treats as a token of gratitude for the past year’s business.

Above left: Patrick Lyons, LYCON, Inc. and Ed McKechnie, Watco EVP and COO visit during the WSOR’s Customer Appreciation train ride. Bottom left: passengers relax on the WSOR executive passenger cars as they roll through Madison. Bottom right: the executive passenger train leaves the Madison Yard.

Photo by John Ryan