Watco’s Ann Arbor Railroad wins an award for putting Chrysler Jeeps on the road.
Ann Arbor Railroad receives Chrysler Service Excellence Award

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

When many people hear the word jeep they think of an open top vehicle, sunshine, and the wind in their hair. The Ann Arbor Railroad Team was recently recognized by Chrysler for moving a more suburban version, the iconic Jeep Cherokee.

Ann Arbor representatives recently attended the INL/Chrysler Carrier Reception where the Ann Arbor received special recognition for the service excellence that was demonstrated throughout the Jeep Cherokee launch, a complex and high profile event within Chrysler.

The evening included a welcome by the Chrysler Vehicle Logistics Team followed by a presentation of carrier awards for outstanding performance. During the presentation of the carrier awards, Chrysler recognized three railroads; Union Pacific, CSX and Ann Arbor. Chrysler and INL commended the AA team for their dedication and commitment to service.

Bob Billings, Ann Arbor general manager, said, “What an honor it is to receive such recognition from the Customer, the value attained is immense and we’re very thankful. This recognition is attributed directly to the dedicated Ann Arbor Team Members and service provider partners such as AWC, Vascor, CSX, NS, UP and Cassens which strive together daily, in an effort to best serve the Customer.”

As part of the presentation, Chrysler described the complexities and challenges that were encountered during the Cherokee launch. Chrysler explained that one of the launch highlights, worthy of benchmarking, was AA’s capabilities at origin loading, switching and vehicle logistics services, all of which positively contributed toward Chrysler successfully achieving their goal of moving 20,000 new Cherokees to dealerships within 14 days without any significant delay or disruption to the overall network.

Eric Thurlow, AA marketing manager, “Every day we strive to not only meet but exceed our Customer’s expectations. We are honored to receive this award which is a testament to how focused all of the Ann Arbor Team Members are on serving the Customer and making sure everything we do gives the customer a competitive advantage and adds value to their business.”

Accepting the Chrysler Service Excellence Award on behalf of the Ann Arbor (AA) Team are (l-r): Eric Thurlow, AA marketing manager; Chris Boatman, AA director automotive operations; and Bob Billings, AA general manager.

Jeeps as far as the eye can see at the Ann Arbor Ottawa South Facility.

Record Western Australia grain harvest keeps Watco hopping

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

While many of us here in the States are ready for some warm summer weather, across the pond in Australia they have been experiencing record highs. Despite the extreme temperatures the Watco Western Australia Rail Team is working to move the largest wheat crop ever in Western Australia history.

The average rail task for grain transported by rail was estimated to be around 6m tonnes but is now estimated to be at 11m tonnes. Watco and CBH members are working very closely with the Customer, the value attained is immense and we’re very thankful. This recognition is attributed directly to the dedicated Ann Arbor Team Members and service provider partners such as AWC, Vascor, CSX, NS, UP and Cassens which strive together daily, in an effort to best serve the Customer.”

Watco will continue to improve its ability to move more grain to the Customers port destinations thru effective leadership and improved management awareness by continuously measuring, reviewing and acting to foresee and address operational constraints and plug points by deploying assets and team members in the most effective and efficient manner that allows us to achieve the Customer’s expectations.

One example of the focused improvement required to move a record grain crop is centered around asset utilization through the ability of the field service technicians to continually improve their performance on the running repairs as needed on locomotives and wagons so that they reduce the time that the assets are unavailable for revenue service. A crew of seven field service technicians lead by Mechanical Superintendent Mike Sutton including Padmore Kufa, Craig Sutherland, Peter Malley, Robert Mansell, Travis Harper, Somasodwa Sibanda, and Pumelela Maposa are not only able to complete these tasks in the field timely but also safely. The mechanical maintenance department under the leadership of Bruno Ottaviano has gone more than 430 days injury-free.

Watco will continue to improve its ability to move more grain to the Customers port destinations thru effective leadership and improved management awareness by continuously measuring, reviewing and acting to foresee and address operational constraints and plug points by deploying assets and team members in the most effective and efficient manner that allows us to achieve the Customer’s expectations.

WWAR field service technicians recently changed out a bad order traction motor at the pit maintenance facility in Avon, Western Australia.
Upcoming Watco U Courses:
201 March 4-6, Pittsburg, KS
101 March 11-13, Houston, TX
101 March 18-20, Pittsburg, KS
TS&IC March 25-27, Burley, ID

RAIL Course of the Month:
“Core PMI Values and Ethical Standards”

Watco University Completions
101 - Kelly Scarrow, Clerk, Twin Falls, ID; Matthew Troth, Interline Account Specialist, Pittsburg, KS; Kelly King, Operations Manager, Mulga, AL; James Potts, Trainmaster, McPherson, KS; Carl Clausen, Plant Superintendent, Cudahy, WI; Ishmael Elkamil, Revenue Account Specialist, Pittsburg, KS; Michael Salts, General Manager, Pecos Valley, TX; Derek Prestholt, Specialist - Fleet Management, Pittsburg, KS.
201 - Todd Mulrooney, Roadmaster, Janesville, WI.

Accountability at Watco
by Bob McElwee
Training & Development Specialist

In the last issue of The Dispatch I wrote about the concepts of ethics and morality as they apply to Watco’s Customer First Foundation Principles, the Work Climate Survey, workplace behaviors, and our Leadership Competencies. This month I want to build on those concepts by explaining how the idea of accountability is connected to this basic Watco foundation.

One does not have to work at Watco long before hearing the word accountability. Indeed, managers are supposed to hold their people accountable for their performance. In fact, managers are accountable for holding their direct reports accountable. But what does holding someone accountable mean?

Watco assumes that its team members are free to make choices. For instance, all of our team members have chosen to work for this company. Properly understood that means that all of us are choosing to share our decisions and behaviors according to the Customer First Foundations Principles. When we come to work each day we have agreed to serve both our external and our internal Customers according to Watco’s principles. This is a choice that we make. However, we can rightfully only be held accountable for that choice if we make it freely, knowingly, and capably. If our choice meets all three of these requirements then we can justly be rewarded or punished for our behavior. After all, that is what accountability means.

This is why Watco U places so much importance on Management Process training. Good managers are responsible for helping to see that all Watco Team Members want to be part of our team, understand what is expected of them, and have the skills necessary to successfully accomplish their assigned tasks. Many of you have heard Watco CEO Rick Webb express this truth in a more direct way when he says that before someone can be held accountable for their work they must be given three things: the training, the tools, and the environment. Then, and only then, can a team member be expected to do the right thing, produce the right product, or deliver the right service safely.

This rightful expectation of all Watco leaders and team members is precisely why we stress that the first responsibility of a Watco manager is to be a teacher and a coach. The Management Process is the name we give to the manner in which we want managers to be teaching and coaching so that our team members can be rewarded (held accountable) for their productive behavior and decisions.

This is why I tell everyone in Watco - 101 and 201 that the most important question that a manager can ask his/her direct reports is "What can I do to help you? " That is another way of asking: Do you need more training? Do you need more tools? Do you understand what you are expected to do? Are there obstacles that I can remove so you can do your job? Do you have a better, faster, more efficient, or safer way to do your work? Are there external conditions that I need to know about that are keeping you from doing your work?

The manager’s job is not to make people do their work or to do their work for them. Instead, a manager’s job is to help them do the work that they have freely chosen to do so that they can take pride in their efforts, know that they are respected and needed, and be able to increase their skills so they can continually to grow professionally and personally. Accountability, properly understood makes all of this possible.

Wisconsin TS&IC donates to Ronald McDonald House

The Wisconsin & Southern Railroad's TS&IC Team recently collected items to donate to the local Ronald McDonald House. The items were gathered at the company holiday party and included items such as food, toiletries, activity/coloring books, toys, ice melting salts, and cleaning supplies.

TS&IC leader Steve Ponio said, "The WSOR TS&IC would like to thank our team for stepping up and helping the local families in need."

Refugio celebrates 100,000 truck milestone at the Refugio, Texas Terminal

The team at the terminal in Refugio, Texas celebrated loading their 100,000th truck of sand on January 26. Team members at the terminal work in four shifts around the clock to unload sand from unit trains and then onto trucks after processing.

The sand is used in the drilling process and the new shale plays in Texas are keeping the Team busy and they are hitting record highs for unloading railcars and loading trucks.

Congratulations and thank you to our team members in the Lone Star State.

Celebrating their 100,000th truck milestone at the Refugio, Texas Terminal are team members who loaded that truck: Back row: Jeffrey Rocha, operator; Matthew Andrade, operator; Alex Cox, maintenance utility; Nathan Lill, operator, Jonathan Lara, operator, and Brett Brown, engineer. Front row: Rene Sfyuentes, operator; Lee Garza, shift supervisor, Jeff Crandll, cab logistic driver; JR Guzman, switchman, and Hilda Morin, assistant manager.
West Region Team Member loses battle with cancer

The Watco Team was hit hard in the month of January with the death of a very special person. Ray Sargent, senior financial analyst, West Region Operations, succumbed to his battle with cancer on January 25. Ray was diagnosed with the disease in April of 2013.

Ray joined the Watco Team in March of 2005 as West Region controller and has been a key member of the West Region Team. John Brown, senior vice president of special projects, said, “I remember the day I hired Ray, we were looking for a West Region controller and Ray certainly possessed all of the qualities that you would expect of someone applying for that job. I immediately liked Ray, but there was something else that made him very different from most of the others applying for the position. It didn’t take long to understand what that difference was, Ray proved to have tenacity and a will to win, probably from his days as a college level state champion wrestler. He had above average common sense and work ethics, more than likely from working on the family farm with his dad, and throughput production experience from successfully managing a manufacturing plant. Ray was the real deal and was a lethal business addition.”

Although Ray was hired for his business acumen, he had a talent for developing and retaining relationships.

Matt Lewis, West Region human resource manager, said, “Ray was a trusted friend and advisor to anyone he came in contact with. He had a natural ability to connect with and relate to almost anyone. He loved wood working, hunting, fishing, camping, and canoeing, and used his love of photography to capture all of it. Ray spent a lot of time in Bear Valley, a very rugged, remote, and pristine area in the Idaho Wilderness. Many of his pictures hang in the West Region office. The office doesn’t have many windows, so Ray’s pictures provide us all with a glimpse of what we wish was the view from our windows.”

Ray was born on August 12, 1957, in Burley, Idaho, to Bill and Joan Sargent. Ray grew up farming in Murtaugh, Idaho, with his brother Steve and sister Carol. He graduated from Burley High School and Idaho State University. His first job out of college was as a CPA in Helena, Mont., before moving back home and starting his own business.

On Nov. 13, 1981, he married Brenda Copenbarger. They have three children; Kayci (Chad) Montgomery, Matthew (Summer) Sargent, and Tami Sargent and eight grandchildren Connor Montgomery, Anthony Montgomery, Kayli Montgomery, Savanna Montgomery, RYli Montgomery, Rebekah Sargent, Gabriel Sargent and Ryan Sargent.

Before joining the Watco Team, Ray worked at Acme Manufacturing in Filer, Idaho, for 17 years. He started out in the accounting department and worked his way up to company president. In 2005 he began working for Watco and held the position of senior financial analyst at the time of his death.

A celebration of life service was held Saturday, Feb. 1, at the Twin Falls Reformed Church in Twin Falls. Contributions can be made in Ray’s name to a trust that has been established at the Idaho Central Credit Union, Pole Line Branch in Twin Falls, Idaho.

Anyone wishing to share memories and condolences may do so on Ray’s memorial webpage at www.magicvalleyfuneralhome.com.

Car accident takes the life of PSWR Team Member's son

Team Member John Snow, general manager of the Pennsylvania Southwestern Railroad, suffered a tragic loss when his son Emmett was killed in a car accident on January 18. John “Emmett” Snow III, 16, and two others, Kristyn Butcher, 16, of Newell, W.Va.; and Kaylin Rice, 16, of Chester, W. Va., were killed after their vehicle collided with a firetruck on Route 8 near New Manchester, W. Va. The three were returning from watching a girls basketball game in which Emmett’s sister Alyson was playing in.

Emmett was a sophomore at Oak Glen High School in Hancock County W. Va. He enjoyed hunting and working on the farm. Emmett raced four-wheelers and his racing number was 806. Special stickers were made up with Emmett’s favorite saying, “It will be alright.”

Emmett was born on July 26, 1997, in East Liverpool, Ohio. His parents are John and Amy Snow Jr., of Chester, West Va., and Julie (Smith) and David McMichael of Chester. He leaves behind three sisters, Taneka Smith of Chester, Alyson Snow of New Cumberland and Mackenzie Bailey of New Cumberland; a niece, Raya Frischkorn; paternal grandparents, Linda Snow of Chester and Nancy Waugh of New Cumberland; and a maternal grandmother, Tina McMichael of Chester. He was preceded in death by maternal grandparents, Reta and Dean Smith and paternal grandparents, John Snow Sr. and Robert Waugh.

Funeral services were held Jan. 22 and he was laid to rest at Locust Hill Cemetery, Chester.
Catherine Dillard and Jason Turcyn were united in marriage on October 15, 2013. The ceremony was held at the Birdsong Barn in Titusville, Fla.

Parents of the bride are Webb Dillard, Jr., who passed away just two weeks after the wedding and Susan Dillard. The groom’s parents are Barbara Turcyn and the late Raymond Turcyn.

Jason is a conductor for the Austin Western Railroad in Austin, Texas.

After spending their honeymoon in Florida, the couple is residing in Smithville, Texas.

Jessica Lynn Conerby and Joshua Lee Flaugh were united in marriage on October 5, 2013. The ceremony was held at the Leamersville Grace Fellowship Church in Duncansville, Pa.

Parents of the bride are Terry and Robin Conerby of Altoona, Pa. Robin has been the rail fleet administrator for Watco’s Millennium Rail, Inc., Fleet Management Services. Parents of the groom are Tim and Cindy Flaugh of Duncansville, Pa.

The groom is a team member at the Hollidaysburg, Pa., mechanical shop. The couple will be honeymooning on a Caribbean Cruise in June 2014 and are residing in Duncansville, Pa.

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!


2 Years: Valerie Altenhofen, Michael Brinkerhoff, Korey Deters, Dennis Dohle, Sheena Eaton, Anthony Ebarb, Jim Fuchs, Paul Gage, Brian Gerhart, Matthew Middleton, Antonio Green, Alberto Guzman, Jacob Johnston, Dale Kennedy, Cody King, Christopher Liles, Martin Mandujano, Matthew Morrison, Johnny Morton, Daniel Nielson, Cristobal Nunez, Drew Otto, Albert Perez, Donald Pitre, Tanner Pugh, Stephanie Rich, Erin Roberts, Alfred Santorelli, Chad Shaffer, Timothy Sharitt, Kris Sherry, Cory Smith, Danny Smith, Matt Spade, Tyler Stapleton, April Summit, Chris Wright

3 Years: Scott Adams, Homero Aguilar, Kendrick Bates, Dennis Cain, Keith Cameron, Robert Castellani, Charley Dohle, Johnathon Garrison, Josh Gwillim, Christina Hoard, Richard Hoffman, Sean Jamerson, George McMahan, Christopher Miller, Raymond Moore, Derek Mooy, Scott Reeves, Matthew Reus, Evelyn Salas, Michael Schaffer, Monica Simpson, Joseph Smith, Sarah Smithmyer, Salvador Tello Madrid, Michael Vaughan, William Watts, Willis Whitaker

4 Years: Nathan Beachner, Errol Flint, Jeffrey Hilliard, Ron Lander, Joe Marshall, Rosendo Resendiz, Francisco Rivera, Scott Shorb, Wesley Williams

5 Years: Gerald Carter, Joseph Forchione, Jim Gees, Timothy Holan, Mark Leight, Shawn Pool, Ronald Whitewater

6 Years: Timothy Ainsworth, Audric Broussard, Perry Clark, Ben Coward, Brian Ezell, Ty Furgason, Erin Livingston, Robert Manley, Federico Mendieta, Joseph Patalano, Walter Robinson, Robert Smith

7 Years: Robert Balzer, Rickey Carter, Jeffery Denton, Albert Glenn, Andres Lachino, Al Mee, Derek Nyman

8 Years: Michael Lewis, Benjamin Martinez, Willie Pierce, Richard Polk, Daniel Reeves, Joseph Reid, Warren Sanderson, John Scheelhe, Darrell Thompson, Carla Wilson

9 Years: Michael Berkheimer, Douglas Fleming, Matthew Hinojosa, Charles Houlton, Gregory Lovelace

10 Years: Terry Gilbert, Michael Janke, George Villa

11 Years: Scott Adams, Tammy Arbuckle, Jason Cox, Michael Dumont, James George, John Glover, Gary Goodwin, David Moody, James Taylor

12 Years: Sara Hanson

13 Years: Greg Andersen, Serafin Contreras, Bob Cunningham, John Novacek, Kevin Schoenhofer, Bob Stewart

14 Years: James Andrews, Michael Cathorall, John Clark, Russell Huber, Michael Rock, Dale Thomas

15 Years: Melvin Minnis

17 Years: Jeff Adams, Gilbert Loberg, Robert Williams

18 Years: Carl Clausen, John Henderson, Russell Kimball, Michael Manion, Chad Rose, Dale Swenson, Troy Tracy

20 Years: Michael Berley, Darryl Marshall, Roland Mcclachlan

21 Years: Filiberto Barrientos, Richard Berkheimer, Fredrick Breth

24 Years: Horace Gilbert

26 Years: John Zini

27 Years: John Everson, Theodis McClain

28 Years: Arthur Bradford, Stephen Chestnut, Kenneth Joyce, Kerry Lloyd

33 Years: Nathan Cooper, Rickey Eaton

36 Years: Mariena Leptor

37 Years: Bobbeye Russell

43 Years: William Blackwell

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.
Aviation to Railroding
A new career path in transportation

by Kersee Currier
Communications Intern

“What do you want to do when you grow up” is a common question that most are asked. The answers could range from astronaut, famous sports player, secret agent, school teacher, businessman, doctor or any number of other titles. As a college student, I am currently in the developing phases of working towards my dream job. However, I am beginning to realize that dream jobs can change and lead to a different career path.

Over winter break I had the opportunity to meet one of Watco’s great team members, Robert Sullivan. He kindly shared his story about his career path and how it has changed and transformed. Sullivan is the newly named Kaw River Railroad (KAW) trainmaster, but he originally dreamed of a career in aviation. He studied Airway Science at Kansas State University of Salina from the Fall of 2001 to the Spring of 2005. While working towards his degree with a minor in business management, he earned his commercial pilot’s license. After attending KSU-Salina, Sullivan worked for Yingling Aviation in Wichita, Kan., managing aircraft handling/refueling. His ultimate goal was to enter the corporate aviation world as a corporate pilot, but the long term impact of September 11th events brought about instability in the aviation field. Forging forward he founded his own aviation company, Sullivan Aircraft Services, in 2011. The company services offered cleaning and detailing of customer’s aircraft. However, the continued imbalance of the aviation world lead Sullivan to railroading, and aviation’s loss is the railroad’s gain.

“The long term stability of the railroad was intriguing to me. I’d been interested in seeking a job in this field and the referral of a family member allowed me to achieve a job as conductor,” said Sullivan.

Transitioning to a different line of work had trials to overcome he shared, “Learning the operation as a whole, the individual requirements to be successful and most importantly how to work safe daily were key areas I focused on.”

After adapting to the railroad industry he concentrated on gaining an engineer position to learn more about railroading.

“From conductor to engineer to trainmaster at the KAW it is a continuous learning experience,” says Sullivan. “After gaining the knowledge of how to mechanically do the job, I focused on Customer service. Learning the individual service needs of each industry we serve as well as building relationships with the Customer’s contacts that work directly with crew members is imperative part of effective communication.”

In less than two and a half years with Watco, Robert Sullivan determined one of his favorite parts of the job is working with the customers and team members. He welcomes the daily circumstances he will meet and strives to do the right thing for both.

“A trainmaster’s job is to ensure our Customers receive the service they need to be successful while ensuring our team members can safely complete a day’s work and return to their family’s healthy with a good quality of life. Doing this daily will help KAW be successful,” said Sullivan.

Sullivan is a driven manager and looks forward to his new position.

“My personal goals as a KAW trainmaster is to work with the Kansas City management team to drive stronger relationships with Customers and team members while working together to build efficiencies for the KAW that have measurable results,” said Sullivan.

Moving forward in his new dream job Sullivan wants to learn as much as possible - and do it well.