



A&K Railroad Materials, Inc.

Monthly Newsletter of
A&K Railroad Materials, Inc.

December 2010



Always Moving Forward

To our Valued Customers & Friends in the Railroad Industry

I'm generally not a big fan of holiday letters as they're typically filled with saccharine laced tales spun to barely resemble reality by the time the glue on the envelope has dried. Being in business for over fifty years, A&K is a leader in the industry, and we are constantly looking for ways to do it safer, better, faster, smarter, cheaper, and I am so proud to report to date we have ZERO lost time accidents for 2010. As I took a stroll through the calendar for the past year, besides our railroad expertise, there are a few other major accomplishments I'd like to highlight.

After our first ever holiday shutdown at the end of 2009 to give our people a much needed break, and help us bear the brunt of the economy we came back to work refreshed January 4, 2010 with a tobacco free initiative. With the lives of our people and health care costs skyrocketing as major concerns we offered a monetary cessation initiative and have made all A&K properties tobacco free.

After tirelessly implementing a new computer Information system for thirteen months, February 1st was our successful GO LIVE date. We also unveiled a new brand that month along with our new logo. Our mission is to *help our customers perform better by supporting them with the best service and people in the industry while delivering the quality railroad materials they need, when they need them.*

In conjunction with the American Heart Association we implemented a company-wide health challenge and formed teams across the country to walk the length of the Transcontinental Railroad – San Francisco to Council Bluffs – 1900 miles (3,800,000 steps). The challenge culminated with a 5K Heart Run / Walk in Salt Lake City.

There are now over 500 million active Facebook users and Facebook claims more than 10% of all the time on the internet. Airlines such as JetBlue and Southwest believe one on one instant communication can drive loyalty and purchases. If you haven't visited our website lately, it has been updated and many items have been added. One of the additions you will see is that A&K is now on Facebook and Twitter. We encourage you to check out our website, "like us" on Facebook and join us on Twitter.

While we continue to maintain strategically located inventory locations to supply all your railroad material needs, I would like to emphasize the two most important things in our business remain to be our customers and our employees. Without both of you we are out of business. So THANK YOU for all you do! Look forward to seeing you in 2011 whether it be at a convention, your site or mine. Please keep in touch.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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Snapshot

Pictured is 82 year old Mr. Steve Kennedy, the father of Mark Kennedy with Trac-work, Inc. Mr. Kennedy built the picnic table and benches from salvaged lumber from A&K trackwork boxes and stickers between rail delivered to a jobsite in gondolas. He sanded and sealed the wood for weather proofing. It still looks terrific after enduring an Oklahoma winter! He also built glider swings that hang from oak trees with the same salvaged lumber. Quite an impressive example of going green Mr. Kennedy!



Employee News



Congratulations to Jessica Blankis (Iron Highway Logistics) and her husband Matt on the birth of their first child. Liam Ehrlich was born September 30, 2010 at 2:57 a.m. He weighed 8 pounds, 8 ounces and was 20 1/2 inches long. Another Kansas City Chiefs fan, born and bred... perhaps a future quarterback? Go Chiefs!



Luz Reynolds (Houston) shares pictures of her five wonderful and precious grandchildren on Halloween. Her son Carlos' children (oldest to youngest) are Yasmine, Aliah, Zakai and Zayd; and her daughter Hannah's son, Drake. Hope everyone enjoys the holiday season spending time with family and friends!



The Little Tree That Could



A few years ago, Rhonda started a tradition of A&K employees attending the Evergreen Christmas Tree fund raiser for Safe Harbor Shelter. Safe Harbor is a women's shelter for victims of domestic violence and rape. At the event there is a silent auction, a dinner and a tree auction. Cindy Merrell and her daughter Melissa, with the support of their partners Bob and Mike, sponsored their own tree and decorated it. They named it Wind Beneath Our Wings. The theme was old world elegance including jeweled, feathered ornaments and birds of every shape, size and color. This being their first tree, Cindy and Melissa felt they may have trouble raising even the money they had put into the tree.

When the big night arrived with the emotional support of A&K employees, their partners and guests they watched the auction. The trees did not seem to be bringing in the money they used to but with the economy the way it is, that was not so surprising. So the nail biting began. Their tree was #18, a long way down the list. The suspense was awful but the A&K spirit was strong. The support for the "little tree that could", as Melissa had nicknamed it, was so great it filled the three tables and then the room. We wish every employee could have seen the support, the cheering that came from the A&K tables. It was absolutely magical. Then it was time, tree #18, was up for bidding. Wow! It started a little slow and then it took off. The bidding went up and up and up! Our tables were cheering, clapping, yelling with all our energy and support for the tree. Then it was over!

The #18 tree had a new home, The Belvedere Building Condominiums and we had an amount. The tree went for \$5,700.00, the second highest bid in the 14 years of the fund raiser. Our tables were overjoyed and the congratulations just kept coming. It was such a wonderful feeling to know that that much money was raised for such a great cause. Cindy and Melissa were greatly relieved that their tree, they had put so much into, had not gone down in flames. The best part of the night, for them, was the support and encouragement they received. They wish to express their thanks. They feel like it had been a truly magical night for all the right reasons, a wonderful way to start the holiday season. Cindy and Melissa have begun looking for sponsors for next year's tree and already have two fabulous ideas they are working on.

Holiday Shutdown Reminder

Please be advised that in a continued effort to save costs, we will be implementing a company wide shut down this holiday season which will be in effect December 24, 2010 – January 2, 2011. All locations will reconvene for business Monday, January 3, 2011. Happy holidays to you and your families.

Jake Award

Congratulations to the V&S Railway which was recently awarded the “Jake Award with Distinction” for 2009. This is an industry award presented to Short Line Railroads with no Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reportable accidents for the year.

In 1995, the Jake Award Program was created by, and named for Lowell S. “Jake” Jacobson, a previous recipient of Railway Age Magazine’s Railroader of the Year. Jake started giving these awards, out of his own pocket, to recognize outstanding safety achievements in the short line railroad industry, which had gone unrecognized before. In 1999, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) Safety Committee adopted the Jake Awards, and since then, has continued Mr. Jacobson’s legacy of rewarding and drawing attention to the high safety standards of the small railroad industry.

Thank you to all of the employees who strive to improve the safety of our operations. We put a lot of time and effort into observing and complying with safety rules and regulations, and it is good to see those efforts are paying off.



Pictured from left to right: Clay Rucker, Tom Ponder, and Tim Belt.

Heavy Improvements

Construction is currently underway in Gary, IN and Salt Lake City, UT with new combination truck & rail scales being installed. When these are complete, they will count among the six locations outfitted with these important tools including Stockton, CA; Toledo, OH; Granite City, IL; and Kansas City, KS. Scales are used for inventory estimation, verification of incoming material quantities, proof of materials shipped, and maximizing loads on trucks and in rail cars. In the near future, Eagle Lake, TX will undergo installation of the same truck & rail scale.



Sales: Top performers for October 2010

Katrina Gougis New Orleans, Louisiana

Jeff Long Salt Lake City, Utah

Alfredo Sansores Houston, Texas

Top Sales Year-to-Date

Dave Minor McMurray, Pennsylvania



Katrina Gougis



Jeff Long



Alfredo Sansores



Dave Minor



Birthdays and Anniversaries for December 2010

Birthdays



Anniversaries



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Jorge Borjas-Kansas City, KS John Dulaney-Field Operations Casey Strange-Mira Loma, CA 1 year	2 Pamela Messerly-Corporate Headquarters	3 April Washburn-SL Real Estate Dept. Chris Lowe-Salt Lake City, UT 3 years	4
5	6 Bill Beck-Kansas City, KS John Hager-Field Operations 15 years	7 Russell Weimer-Toledo, OH Mario Robles-Kansas City, KS Kate Goble-Corporate Headquarters Bruce Skousen-Corporate Headquarters	8 Beth Wyatt-Field Operations Emigdio Florez-Field Operations	9 Kevin Best-Gary, IN Marcos Dominguez-Toledo, OH Carl Kurek-Gary, IN 30 years Harry Hoberek-Field Operations 25 years	10	11
12	13	14	15 Sandy Groff-Kansas City, KS Eufemio Andrade-Kansas City, KS	16	17 Emigdio Martinez Florez-Kansas City, KS 3 years	18 John Gari-Phoenix, AZ Sheri Stott-Clearfield, UT 4 years
19	20 Reomie Riley-Kansas City, KS Francisco Machuca-Kansas City, KS 17 years	21	22	23	24	25
26 Jeff Kron-Field Operations 3 years	27 David Hagadorn-Phoenix, AZ Joe Shinsky-Toledo, OH Larry Bird-Gary, IN 17 years	28 Billy Jones-Phoenix, AZ Jim Okroy-Corporate Head- quarters	29 Kevin Jankowski-Field Operations	30 Ramiro Cervantes-Kansas City, KS Fran Matay-McMurray, PA Claudio Haro-Kansas City, KS 18 years	31 Sailor Walker-Field Operations	

It's What's Inside That Counts

Christmas is for love. It is for joy, for giving and sharing, for laughter, for reuniting with family and friends, for tinsel and brightly decorated packages. But mostly, Christmas is for love. I had not believed this until a small elf-like student with wide-eyed innocent eyes and soft rosy cheeks gave me a wondrous gift one Christmas.

Mark was an 11 year old orphan who lived with his aunt, a bitter middle aged woman greatly annoyed with the burden of caring for her dead sister's son. She never failed to remind young Mark, if it hadn't been for her generosity, he would be a vagrant, homeless waif. Still, with all the scolding and chilliness at home, he was a sweet and gentle child.

I had not noticed Mark particularly until he began staying after class each day (at the risk of arousing his aunt's anger I later found) to help me straighten up the room. We did this quietly and comfortably, not speaking much, but enjoying the solitude of that hour of the day. When we did talk, Mark spoke mostly of his mother. Though he was quite small when she died, he remembered a kind, gentle, loving woman, who always spent much time with him.

As Christmas drew near however, Mark failed to stay after school each day. I looked forward to his coming, and when the days passed and he continued to scamper hurriedly from the room after class, I stopped him one afternoon and asked why he no longer helped me in the room. I told him how I had missed him, and his large gray eyes lit up eagerly as he replied, "Did you really miss me?"

I explained how he had been my best helper. "I was making you a surprise," he whispered confidentially. "It's for Christmas." With that, he became embarrassed and dashed from the room. He didn't stay after school any more after that.

Finally came the last school day before Christmas. Mark crept slowly into the room late that afternoon with his hands concealing something behind his back. "I have



your present," he said timidly when I looked up. "I hope you like it." He held out his hands, and there lying in his small palms was a tiny wooden box.

"It's beautiful, Mark, is there something in it?" I asked opening the top to look inside. "Oh you can't see what's in it," he replied, "and you can't touch it, or taste it or feel it, but mother always said it makes you feel good all the time, warm on cold nights, and safe when you're all alone."

I gazed into the empty box. "What is it Mark," I asked gently, "that will make me feel so good?" "It's love," he whispered softly, "and mother always said it's best when you give it away." And he turned and quietly left the room.

So now I keep a small box crudely made of scraps of wood on the piano in my living room and only smile as inquiring friends raise quizzical eyebrows when I explain to them that there is love in it.

Yes, Christmas is for joyousness, merriment and song, for good and wondrous gifts. But mostly, Christmas is for love.

