



**MONTANA  
RAIL LINK**

# Dispatch

Company News for MRL Employees

Dispatch Staff: Lynda Frost • Anne Marvin • Michelle Watt • Pete Lawrenson • Ted Hagemo • Jennifer Hathaway

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## MRL Santa Train stops at Southgate Mall, spreads cheer



*Photo by Christy Cheff*

Rachael, Elizabeth, and Matthew Cheff (children of Christy Cheff of Training Rules and Safety, Missoula) take a moment to tell Santa Claus their wish list for the 2006 holiday season. Nearly 400 children visited with Santa during this year's MRL Santa Claus Express.

*Jennifer Hathaway • Executive Administrative Assistant*

All Aboard the Santa Claus Express!

The nineteenth annual MRL Santa Claus Express arrived at Southgate Mall on Saturday, December 2 to heed the holiday wish lists of nearly 400 children from the Missoula area.

MRL passenger cars were decorated for the holidays and played Christmas music as kids and parents toured the train and waited in line to visit Santa. Santa Claus (Gerald Marshall) and Mrs. Claus (Patty Seabaugh), along with volunteers Christy Cheff, Elizabeth Cheff, Debbie Marshall, Dennis Meyer and Sandy Meyer enjoyed welcoming kids and parents on the Montana Rail Link passenger cars.

The event, organized by Pete Lawrenson and Lynda Frost, provided children with not only a Santa visit, but also warm hats, gloves and scarves. This winter wear, donated every year by Sears, helps keep Missoula area children warm during this cold Montana season.

Southgate Mall and the University of Montana Office were also instrumental in the planning of the Santa Train. New to this year's Santa visit was a car wishing kids and parents a "Merry Grizmas!" Kids received Griz mini-footballs and pom-poms to support their favorite team!

Next year, the Santa Train will return to Southgate Mall and also head down the Bitterroot to wish children and parents alike a happy holiday! A big thank you to all those volunteers, organizers, and MRL employees who made the Santa Train safe and successful in 2006.

## Zimmer elected ACACSO Vice President

*Jennifer Hathaway • Executive Administrative Assistant*



*Rick Zimmer*

Rick Zimmer, Manager of Customer Service, has been elected as 2nd Vice President of ACACSO (Association of Car Accounts and Car Service Officers). ACACSO's mission is to make known the rules and methods for improving the handling of railroad freight cars, trailers and containers, and maintenance of records and related accounts. Twice a year, members of ACACSO meet with peers in the industry for informative presentations and sessions.

The 2nd Vice President is a member of the Executive Board and the position is a one year commitment commencing in 2007. In 2008, Zimmer will become the 1st Vice President and will become the President of ACACSO in 2009.

Rick Zimmer has worked at the Montana Rail Link since the company first began almost 20 years ago. Currently, he serves as the Manager of Customer Service where he oversees car distribution, car hire, and customers' needs.

Congratulations Rick - we are very proud of your accomplishments!

Montana Rail Link congratulates **Rick Zimmer** who was recently elected as the 2nd Vice President of ACACSO and **Julie Devlin** who serves as the Chair for the Site Selection Committee for ACACSO.

## MRL employees volunteer at Laurel Fire Department



*Volunteer Fireman Kent Kulesa, Travis Fox and Butch Ripley take a moment to pose in front of a Laurel Fire Department engine. Other volunteers not pictured are Shawn Besel, Kevin Zard, Jason Ness, and Casey Barnhart.*

*Photo by  
Rob Harris*

*Anne Marvin • Manager of Mechanical Administration*

Montana Rail Link has seven employees who volunteer their time to the Laurel Fire Department. The Department averages 300 calls per year, which range from car wrecks to down power lines, carbon monoxide calls to refinery fires.

As the Training Officer for the past 5

years, Kent Kulesa offers 200+ hours of training per year, 30 of which is required by the state. On top of being available for emergencies, the group claims to put on the largest fireworks display in the state for the Fourth of July, and decorate the city with Christmas Decorations!

## Give thanks for safety and health

Pete Lawrenson • Chief of Security

As Americans, we start the year-end holiday season with Thanksgiving followed by Christmas and New Year's. This Thanksgiving holiday marked a time to be reflective on all the bounty we received in family, friends, health and security, to include our safety at home, work and play. We work and play safe to make the most of our blessings; with employment and safety being so important among our blessings.

More often as not, safety is a personal choice and as MRL workers we make the right choice at the right times to be safe. That choice includes looking out for the safety of our coworkers and the safety of the Company which goes to keeping our families and communities safe too.

We are blessed to live in a great country and state, have good jobs and have the freedom of choice. Thank you individually and as a company 1,000 strong in the commitment to choose to be safe. Let's choose to make 2007 even better than 2006 with a renewed commitment to safety in all we do. When it comes to safety, what's in it for me – Everything!

## Dates to Remember for 2007!

**Saturday, June 23**

Missoula Golf Outing

**July 15 - July 18**

Operation Lifesaver Region 8 Conference

**Friday, August 17**

Laurel Golf Outing

**Wednesday, October 31**

Montana Rail Link's 20th Anniversary

## TRS year in review - fuel, operations, safety

Ted Hagemo • Director, Training Rules and Safety

### Fuel Use

The new SD70Ace locomotives have been used primarily on the Helena and Livingston helpers, Missoula – Laurel (ML/LM) and the gas train. Even with significantly increased traffic levels our fuel usage has decreased by more than 800,000 gallons in the first 10 months of 2006. The savings are seen in the following areas:

- ML/LM: 272,469 gallons
- Gas Train: 140,628 gallons
- Livingston Helper: 139,530 gallons
- Helena Helper: 260,708 gallons

During this time period fuel prices averaged between \$1.96 and \$2.50 per gallon. Using less fuel is obviously beneficial to Montana Rail Link but also to the economy of the United States and to our environment.

### Operations Tests

MRL supervisors are required by federal law and company policy to perform operations tests. Tests are conducted by supervisors observing employees during

their normal duties while watching for safe work practices and rule compliance. The purpose of the tests is to correct potential problems before they result in accident or injury. Through October 2006 there were 26,399 tests performed with a 97.3% pass rate. Excellent results, a credit to all MRL employees and yet another statistic indicating our commitment to safety.

### Senior Safety Fund

On December 1, the annual \$100,000 Senior Safety Fund was allocated by the Senior Safety Counsel during a meeting in Laurel. Employees submitted dozens of suggestions through their local Safety Committee Chairmen, which were all discussed to determine which projects would have the most impact on safety.

President Tom Walsh increased the fund this year to \$148,428 to make it possible to complete these important projects. Watch for Senior Safety Counsel meeting minutes for a more detailed description of the approved projects.

## Alaska-bound military train stops in Missoula



Photo by Perry Smith

Missoula Trainmaster Jim Lyons stands in front of a military train stopped in the Missoula Yard on November 27. The 42-car train originated at Aledo, Texas and is destined for Fort Richardson in Alaska through Vancouver.

## Employee Assistance Program at MRL

In the New Year, Montana Rail Link will begin offering an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides services and resources for any employee concerned about themselves, their jobs, their children and who need some degree of assistance. Managed by The Allen Group (TAG), employees can speak with counselors about stress, work, family, and all aspects of personal and vocational concerns. Also, EAP provides referrals, and often free consultations, on child care, legal matters, financial assistance, and work/life solutions. For more information, visit their website at [www.theallengroup.com](http://www.theallengroup.com)

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## MRL Sponsors Livingston Soccer Team

Each year, Montana Rail Link donates almost \$20,000 to sponsor community programs, events and teams, like the 3rd and 4th grade Livingston soccer team, coached by MRL employee Bruce Young, Materials Manager, pictured here. Community participation by MRL employees and donations by the company continue to make MRL an exceptional community partner across the system. Thank you for your continued efforts.

## This Christmas, "Be the Light" for a child at Watson Children's Shelter

As the holiday season fully blooms, Montana Rail Link would like to recognize the efforts of its Missoula area employees who have generously donated to our "Be the Light" campaign, which has focused on the stories and needs of children at Watson Children's Shelter. Employees have given of their whole hearts to make a child's Christmas wish come true.

Thank you!

