

News Release

DATE: Jan. 8, 2021
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

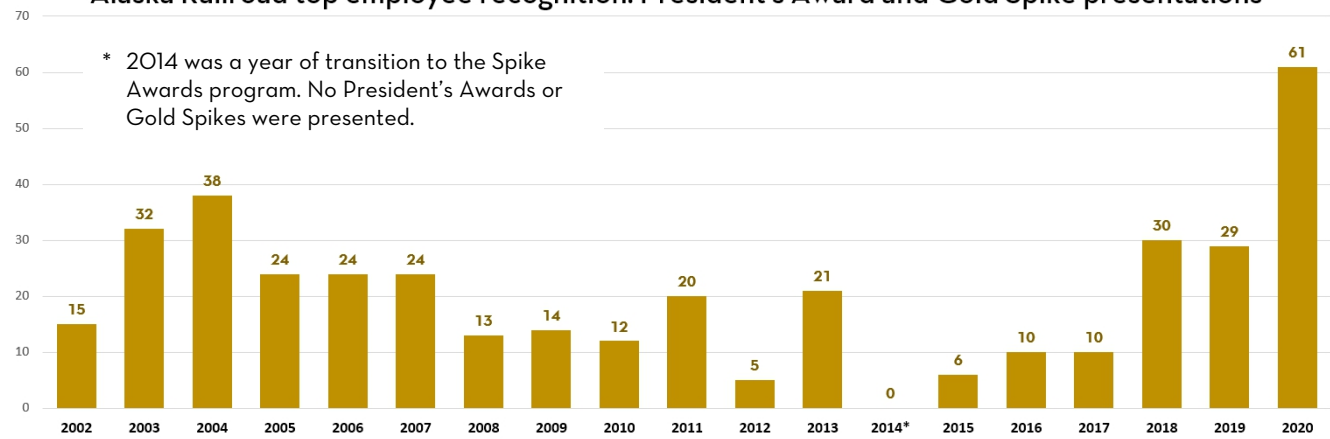
CONTACT: Stephenie Wheeler, 265-2671, cell 382-3327
or Tim Sullivan, 265-2357, cell 223-7372

Railroad presents highest honor to 61 employees *2020 annual year-end awards presentation breaks record*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) had a record-breaking employee awards program for 2020, with more annual top honors presented since ARRC established a formal employee recognition program in 2002. The award of 61 *Gold Spikes* — 10 as individual awards and 51 spread among six teams — was double the number of awardees in 2018 (29) and 2019 (30); and a third more than the previous record set in 2004, when 38 *President's Awards* were presented. The railroad updated its employee recognition program in 2015, replacing the *President's Award* with the equivalent *Gold Spike* as the highest honor. *Gold Spikes* are presented at year's end to employees who clearly stand out for above-and-beyond demonstration of company values — *Safety, Service Excellence, Integrity, Sustainability and Teamwork* — through stellar performance.

Given the pandemic impacts overshadowing 2020, some might assume the surge in awards was primarily due to pandemic-related performance. In fact, only five of the 61 awards (one individual and a related four-person team) were associated with pandemic response. The remaining awards focus on operations across railroad departments. Some reflect excellent capital project management, tireless customer service, and remarkable productivity despite adversity. Some represent skilled and innovative mechanics, and insightful operations problem-solvers. Others recognize dedication to technology advancements, commitment to more efficient processes, and a dogged pursuit of safer railroading.

Alaska Railroad top employee recognition: President's Award and Gold Spike presentations



- more -

“We wondered if award nominations would be disrupted or muted this year. But railroaders readily submitted dozens of co-workers. Peers nominated peers. Subordinates made the case for great supervisors, and vice versa,” said President & CEO Bill O’Leary, who makes final award decisions. “Railroaders know what’s happening on the front line and behind the scenes, and they did a fantastic job recognizing truly outstanding performers.”

Below are the 2020 Alaska Railroad Gold Spike Award winners.



Silver and gold plated railroad spikes are part of ARRC’s Spike Award program.

Multi-Department

- **Positive Train Control (PTC) completion team** implemented the PTC train operations safety system by the federally-mandated Dec. 31, 2020, deadline.
 - **Advanced Train Control Systems (ATCS):** Senior PTC Systems Engineer Patrick Baker, Project Manager Breanna Byrd, Systems Acceptance & Support Manager Lane Davis, Project Student Intern Graham Dinkel, Transportation System Program Manager Stephan Kester, Road Foremen of Engines Connor Keogh and Landon Messelheiser, ATCS Senior Director George Newman, Monitoring System Engineer Scott Pettie, PTC Trainmaster Mike Weatherell; and PTC Systems Engineers Matthew Berry, Jacob Dempsey and Tom Riley;
 - **Technology:** IT Infrastructure System Engineer Jerry VanThomme and Senior Database Administrator Curtin Schafer;
 - **Engineering:** Public Projects Manager Kate Dueber;
 - **Communications & Signal:** Telecom Systems Engineer Joel Keller and Communications Engineer Brian Scheid;
 - **Mechanical:** Manager of Motive Power Utilization and Transportation QC Dennis Bouwens, Mechanical Supervisor Stephen Hupe, Director of Locomotive & Equipment Operations Rusty Pochatko

Engineering / Project Management

- **Capital Project Manager Brian O’Dowd** provided exceptional management of multiple projects to improve the Whittier Barge Slip and Whittier Yard infrastructure.

- more -

Mechanical

- **Manager of Motive Power Utilization and Transportation QC Dennis Bouwens** improved access to locomotive fleet information by replacing manual white boards with electronic displays.
- **Journeyman Mechanic Brian Donnelly** rebuilt an excavator after it suffered substantial hydraulic system damage. The in-house rebuild saved ARRC at least \$50,000.
- **Trailer-on-Flat-Car (TOFC) Mechanical Supervisor Jaimie Fetterman** researched van loader specifications to facilitate purchase of new TOFC equipment to replace aging and ailing old equipment.
- **Journeyman Mechanic Joshua Robinson** installed new HVAC systems on passenger coaches with exceptional efficiency, and also shared time-saving methods while training others.
- **Journeyman Mechanic Al Szewczyk** trained all new mechanics, ensuring critical knowledge of inspection procedures and safety standards.
- **Journeyman Mechanic Tim Vertrees** exceptional support of track maintenance gangs as their on-site mechanic, keeping equipment down time to near zero.
- **Diesel Shop Second Shift: Journeymen Mechanics Kristine Bollinger, Anthony Davis, Nicholas Kough, Patrick Rowe, David Thunen and Brian Turgoose** performed locomotive inspections at a rate far exceeding department plans, enabling time to work on additional projects.
- **Fairbanks Trailer-on-Flat-Car operation: TOFC Foremen Monty Bloom and James Coltellaro; TOFC Equip Operators Daniel An, Joshua Cameron, Steve Champagne, Christopher Coldsmith, Eric Januchowski, Tyler Nicholson, Thomas Osterman and Daryl Whiteside; Equip Operator/Truck Drivers Thomas Holmes and Justin Lord.** The team received and delivered a record volume of North Slope pipe with remarkable efficiency and safety.
- **Wheel Shop Team: Journeymen Mechanics Nathan Crawford, Garrett Dusenbery and Joseph Saelens** produced triple the average number of wheel sets in order to overcome a supplier-caused backlog that impacted freight customer service.

Maintenance of Way (Track)

- **District 2 Brush Cutting Crew: Track Repairers Brian Northcutt, Jarvis Rabb, Shaun Sanderlin, Brian Sartor and Benjamin Wright** executed an exceptionally productive brush-cutting season, clearing 131 miles of main track (13% more than typical) in the Mat-Su area while also accomplishing many additional unplanned tasks.

- more -

Marketing & Customer Service

- **Manager of Freight Customer Service Sasha Kincaid** helped develop ARRCConnect, a customer-facing portal to track railcars, access billing and communicate with the railroad.

Transportation

- **Transportation Timekeeper Amanda Hurry** contributed to a successful transition to a web-based electronic train crew time sheet through testing, feedback and procedures.

Technology

- **Director of Information Technology Beth Fleischer** planned and orchestrated the remote-work transition of 100+ employees far faster than industry norms.
- **Remote work Implementation Team: Service Delivery & Security Manager Glen Biegel; Service Desk Specialists Ken Baynum and Mike Sollars; and Business Systems Analyst Kirt Beck** quickly moved 100+ employees to a work-from-home model in mere days, compared to many agencies and U.S. railroads that required several weeks to do the same.

- end -

The ARRC is an Equal Opportunity Corporation. If you need special assistance (including language) in order to participate in any ARRC service, program, or activity, please contact the Alaska Railroad Corporation; P.O. Box 107500; Anchorage, AK 99510; Attention: Legal Department, zappasj@akrr.com, (907) 265-2461; via Alaska Relay Service for hearing impaired – dial 7 11 anywhere inside Alaska, OR dial toll-free from anywhere outside the state 1-800-770-8255 (voice); 1-800 770-8973 (TTY). Upon request, printed materials can be made available in alternate formats.