

News Release

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

Railroad presents top employee awards for 2017 *Gold Spike awards recognize remarkable railroaders*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Eight train dispatchers, a transportation field manager and a telecommunications manager garnered the Alaska Railroad's (ARRC) 2017 Gold Spike Awards Jan. 30, during an afternoon ceremony that drew more than 100 fellow railroaders and family to celebrate some truly outstanding performers. Presented for a third year, the Gold Spikes replace the President's Award in recognizing employees who consistently go above and beyond in demonstrating core ARRC values including safety, service excellence, integrity, sustainability, teamwork and leadership.

Train Dispatchers Vern Bashor, Benjamin Bowen, Ryan Diehl, Caitlin Elison, Joshua Robinson, Lauren Shinn, Bryan Sooter and Steven Tennison earned a team award for a sustained level of excellent performance and team-driven professional development, which in turn, improved train transportation performance. Many dispatchers also volunteered their time and expertise to help other departments with projects, programs and training. For example, they worked with Positive Train Control project developers, and presented at training classes for other train operations employees.



Pictured L-R: President & CEO Bill O'Leary, Dispatchers Ryan Diehl, Benjamin Bowen, Joshua Robinson, Vern Bashor, Steven Tennison and Caitlin Elison. This is a combination of two presentations - one at the dispatch office and one at the depot ceremony. Lauren Shinn and Bryan Sooter were not available.

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Transportation Field Manager Kyle Bergner earned a Gold Spike for his leadership in Whittier, where he has fine-tuned the barge-to-train freight operation. Bergner's efforts have improved efficiency to accommodate increased train activity (including significantly longer freight trains) with fewer resources. His personal commitment to safety has driven change at the Whittier Terminal, where train crews benefit from thorough briefings and opportunities to discuss safety warnings and messages.

Telecommunications Manager Brian Studinski's empowering management style inspired four subordinates to nominate him for a Gold Spike Award. He improved processes that have dramatically increased department productivity, efficiency and successful troubleshooting. His focus on safety has helped the department avoid personal injuries for several years. Studinski also won respect for consistently teaching, mentoring, and remaining available to assist his team.



"The Alaska Railroad benefits tremendously from values-oriented employees like these Gold Spike awardees. They understand the importance of communication, encouraging one another, team-building and providing thoughtful leadership," said President & CEO Bill O'Leary.

"These railroaders certainly inspire me," O'Leary added. "If the great attendance at the presentation ceremony is any indication, they inspire many railroaders as well."

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