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Our Vision is to realize the tremendous potential of BNSF Railway Company by providing transportation services that consistently meet our customers’ expectations.

EVIDENCES OF SUCCESS
We will know we have succeeded when:

- Our customers find it easy to do business with us, receive 100 percent on-time, damage-free service, accurate and timely information regarding their shipments, and the best value for their transportation dollar.
- Our employees work in a safe environment free of accidents and injuries, are focused on continuous improvement, share the opportunity for personal and professional growth that is available to all members of our diverse workforce, and take pride in their association with BNSF.
- Our owners earn financial returns that exceed other railroads and the general market as a result of BNSF’s superior revenue growth and operating ratio, and a return on invested capital that is greater than our cost of capital.
- The communities we serve benefit from our sensitivity to their interests and to the environment in general, our adherence to the highest legal and ethical standards, and the participation of our company and our employees in community activities.

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ON THE COVER
Photographer Greg Latza captured this grain train passing silos at Sioux Falls, S.D., during harvest.
While change is nothing new at BNSF, we are definitely in a time where things change quickly and by a lot. As the marketplace and business conditions continue to evolve, we continue to find ways to capture new opportunities and gain new efficiencies while staying true, as always, to our Vision & Values and other enduring principles.

We’re facing many significant challenges together. In safety, tragically, we lost three of our colleagues who were fatally injured in January, and we are working to continually reduce injuries through our focus on identifying and eliminating risk. In service, while we are used to operating in challenging conditions, we faced severe winter weather on our North Region, followed by significant spring flooding in the central U.S., which impacted our ability to provide the level of service required to meet our customers’ expectations. We thank all those who worked under tough conditions to restore operations on impacted parts of our network, and we are gaining momentum day by day.

So far this year, we’re seeing signs of an improving economy along with increases in several areas of our business. Volumes are up year-over-year, and we continue to build on the market share gains we achieved in 2016. All of that is welcome news, but we also need to recognize that even with the gains we’re making, we’re still well short of the peak volumes we achieved in 2006. While we are performing well against our competition in capturing the volumes that are available, we have essentially gone more than a decade without unit growth.

As we’ve discussed, the biggest driver of the long-term shift in our industry is the structural change in our coal business. In 2016, we handled the lowest coal volumes since the Powder River Basin mine expansion in 2002-03. While demand for coal may increase periodically, we believe that, given the ample supply of natural gas as an energy alternative, the fundamental shift away from coal is lasting. We’ve seen a similar shift in our crude oil business, which has been impacted by low oil prices as well as pipeline competition.

We’ve had a strong and measured response on several fronts as we adapt to change. As we’ve always done, we continue to identify new ways to leverage our network to gain market share, develop new markets and offer new services. Innovative offerings in recent months include a new, more direct intermodal service linking the Pacific Northwest with markets in Texas, multiple service offerings focused on expanding our plastics business and additional service options out of Mexico. At the same time, we’re changing our cost structure to be sustainable over the long term and align with an evolving freight environment, where the markets we serve, technology, our customers and our competitors are constantly changing. As a company and as individuals, we are transforming the way we work, scrutinizing everything we do to ensure that it truly adds value and is designed to maximize results.

As we face these challenges, it is so important to celebrate success. This edition of *Railway* honors our 2016 Employees of the Year. I have always said that BNSF is a great company with great people, and these employees’ achievements truly reflect who we are as a company. Several of these teams implemented leading-edge technology that significantly improves safety and efficiency. Others have done an exceptional job of identifying and capturing new business in a competitive environment. Still others enhanced service through network investments or process improvements. These individuals and teams are great examples of how we’re working together to realize the tremendous potential of this railroad.

We are confident in the long-term prospects for our business, and we have tremendous opportunities as we tackle the challenges ahead. Thank you for your continued commitment to operating a safe, efficient, reliable railroad and to meeting our customers’ expectations as we navigate these times of change together.
2016 EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR HONORED FOR COLLECTIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

Employees from across the BNSF system came together in Fort Worth this spring to be honored for their outstanding contributions in 2016. The annual Employees of the Year program recognizes employees who demonstrate BNSF’s Vision & Values through their commitment, leadership and focus on working safely and efficiently to meet customer expectations.
President and CEO Carl Ice thanked the honorees for their hard work and dedication to their jobs, their peers and their customers.

“BNSF is a strong company because of the people of BNSF. The people and teams we recognize tonight have made a significant positive impact on both our business and on the customers we serve,” he said during the ceremony. “On behalf of our entire company, I thank these employees and their families for their great contributions.”

At this year’s ceremony, 65 representatives were selected for recognition for 21 outstanding individual and team achievements. Forty leaders were named Best of the Best for leading teams that exhibited exceptional safety focus and worked with no reportable injuries in 2016. In addition, five Safety Employees of the Year, representing Transportation, Mechanical, Engineering, Telecommunications and Intermodal Business Unit Operations, were honored.

Congratulations to the 2016 Employees of the Year.

Southern California Blue Cut Fire Response and Service Recovery

One day last August, Southern California crews had to halt train operations through Cajon Pass when the Blue Cut wildfire reached BNSF tracks. The response called for a tremendous effort and close coordination across multiple departments. Teams worked around the clock to safely protect residents, property, customer freight and infrastructure. The fire had a significant impact, burning 37,000 acres, damaging 105 homes and more than 200 other structures, and forcing the evacuation of more than 82,000 residents. But the impact would have been even more significant if it had not been for this team’s efforts. In cooperation with local emergency responders and the U.S. Forest Service, BNSF employees restored service to all three main lines the next day.

Jimmy Capps, division engineer, Engineering, San Bernardino, Calif.
Ty Christian, terminal superintendent II, Transportation, San Bernardino, Calif.
Kevin Gravely, road foreman of engines, Transportation, Barstow, Calif.
William Maines, manager, Signal, Engineering, San Bernardino, Calif.
Rhon Wilson Jr., supervisor, Structures, Engineering, San Bernardino, Calif.

Resumed BNSF Operations between Tenaha and Silsbee, Texas

In January, as part of BNSF’s continued focus on capturing new business and maintaining best-in-class service, BNSF resumed direct operations between Tenaha and Silsbee, Texas, on the Red River Division. The track spans more than 130 miles and includes numerous customers that BNSF now serves directly. Although BNSF had maintained ownership of this track, the Timber Rock Railroad (TRRR) had been operating on the line since 2004 under a lease agreement. A great deal of planning was required in 2016 as BNSF prepared to resume train operations and maintenance on the line. This team was instrumental to BNSF’s success, working closely with TRRR and other stakeholders to execute a safe and effective transition on Jan. 1.

David Gomez, senior manager, Blocking/Haulage, Service Design Performance, Fort Worth
Charles Higginbotham, manager, Telecom, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Todd Parker, terminal manager, Transportation, Haslet, Texas
Travis Roma, manager, Structures, Engineering, Albuquerque, N.M.

Left to right: Jimmy Capps, Kevin Gravely, Rhon Wilson Jr., William Maines and Ty Christian

Left to right, front to back: David Gomez and Charles Higginbotham; Travis Roma, Richard Roby III and Todd Parker
Two Years in a Row with Perfect AAR Audit

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) annually conducts certain audits to ensure that railroads are operating safely and within industry standards. From a Mechanical perspective, the AAR audits “air rooms,” typically located in locomotive shops. While most railroads have several air rooms, BNSF has one at the shop in Lincoln, Neb. There, 18 expert mechanics supply locomotive air brake parts for BNSF’s locomotive shops throughout the system. These experts rebuild, clean and repair locomotive air brake parts; in 2016 the team was responsible for repairing more than 8,500 parts. Most significantly, for the last two years during annual AAR air room audits, the auditor cited zero findings – something never seen in his 25 years of auditing.

Chris Greisen, manager, Mechanical Material, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Brian Johnson, machinist, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.

Insourcing Fueling at Lincoln Yard

Another Lincoln team was honored for increasing efficiency, improving service and enhancing flexibility by insourcing locomotive fueling previously handled by an outside vendor. When it became obvious that the vendor was struggling to keep up with staffing and unable to meet BNSF’s fueling schedules, an alternative was sought. With the combined effort of Sourcing, Mechanical and Human Resources and support from the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers, the decision was made to insource the work. It was not an easy task. Equipment had to be secured and people hired and trained, and processes needed to be enhanced. Today, thanks to this team’s efforts, BNSF employees are providing direct-to-locomotive fueling services at Lincoln, improving the service and efficiency of the operation.

Frosty Adams, general laborer, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Ronald Akers, mechanical foreman I, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Christopher Martin, senior analyst, Finance, Fort Worth
Eric Poland, equipment operator-general laborer, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Timothy Quinn, general laborer, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Michael Schnell, general foreman II, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.

Development of Remedy Disable Application for Smartphone Use

Grade crossings represent one of the most visible and critical interactions between the railroad and the public, requiring flawless execution during testing and maintenance.

Left to right: Timothy Morgan, Doug Proffitt, Stanley Mudge and Nicholas Foster

A joint Signal and Technology Services team created an innovative mobile app for employees repairing grade-crossing warning systems. For years, a program called Remedy has been used to help employees manage and log inspection, maintenance and repair work. This team enhanced that technology by adapting the Disable program to a mobile app that employees can easily access on their smartphones. The new technology also provides automatic escalation capability when crossings are disabled, providing additional oversight throughout several layers in the organization. Today, this mobile technology enhances the field team’s efficiency, while creating a safer environment.

Nicholas Foster, senior systems developer II, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Timothy Morgan, signal maintainer, Engineering, Houston
Stanley Mudge, manager II network control systems, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Doug Proffitt, director signal south, Engineering, Temple, Texas
Leadership in Construction of the Vancouver Bypass

BNSF’s Vancouver, Wash., Yard is one of the busiest in the Pacific Northwest and a major hub for freight and passenger trains. For decades, it was also a choke point. In 2016, BNSF completed a 10-year construction project to address those constraints. Given the number of outside parties and the need to maintain full-time train operations, the Vancouver Bypass team had to overcome unique challenges and requirements. The work included significant civil work, constructing 3 miles of new mainline track, reconstructing nearly 8 miles of yard track and building a new highway overpass. Today, what was once a 10 mph single track route is now a double, 25 mph signalized track lead, significantly improving throughput and velocity of freight and passenger trains.

Manal Bishr, assistant division engineer, Engineering, Kansas City, Kan.
Cody Ellis, gang/section foreman, Engineering, Mobile Gang
Kevin Fitzpatrick, manager I, Telecom, Technology Services, Spokane, Wash.
James Halbert, inspector, Engineering, Mobile Gang
Paul D. Robinson, manager, Signal, Engineering, Vancouver, Wash.
Taylor Smith, manager, Public Projects, Engineering, Everett, Wash.

Safe and Efficient Response to a Hazmat Incident

BNSF’s Barstow, Calif., Yard is a key gateway for Southern Transcon traffic. On Sept. 17, a carman inspecting an inbound train noticed a release of a commodity from a customer-owned tank car. BNSF immediately notified fire departments, other local agencies and a number of BNSF personnel. The yard was shut down, and BNSF hazmat responders arrived to contain the release. In close coordination with the local fire departments as well as hazmat teams, these responders ensured the safety of employees and fellow responders and minimized environmental impact. Within three hours, major operations had safely resumed. All tracks were returned to service the next morning.

Kory Gumm, mechanical foreman II, Mechanical, Barstow, Calif.
Ryan Nadeau, general foreman I, Mechanical, Barstow, Calif.

Implementation of the SecureTrak System

BNSF has hazmat responders with specialized equipment staged across the network who are prepared to respond if BNSF has an incident. These employees also train thousands of public emergency responders every year in the communities BNSF serves; in 2016, they trained over 10,000. All of this work helps ensure effective coordination between BNSF and response agencies. To further enhance that communication and coordination – after BNSF and other hazmat carriers were asked by federal and state agencies to report information about hazmat traveling through their regions – a Technology Services team designed the SecureTrak system. The web-based Global Imaging System tool provides immediate access to real-time data about individual rail cars, including cargo and location information, for first responders.

Gregory Palcich, manager II, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Caleb Peterson, consulting systems developer I, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Successful Implementation and Project Management of DriveCam

As part of BNSF’s safety commitment, new technologies are frequently deployed where they make sense. One example is DriveCam, a small, digital event recorder installed in company vehicles that identifies at-risk driving behaviors and reinforces safe driving. A team played a crucial role in deploying the DriveCam program, working to ensure adherence and confirming that effective coaching happens if an employee puts himself or herself at risk. Since DriveCam was introduced at BNSF in 2014, the frequency and severity of behaviors triggering DriveCam events in company vehicles have declined – with a nearly 20 percent overall reduction of at-risk driving behavior year-over-year.

Brody Cartwright, manager, Budgets, Finance, Fort Worth
Heather Parrish, manager, Operating Practices-Vehicles, Safety, Training & Ops Support, Fort Worth

Recognizing the Lincoln Diesel Shop for its Material Culture, Vision & Leadership

As part of BNSF’s Materials Asset Management initiative, Mechanical shops across the network are setting up new processes and procedures to ensure the most efficient and effective operations within each facility. Since the Lincoln Diesel Shop team embraced this initiative, they have completely overhauled the warehouse, while categorizing and capturing all materials in a new inventory system. They also transitioned the warehouse to a closed warehouse, ensuring that all locomotive material is properly secured and accounted for so that inventory is appropriately used and available to maintain locomotives. Year-over-year, the accuracy of the shop’s inventory has improved from 70 percent – or a variance of $1 million in inventory – to 99 percent – a variance of about $40,000.

Eric Cobb, general clerk, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Chris Greisen, manager, Mechanical Material, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
Jason Rash, machinist, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.
David White, boilermaker, Mechanical, Lincoln, Neb.

Hard Work and Dedication on the Source2Pay Implementation

Source2Pay – or Sourcing to Payment system – is a corporatewide system that improves controls, prevents overpayments and increases sourcing-saving opportunities.

Noor Ahmed, consulting systems developer I, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Pamela Kuhlman, manager, Revenue Accounting, Finance, Fort Worth
Andrew Manthei, director, Strategic Sourcing, Finance, Fort Worth

Source2Pay consolidates, streamlines and simplifies separate processes to request, bid for, contract, invoice and pay for services.

With the system, purchase orders are approved before work begins, and controls are built in to confirm that the rates that are invoiced match what is in the contract. This online tool supports BNSF’s continued efforts to optimize resources, reduce costs and drive efficiency. By consolidating services information, Source2Pay also enables the Sourcing team to negotiate the most competitive rates for services across the company. This tool has resulted in the prevention of $5 million in overpayments in the first year of implementation.

Noor Ahmed, consulting systems developer I, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Pamela Kuhlman, manager, Revenue Accounting, Finance, Fort Worth
Andrew Manthei, director, Strategic Sourcing, Finance, Fort Worth
Dedication to Customer Service Leads to Accounts Receivable Improvements

In 2016, Finance was asked to assign all account-receivable work for a major petrochemical customer to a single employee – one with strong communication and problem-solving skills. Finance identified Raymond Zilliox, general clerk, Topeka, Kan., who in four months improved this customer’s account-receivables from 38 to 86 percent, with those over 90 days past due dropping from $2 million to $210,000. The customer had as many as 20 active accounts with BNSF, and each account had multiple contacts with different payment and approval processes. Zilliox recommended that the customer implement a small task force to evaluate outstanding delinquent invoices and current procedures. After multiple calls and updates, the customer identified patterns in their delinquencies and addressed those internally. These discussions gave Zilliox the chance to educate the customer about tools BNSF has to help customers manage accounts. His success has led BNSF to use this account management method with other customers – and this customer’s account-receivables continue to improve; as of March, the customer was 96 percent current.

Successful Execution of Camp Ripley’s National Guard/Rail Brigade

In January 2016, BNSF began planning the largest rail transport mission ever, moving 1,300-plus pieces of military equipment over 2,000 miles – from Camp Ripley in Minnesota to the Mojave Desert in California. This was an enormous job, requiring collaboration across multiple departments and National Guard brigades. The equipment – Humvees, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Abrams tanks and other systems – was needed for a major training exercise and required eight trains. Because Camp Ripley had limited track, trains were built off-site, arriving every morning for loading and departing nightly after being loaded. The cycle would start over the next morning. The operation was flawlessly executed, and its success opened the door for another National Guard move at Burlington, Iowa, in June.

Tommie Edwards III, division trainmaster, Transportation, Minneapolis
Corey Ellis, equipment specialist, Marketing, Fort Worth
Grace Kung, manager, Marketing, Industrial Products, Fort Worth

Achieving Financial and Market Share Growth in BNSF’s Pulpboard Market

In 2016, the Pulpboard Sales and Marketing team achieved annual net revenue of $128 million, topping its 2008 record by $6 million. The team also increased BNSF’s market share of the western market by 2.3 percent and volume by 3 percent. This was achieved in a highly competitive landscape where there was no option to leverage equipment supply. To achieve growth, sales managers fostered strong relationships with three principle pulpboard shippers, mining requests for proposals to gain a holistic view of supply chain and value-add propositions. The team then used consultative selling strategies to promote solutions that benefited both parties. They also designed transportation solutions that shifted market share to BNSF from a major competitor without eroding profit.

Kyle Cooper, manager, Business Development, Industrial Products, Fort Worth
Thomas Tomberlain, manager, Sales, Industrial Products, Acworth, Ga.

Sand Unit Train Conversion

The increased demand for sand used in fracking led this team to convert many of BNSF’s sand shipments to unit train service. The expansion included 11 unit train origins and 40 unit train destinations. This team also engaged customers to invest an estimated $630 million in track and plant expansion. This was a challenge, given the downturn in crude oil prices and pressure on drilling and pumping companies to cut costs. Shifting to unit trains allowed a better pricing
Successful Launch of Chrysler Service

In early 2013, BNSF was awarded new business from Chrysler that would bring an additional 500,000 finished vehicles onto the network annually, beginning in 2016. Preparing for this sizeable volume increase required that BNSF redesign and expand selected automotive ramps, expand and distribute the auto rack fleet, review local switching and line-haul service, and adjust and build new Transportation Service Plans. At the same time, BNSF needed to integrate systems and exchange information with Chrysler and its logistics providers. A team of BNSF employees was tasked with implementing these enhancements, which required constant communication and precise coordination with Chrysler. As a result, Chrysler’s transition to BNSF was completed successfully – and the customer has been very pleased with the outcome.

Christian Carlsen, manager, Ramp Operations, Marketing, Alliance, Texas
Michael Thidemann, project manager, Marketing eCommerce, Marketing, Fort Worth

First Commercial UAV BVLOS Operations

BNSF has been a leader in the commercial use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) – drones – with a strategy to explore their use to enhance safety and operations. Originally, regulations allowed BNSF to fly UAVs in line of sight, but the greatest potential was in operating UAVs for longer distances, beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS), especially for track inspections. BNSF’s UAV team partnered with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop a plan for BVLOS operations in the U.S. Their work culminated in a 135-mile flight on the Clovis Subdivision in New Mexico – the first commercial BVLOS flight of a UAV in the lower 48 states. Along with this historic flight, the team established the process for expedited FAA approval on additional subdivisions.

Todd Graetz, director, Telecommunications, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Michael Mischke, consulting systems engineer II, Technology Services, Fort Worth
EAM Center Console Implementation

Engineering Asset Management (EAM) is a technology used by Engineering to streamline inspection and maintenance processes for track and other assets. The system operates on a tablet, and because employees conduct track and asset inspections from a company vehicle, the console that holds the tablet is extremely important. Joseph Day, project manager, Technology Services, partnered with a vendor to manufacture the consoles, then worked with Sourcing on procurement and managing distribution and installation. The console was installed in more than 700 BNSF vehicles across the system, with minimal impact to operations. Engineering employees now use EAM in their vehicles to input real-time track inspection and asset condition information. Day completed the project on time and under budget – saving the company $800,000 from the original planned cost of installations.

Completion of IBM Global Services Contract Negotiation

Since 2002, IBM Global Services has been responsible for BNSF’s largest data centers, running some of BNSF’s most critical applications, including TSS, SAP and others. The services contract was up for renewal in 2017, so in 2016 BNSF began negotiations. Over five months, this team took on a significant amount of work, including conducting an in-depth market analysis and a detailed review of the contract and its performance results. The team’s efforts resulted in BNSF realizing more than $10 million in savings while rolling out the new contract in early 2017 – well ahead of deadline. Further successes included improved service level agreements and defined “critical deliverables” such as the use of automation to deliver highly secure infrastructure quickly.

Stacey Carpenter, manager, Systems Engineer, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Cheryl Fernandez, manager II, Systems Engineer, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Lisa Owen, manager, Strategic Sourcing, Finance, Fort Worth

Designing and Implementing a New BNSF Employee Portal

Over time, BNSF’s Employee Portal had become difficult to use and navigate, so with a focus on streamlining and simplifying this tool, a team designed and implemented a new portal. The team worked with subject matter experts to update information, then reorganized content to improve navigation. They also updated the design and made the portal more user-friendly and mobile-compatible. The new site rolled out smoothly, supported by a communication and change management plan. The foundation laid by this team carried this project into 2017 as the new approach is being applied to departmental pages and other content. To ensure that this work is maintained going forward, the team created a governance strategy that guides the site’s management and functionality.

Jason Lamers, director, Internal Communications, Corporate Relations, Fort Worth
Carolyn Liles, senior systems developer II, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Daniel Mendez, manager II, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Praveen Munipalle, consulting systems developer I, Technology Services, Fort Worth
At the 2016 Employees of the Year program, BNSF honored five Safety Employees of the Year representing Transportation, Engineering, Intermodal Business Unit Operations, Mechanical and Telecommunications. They exemplify the very best of our many safety teams and strong safety culture.

**Efrain Alvarez Jr.**
*Intermodal Safety Employee of the Year*

Despite a busy work schedule and a long commute from BNSF’s Cicero, Ill., intermodal facility, Efrain Alvarez Jr. makes a point of being home every night in time to put his three kids to bed. Family is the most important reason he works safely—and it’s where he starts when talking to others about working safely.

Alvarez believes that having a personal relationship with co-workers is the best way to engage them in discussions about being safe. When you treat co-workers like they’re extended family, he says, they know you’re sincere when you talk about safety.

This personal connection starts when Alvarez helps train new hires. He’s one of the first people they’ll see in the first few months on the job. He gets to know them during the training—and makes a point of building on that personal connection.

“It’s all about reading people, getting to know them on a personal and professional level,” he says. “I make it my homework to get to know people and break the ice. The key to safety is good communication and building strong bonds and relationships.”

He has also been instrumental in delivering the Approaching Others About Safety training at Cicero for the past two years and helped shape training content for other teams. As a member of the BAPP® (Behavioral Accident Prevention Process) design team for Cicero, he helped establish observation criteria for the BAPP® site facilitator. (BAPP® is an employee-driven process focused on eliminating injuries by reducing risk to exposure. Trained employees observe co-workers’ activities against a defined list of behaviors.)

When Alvarez delivers training, he focuses on showing, not just telling, completing a task side by side with his co-workers.

“Getting to know a person takes time,” Alvarez says. “But it’s worth the effort, because everyone will agree with this message: You want to go home safe.”

**Dante Diaz**
*Transportation Safety Employee of the Year*

Before Dante Diaz came to BNSF in 1997 as a conductor, he served 20 years in the Air Force. There he learned the importance of always being prepared when, unfortunately, he was inside a fuel tank and a fire erupted on the aircraft. While everyone got out safely, that incident drove home the value of commitment to safety. Following that incident, he dedicated himself to safety, determined to do whatever he could to prevent others from experiencing risk.

When he came to BNSF at Needles, Calif., he brought that mindset. He saw that co-workers were focused on
complying with the rules, but he wanted to encourage a deeper commitment to safety. He got involved and joined the local BAPP® committee during its development.

Feedback is vital to BAPP®, says Diaz, who until recently was the local facilitator. That means that as trained employees observe peers, they reaffirm when they see safe actions – or raise awareness when they see risk. They identify barriers and solicit employees’ ideas and solutions to eliminate risk to exposure. This approach gives employees ownership, moving BNSF to a culture of commitment.

While getting BAPP® up and running wasn’t easy, over time, Diaz and the committee got buy-in. “I believe a team can be way more effective than an individual, because as a team you’re communicating with each other and working together for a common goal: safety,” he says.

The committee facilitated changes to procedures and plant at Needles, helping build trust. In fact, Needles received the highest rating of any BAPP® team at BNSF for its sustainable process from consultant BST. Today, close to 99 percent of BAPP® observations at Needles show employees working safely, a high baseline rate that underscores the impact of this team over the past three years. Importantly, the terminal has been injury-free since 2015.

**JED HARTING**

**Engineering Safety Employee of the Year**

There’s a unique BNSF facility in Brainerd, Minn., where 100 Engineering team members design, build and repair roadway equipment used by field crews to maintain infrastructure. It’s a one-of-a-kind facility with a reputation for innovation, world-class quality of work and a strong safety culture.

Leading those safety efforts is Machinist Jed Harting, the shop’s safety assistant. His is a unique role, voted on every two years by the scheduled team in the shop. Harting was elected by his peers in 2009 and has served ever since, conducting all training and certification, and leading facility audits while representing the scheduled group as part of the Brainerd leadership team.

In addition to being chief trainer, Harting is also known for being a go-to guy because he makes himself available and is easy to talk to. Co-workers are comfortable passing along suggestions or concerns.

“Follow-up is important so the guys on the floor can trust you and know you’re going to make a change,” he says. “When you close the loop with safety, it’s starting the process, finishing it and communicating back to the guys so they know what happened. ... It’s the follow-up that makes everything count.”

Harting is also an environmental champion, driving the shop’s Environmental Best Way initiative. He also heads the shop’s OpStop committee, a grassroots, employee-led program that promotes a drug- and alcohol-free workplace.

The shop continues to be a leader in safety performance within the broader Engineering team, currently having gone more than 2.5 years injury-free.

In addition, Harting organizes activities outside of work for Brainerd’s team members, retirees and their families. These after-hours interactions strengthen relationships and encourage open communication – and they’re one of the reasons employees are willing to approach each other when it comes to safety.
**BRYAN HUNTINGTON**  
**Mechanical Safety Employee of the Year**

Bryan Huntington, laborer at the Lincoln, Neb., Diesel Shop, is passionate about safety and building strong relationships with everyone he comes in contact with – whether interacting with employees at the shop or peers on the Leadership Advisory Team.

As a senior laborer trainer, Huntington also visits other locations to help onboard new craft trainers. He invests a lot of time talking to others about the “whys” behind safety rules and processes so they can understand risk to exposures in moving and spotting locomotives to prevent human-factor derailments. “I share my own stories a lot,” he says. “I’m not afraid to share mistakes that I’ve made and use myself as an example to get conversations going.”

Huntington also gets others to commit to taking the safe course. As a leader, he recognizes that it’s not only what you say, but how you say it when engaging others. He asks peers for their thoughts and ideas to be sure communication is open and two-way. He’s also very respectful, thanking employees for working safely.

“The best indicator that you’re making a difference or not is when someone comes up and thanks you for something you’ve done,” he says. This positive reinforcement – pointing out when people are doing something right – is very powerful. He is also quick to intervene and “pause the work” with others when he sees at-risk behaviors.

Huntington is also chairman of the shop’s Leadership Advisory Team. This team is made up of safety leaders, both scheduled and exempt, who have a tremendous influence in creating a culture where safety is truly a value. This team helps develop their safety leadership skills in Approaching Others About Safety, Job Safety Briefings and Employee Safety Contacts.

At Lincoln, the proof is in the numbers. The shop exceeded its safety improvement goal in 2016 and has gone injury-free for over 600 days.

**MIKE LeFAVE**  
**Telecommunications Safety Employee of the Year**

As a telecommunications maintainer foreman, Mike LeFave maintains a strong focus on safety – whether on the ground, on the side of a 200-foot-tall radio tower or deep inside a railroad tunnel. Whatever the job, he believes performing it safely begins with strong communication.

“I have a crew of people that is counting on me to lead, direct and to keep them safe and bring them home,” he says. “It’s imperative that everybody is on the same page ... so getting interaction and feedback is very important. Our job is to make everything black and white when it comes to safety and, ultimately, when it comes to every aspect of our job.”

So if it takes an hour to review how a crew is going to climb a tower, for example, that’s not a problem. LeFave’s first concern is that the crew safely completes the job.

It’s that strong safety leadership that led to LeFave’s assignment last year to a high-profile project inside the 7.8-mile-long Cascade Tunnel, east of Seattle. The team was charged with installing a powerful new ventilation system in the tunnel that would not only clear each train’s diesel exhaust, but would also detect when the tunnel air quality became stable for the next train. The new system would, ultimately, reduce the wait time between trains.

LeFave was selected to lead the safety efforts across multiple work groups engaged in the installation of this new technology. His approach included frequent job safety briefings and re-briefings as scope or conditions changed, ensuring that teams were fully aware of critical systems within the tunnel and understood how to work safely around them. He also ensured that the teams dealt safely with inclement weather while transporting crews and materials in and out of the tunnel. Through it all, the team remained focused and completed this complex project without incident or injury.

Thanks to this level of concentration and communication, LeFave will help lead the next big Telecom project on the Flathead Tunnel.
BEST OF THE BEST RECOGNITION

These individuals were recognized for their outstanding safety leadership, with work teams that achieved exceptional safety performance in 2016. Each work group was injury-free.

TRANSPORTATION

Jeff Costello, superintendent operations, Phoenix
Torrance LeSure, terminal superintendent, Memphis, Tenn.
Jonathon Taylor, superintendent operations, Mandan, N.D.
John Wright III, terminal superintendent, Minneapolis

MECHANICAL

David Bertholf, general foreman II, Seattle
Shawn Bickford, general foreman II, Havre, Mont.
Mark Bieber, general foreman I, Mandan, N.D.
Roman Cisneros, general foreman II, Denver
Demond Dortch, superintendent field operations I, Commerce, Calif.
Erik Eide, general foreman II, Alliance, Neb.
Luz Esquivel, superintendent field operations I, Denver
Mike Hale, general foreman I, Superior, Wis.
Chad Meinholdt, general foreman II, Commerce, Calif.
Jack Murray, general foreman II, Pasco, Wash.
Eddie Rhoads, general foreman I, Houston
Chris Romero, general foreman II, Temple, Texas
Robert Saffle, general foreman II, Richmond, Calif.
Gabriel Schlosser, general foreman II, Glendive, Mont.
Steve Skoglund, general foreman II, Minneapolis
Larry Stover, superintendent field operations I, Minneapolis
Robert Tucker, general foreman I, Havre, Mont.

ENGINEERING

Larry Brackett, manager, Signal, Amarillo, Texas
Ronald Dickerson, manager, Signal, Galesburg, Ill.
Brad Hollaway, manager, Signal, Memphis, Tenn.
Nathaniel Hutchins, manager, Signal, Houston
Cory Knutson, manager, Signal, Billings, Mont.
PJ Lovato, manager, Signal, Albuquerque, N.M.
William Lovelace, manager, Taconite Facility, Superior, Wis.
Tracey Manton, shop superintendent, Equipment, Brainerd, Minn.
Robert Millinder, manager, Signal, Kansas City, Kan.
Mark Neufeld, manager, Rail Complex, Springfield, Mo.
Christopher Obmann, manager, Structures, San Bernardino, Calif.
Paul S. Robinson, manager, Roadway Equipment, Saginaw, Texas
Bill Shulund, division engineer, Mandan, N.D.
Joe Simmons, manager, Roadway Equipment, Clovis, N.M.
Aaron Stansberry, manager, Signal, Billings, Mont.
Jeffery Swanson, manager, Structures, Seattle
Russell Sweet, manager, Signal, Lincoln, Neb.
Tyler Thomas, division engineer, Amarillo, Texas

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Victor Wallace, director, Technology Services, Fort Worth
Fort Worth Network Operations Center being refreshed in 2017

In addition to showcasing exceptional technology, the BNSF Network Operations Center (NOC) in Fort Worth is also one of the quietest places on the railroad – that is, until construction workers moved in earlier this year.

The NOC is a major hub of train operations, where hundreds of train dispatchers communicate with freight and passenger train crews to ensure safe and efficient delivery of both cargo and people. Today, the NOC is undergoing the largest refresh since it was constructed in 1995.

Although the NOC has long featured leading-edge design and function, a lot has changed in BNSF operations over the last 20 years. What’s more, the rail business has evolved and technology continues to advance.

“A refresh of the NOC provides an opportunity to improve communication within divisions and regions and across traffic corridors by better aligning dispatchers and support teams on the NOC floor,” says Greg Lawler, general superintendent, Transportation, South Region.

Along with enhancing efficiency, communication and coordination, the refreshed NOC will also incorporate new designs related to dispatcher workstations, acoustics, lighting and ventilation – while maintaining the building’s protective reinforced shell.

Clearing the NOC floor for a full refresh took careful planning. To minimize possible distractions or work interruptions during the construction and to maximize the construction timeline, all dispatchers were moved to a temporary location before construction commenced.

Dispatchers are now working at a newly constructed Operations Support Building (OSB) located just a few miles north of the BNSF campus. They will remain at the OSB until the new NOC is ready for move-in later this year. The OSB was built as a backup facility for the NOC and will also serve as a company training facility in the future.
NOC history

In the early 1990s, before BNSF was created, Burlington Northern Railroad (BN) was working through a plan to consolidate its leadership and departments in Fort Worth. That plan included bringing BN's seven separate regional dispatching offices under one roof.

According to Dan Bodeman, who recently retired from BNSF, several BN dispatcher offices were brought to Fort Worth before 1995 and housed in the Interim Dispatching Center (IDC), which is now the Employee Center on the Fort Worth campus.

“When the NOC opened in 1995, the rest of the BN dispatching offices were transferred to Fort Worth,” explains Bodeman, who last served BNSF as general director, rules & field support, Safety and Technical Training. “Then, shortly after moving into the NOC, we had the merger, and Santa Fe’s dispatching operations from Schaumburg, Ill., were also moved to the NOC in Fort Worth.”

The state-of-the-art NOC, with an operating floor as large as a football field, included a disaster-resistant “hardened shell” structure, and every system inside the facility had a backup in case of emergency. There were more than 200 desks and workstations on the NOC floor. It was a technological and communication marvel for the time and served its designed purpose well.

Later, in an effort to improve coordination in a few strategic areas, some BNSF dispatching operations were relocated to Spring, Texas; Kansas City, Kan.; San Bernardino, Calif.; and New Westminster, British Columbia.

NOC of the future

According to the current plan, the expectation is that dispatchers will begin to move back into the redesigned NOC near the end of third quarter 2017. Dispatchers will see new workstations, although many other tools will be familiar. For instance, flat-screen monitors were added many years ago, and dispatchers will have a similar setup in the new NOC. The new dispatching desks have sit/stand and wireless headset capabilities, along with improved temperature controls.

Installation of advanced video monitor technology will also free up space that had been used to house cooling cabinets for the large tube monitors of yesteryear.

“Many thanks to all involved in the design and feedback process for our next-generation workstations, and to our transition team coordinating relocation to and from our temporary facility,” says Doug Jones, general superintendent, Transportation, North Region. “A few of us still remember the ‘new-car smell’ from 1995, and we’re looking forward to this new opportunity.”

In the big picture, a refreshed NOC enhances BNSF’s agility and the ability to adjust for the railroad operation and technology of the future. The old dispatching floor was stair-stepped, but the new floor will be a single level, which will provide important flexibility to reorganize work groups to improve coordination and communication between territories and teams.

Recalling the fact that the initial NOC design of the 1990s was soon adjusted to accommodate the BNSF merger, Bodeman says BNSF has to be sure the new NOC has the ability to evolve and pivot to meet the company’s service needs and strategy going forward.

“If you look at the current environment, we have new and expanded technology and tools on the way – Movement Planner and others,” he says. “With our new NOC, BNSF will be ready to support the technology, tools or operational and organizational changes for the foreseeable future.”
Like all communities, Native American tribes have varying interests and perspectives on the role of the railroad. Some rely on BNSF to haul the oil, coal or agricultural goods that are produced on their lands. Many are interested in partnering with BNSF on economic development projects and recognize BNSF’s role in providing well-paying jobs and enhancing local economies. Others want to understand more about BNSF’s focus on safety, including grade-crossing safety and operational safety for the goods moving through tribal lands.

Recognizing our shared interests and the importance of Native American communities to BNSF, a Tribal Relations team – Director Chris Howell and Liaison Quanah Spencer – was formed in late 2014 with a focus on strengthening and reinforcing those relationships. No other railroad has a comparable tribal outreach program.

Howell is a member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, and Spencer is a member of the Yakama Nation in the Pacific Northwest. They spend most of their time on the road, meeting with tribal leaders and helping BNSF employees – including those in Economic Development, Environmental, Engineering and Human Resources – better understand the issues that are most important to tribal councils.

“Tribal governments today are sophisticated, and many tribal councils have a board of directors taking care of all matters of business for a tribe or enacting legislation for their people,” Howell explains. “Our goal is to meet with these leaders to better understand their history with the railroad, to build a level of understanding and find commonalities on both challenges and opportunities.”

Thanks to the work of BNSF’s Tribal Relations team, BNSF now has a permanent storage facility on tribal land along the banks of the Columbia River. The team worked with the Kootenai Tribe, which agreed to allow BNSF to store hazmat response equipment in the facility (pictured behind the group standing on the bank).

The BNSF Tribal Relations team advances understanding, trust

Nearly 90 Native American tribes are located on or adjacent to the railroad, and BNSF is focused on the importance of building strong relationships and open communications with these tribal nations.
To help those unfamiliar with railroading, Spencer and Howell often provide a “Railroad 101” overview on how the railroad operates. Importantly, to be respectful of the leaders of these sovereign nations, the meetings are face-to-face and conducted on tribal lands and reservations. Key topics discussed typically include rail safety, maintenance of way issues, access rights and economic development.

When it comes to rail safety, the team focuses on BNSF’s broad efforts, including preventing incidents and ensuring a quick response in the unlikely event that one does occur. Spencer is certified by government agencies in hazmat response and infrastructure security, including training in fast-water boom deployment and oil spill containment. His familiarity with BNSF’s efforts and terminology helps him speak knowledgeably about the commodities and the initiatives to ensure safe transport of those goods over land and water. BNSF also regularly hosts hazmat training with tribal first responders.

Thanks to the ongoing discussions Spencer and the BNSF hazmat team have had with the Kootenai Tribe about BNSF’s hazmat response and environmental protection efforts, there is now a permanent storage facility on the banks of the Columbia River where hazmat response equipment is stored.

Howell and Spencer also address the importance of complying with grade-crossing laws and trespass abatement, and emphasize the tribes’ role in ensuring the safety of their community members around BNSF track.

While meeting on tribal lands is important, the team also connects by inviting tribal leaders to BNSF headquarters. BNSF also sponsors a variety of programs and conferences to reinforce these relationships, including events honoring Native American veterans and support for education and other selected causes through the BNSF Railway Foundation.

“Chris and Quanah have made tremendous progress in a relatively short amount of time,” says Andrew Johnsen, assistant vice president, Community Affairs, noting that through 2016, the duo had already met with more than 55 of the 86 tribes on the network. “There are many examples where the team has helped BNSF establish a new, constructive relationship with a tribe. Ultimately, their success will help BNSF streamline permitting protocols and procedures, make project development schedules more predictable and reliable, and help tribal leaders see BNSF more as a neighbor and even a partner.”

In addition to reaching out and strengthening external relationships, the team also provides internal guidance and education to other BNSF departments. “While we’re making good progress as a team of two, obviously thousands of other employees across the company interact with tribal communities as well,” says Howell. “We try to be a resource to help employees understand the cultures and issues unique to various tribes so that they can be most effective.”

For example, Spencer and Howell conducted training with signal and construction teams in Engineering who need to know what to do if they discover cultural artifacts or resources while they are working on a railroad construction project. The two also frequently present at division and department meetings to raise overall awareness of the team’s function, as well as to tap into those employees’ institutional knowledge about the tribes and their shared history.

Should employees be consulting with a tribe for the first time, Spencer and Howell help them understand the tribe’s culture and protocols. In some cases, meetings are conducted in a tribal language that has to be interpreted.

“Ultimately, we help start conversations and facilitate discussions, and we listen to what tribes have to share,” says Howell. “Depending on the meeting subject matter, our job requires us to be messengers, teachers and, at times, diplomats.”

Editor’s Note: Many employees interested in their own personal tribal heritage have contacted the Tribal Relations team for more information. The team notes that a great resource to begin your own genealogical research is “A Guide to Tracing American Indian & Alaska Native Ancestry,” which can be found at www.bia.gov.
Across the network, countless BNSF employees volunteer their time to support local nonprofit organizations and community groups. That spirit of service is consistent with BNSF’s focus on making a difference in the communities we serve.

Many are also involved in voluntary organizations focused on supporting and serving co-workers in the workplace. Following are stories about five employees who regularly reach out to assist their colleagues and who are passionate about building and maintaining a strong BNSF community.

Here are three types of internal BNSF organizations for which employees volunteer their time and talent:

• Operation Stop (OpStop) is a grassroots, employee-led program that promotes a drug- and alcohol-free workplace. OpStop members promote a healthy and substance-free lifestyle and provide resources to employees who need help changing their behaviors.

• Peer Support volunteers offer co-workers support following a disruptive event in the workplace, often referred to as a critical incident.

• Six BNSF Business Resource Groups, like the Hispanic Leadership Council, and 12 local diversity councils are another means for BNSF people to support the workplace and the community. They also offer networking opportunities.
RYAN FAGALA

Ryan Fagala is passionate about helping colleagues who are struggling with substance abuse issues, with a concern based on personal experience.

A number of years ago, Fagala was facing an extremely difficult time. His marriage was on the rocks, he was feeling depressed, and his life had become a vicious cycle: sleeping, drinking, sleeping. When the locomotive engineer would get the call to come to work, he’d often lay off or just ignore the call. Soon, his job was on the line.

One of his co-workers took Fagala aside to talk about how close he was to losing his job because of his absenteeism. “He suggested I call EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for counseling,” he recalls of that dark time. “It was one of the best things that ever happened to me.”

After contacting EAP, Fagala was connected to a local licensed counselor. “I went in with an open mind because I didn’t want to lose my job, maybe even my life,” he says. “It was such a relief to get help, as I knew I was going down the wrong path, and the counselor helped me get to the root of my problems.”

Today, Fagala is remarried and works out of Tulsa, Okla. He also is an OpStop volunteer, helping other employees who are dealing with depression or anxiety, which can lead to substance abuse or chemical dependency, to get help. He’s also a Peer Support volunteer.

“Peer Support and OpStop are connected because both can help with issues tied to work/home life,” he says. “Basically, we are letting other employees know, ‘Hey, I care about you.’ ”

Much of his volunteer work is about educating employees on how OpStop and EAP work. “There is no fear of reprisal,” says Fagala. “It’s all about getting you help, no matter which craft or location, whether you’re scheduled or exempt.”

Fagala recalls the help he received from a fellow employee and OpStop volunteer as he was going through recovery. “I’d call him at 3 a.m., and he’d listen and talk to me until I’d calmed down. Now, I want others to know I’m here for them.”

While people often won’t reach out for help until they’re ready – like Fagala was – sometimes he’ll get word from other employees that someone may need intervention. “When that happens, I approach the employee privately and tell him or her, ‘If there is something going on, I’m here for you.’ ”

Primarily, he sees this as an obligation, both for the individual’s safety and for others. “Someone has to step up, and I want to be that support system when it’s needed – just like others did for me.”

GERALD FOBBS

Helping others comes naturally to Gerald Fobbs, who credits his upbringing for instilling that value. “I was raised by a single mother of four,” he says. “She made many sacrifices but was always doing for others. I try to live by and teach my kids and grandkids the lessons my mother gave me: Do right and be respectful.”

When it comes to doing for others, Fobbs has served as an OpStop volunteer for nine years as well as a member of the local Peer Support program at his base in Galveston, Texas. To be respectful, the conductor says, comes down to being a good listener.

“If someone is having a problem, I tell them, ‘I don’t want to get in your business, but let’s talk,’ ” he says. Over many a lunch, he’s had co-workers open up to him about work/life issues that are getting out of control.

He frequently offers advice to colleagues about how to defuse stress. Should an employee cross the line and come to work smelling of alcohol, Fobbs takes a firm stance. “I tell them, ‘I’ll drive you home now or get you help.’ ”

Fobbs is passionate in his comment, “When you’re under the influence, you’re not only unsafe for yourself, but also a risk for your co-workers and the public. It could have tragic consequences.”

Education about available resources is another way he supports co-workers. Anytime there is a feed or gathering, Fobbs uses the opportunity to talk about the program, especially with newer employees. “People just don’t know what OpStop means, so I explain what it is, and what it isn’t. The program has the support of management, but it is run by employees and is totally confidential.”

The two or three minutes he spends chatting with employees can result in an interaction that opens the door to deeper conversations. “Everybody has problems at some point – relationships, financial, stress during the holidays – and these can all be triggers for substance use,” he says.

Having worked in the prison at Huntsville, Texas, prior to joining the railroad, Fobbs knows the value of keeping
RANDY MENEWETHER

Randy Meneweather, Engineering clerk, Galesburg, Ill., has been with BNSF for 10 years. An active member of the Chicago Diversity Council since July 2013, Meneweather believes the council impacts BNSF employees every day by encouraging respect among employees and empowering them to comfortably and successfully communicate with each other.

“A priority of this council has been devoted to RED (Respect Every Day), encouraging people to speak to each other respectfully and openly,” says Meneweather. “I’ve seen a lot of improvement in the way employees speak and treat each other in the last several years. RED has helped create an environment of trust, where people look out for each other and truly care about what’s going on in each other’s lives.”

Meneweather extended the scope of his employee-assistance activities in 2014 when he joined the Galesburg OpStop Committee. “For me, it was a natural supplement to my role on the council,” he says. “Looking at all sides of employee issues means considering anything that affects safety.” He has served as committee chairman since 2015.

Meneweather cites an instance during a diversity blitz centered on an operational change that was met with strong resistance from an employee. Taking him aside for a private conversation, Meneweather learned the employee was experiencing extreme challenges in his home life. Meneweather referred him to EAP for counseling. “I just listened,” he recalls. “Once I realized what was really going on, I was able to point him in the right direction.”

Meneweather sees each engagement with fellow employees as an opportunity to personally connect. “Regardless of the situation or circumstance, I try to remain personable and approachable,” he says. “I volunteer because I want to help others. I believe much of my purpose in life is to serve, and I want to share my knowledge every chance I can to help other people succeed.”

Meneweather’s devotion to serve includes donating time as an assistant youth and high school wrestling coach, United Way volunteer, Easter Seals camp counselor and spokesperson for the Drug Ambassador Program. He is also busy on the personal improvement front as he works to add an MBA in accounting and global logistics to his industrial engineering degree.

ELISA SALAZAR

BNSF’s Hispanic Leadership Council (HLC) is fortunate to have Elisa Salazar, consulting systems engineer, Technology Services, as a devoted, active board member. Salazar is dedicated to HLC’s mission of professional development and community engagement through a strong network of professionals at BNSF who positively represent the Hispanic community.

“HLC provides us with opportunities to share our work-born skills and knowledge between our council members,” says Salazar. “When we collaborate and share ideas, best practices and information, we grow both as a team and as individuals.”

She firmly believes in modeling the way both at work and in the community. “When HLC members go into the community and share our knowledge, we are an extension of BNSF, investing in the community in which we operate,” says Salazar.

A former inner-city kid, Salazar is a huge proponent of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) advancement and other educational programs that motivate and engage students. She supports STEM initiatives by coaching a robotics team at a Fort Worth high school – one that has a graduation rate about 30 percent lower than other area high schools.

“Robotics provides an opportunity for the students to apply science on a competitive project. It’s engaging and
Many members of HLC support this STEM effort, including Oscar Vazquez, a business analyst at BNSF. Vazquez is well-known for having been on a similar high school robotics team that won on the national level, beating collegiate teams from across the country, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Salazar attributes much of HLC’s success to executive sponsorship from Karen Burchfield, assistant vice president, Coal Marketing, and Denver Gilliam, assistant vice president and chief engineer, Engineering. “Our HLC sponsors are our biggest fans,” says Salazar. “They provide us continual leadership, motivation and guidance, while communicating on our behalf within the company and the community. We are incredibly fortunate to have such positive proponents.”

In addition to HLC and BNSF, Salazar’s network includes the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and her local church. When she needs support for a project, she relies on relationships with people in a variety of groups to obtain human and capital resources.

“Much of what I do is simply connect the dots,” she says. Importantly, she credits teamwork with making things happen, step by step. “Small wins lead to big wins,” she says.

**Randy Tapp**

About 20 years ago, a friend encouraged Randy Tapp to join the railroad. Tapp wasn’t looking for a career change but decided to give it a try. After joining BNSF, he found that he really enjoyed being a conductor and working with his friend and other colleagues at their home terminal in Amarillo, Texas. Tapp was promoted to locomotive engineer not long after.

More recently, he became a Peer Support volunteer, offering assistance to train crews involved in disruptive events such as a grade-crossing incident. Similarly, if an employee experiences a serious injury or fatality, Peer Support volunteers are a resource to let co-workers know they understand what they’re going through.

Tapp learned firsthand the importance of peer-to-peer support when in 2004, his close friend died of a heart attack. The friend was in his early 40s. “That’s when I realized that co-workers are like family,” says Tapp, who organized a college fund for his friend’s then 8-year-old son. It became an annual event, with more than $35,000 collected over the years. The friend’s son is now in college.

Tapp’s compassion didn’t end there. He’s active in mentoring new hires through Enhanced Safety Training.

“I want people to do their best, and looking out for them is where it starts. I had a lot of good people looking out for me when I hired on, and I want to do the same for others.”

He notes his Peer Support role starts with empathy. “If somebody is having difficulty, it really comes down to being a good listener. You’re not there to talk, but to be a sounding board.”

Tragically, last summer, two BNSF trains were involved in a head-on collision near Panhandle, Texas, resulting in three employees being fatally injured and a fourth treated for injuries. Tapp was leading a safety marathon when the collision occurred.

“It was difficult to process, and people were struggling with the news,” Tapp recalls. “I knew we needed to get feet on the ground as soon as possible and start talking with and listening to people.” Peer Teams were soon mobilized to local depots, with EAP personnel on site.

Eventually, when operations resumed and trains began operating across the affected territory, Tapp and a conductor offered extended support and reassurance to crews working around the affected territory. Says Tapp, “Many people told us it gave them relief knowing we were there for them, offering support and help.”

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**For More Information**

OpStop and Peer Support teams are assisted by BNSF’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). If you’d like to get involved or learn more about these groups or the services they provide, you can find additional information at myBNSF.com or contact EAP anytime at 800-383-2327.

The Business Resource Groups’ and local diversity councils’ programs are managed by BNSF’s Diversity team. More information is available under the Employee tab of the portal.
You’re invited to join the 
BNSF Alumni Association 
if you worked at BNSF Railway or one of its predecessor railroads or if you are retiring in the next few years.

The BNSF Alumni Association is for retirees and former employees of BNSF or its predecessors, and their spouses, who are interested in keeping in touch with the company. It is also for employees nearing retirement.

In a time of many competing interests and perspectives, it’s important to stay focused on the crucial role of freight rail and transportation infrastructure in general.

The Alumni Association is an opportunity to stay in touch and learn about recent trends and challenges in the rail industry so we can all be informed when our friends, neighbors, community leaders and local news media talk about “the railroad.”

Visit [www.bnsfalumni.com](http://www.bnsfalumni.com) to sign up. For more information, email [alumni.association@bnsf.com](mailto:alumni.association@bnsf.com).

Let’s spread the word about freight rail!