It began as a dare two years ago and ended up being one of Pacific Harbor Line’s strongest employee-led causes.

When Locomotive Engineer Melissa Espinoza challenged her railroad co-workers to wear pink on behalf of the fight against breast cancer, they did not hesitate. With October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, employees wanted to show their support.

“I think it is going to become a yearly PHL tradition,” Trainmaster Eric Flores said. “It is important we remember the women in our lives because they are so important to us.”

Espinoza and Flores designed a pink T-shirt that included a locomotive, container crane and ribbon with the encouraging words, “Operation Support – Railroaders Supporting the Fight Against Breast Cancer.” On the back, the shirt donned the words, “Real Trainmen Wear Pink.”

Espinoza and Flores sold the shirts at the railroad with all funds raised going to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Employees raised $2,000 including PHL-matched donations. The event made the fight against breast cancer more than visible during terminal and dock jobs.

Speaking of visibility, employees wore pink vests while in the yard.

“We had a sense of

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Cyclists take the challenge

Making time for health and wellness always is the right choice. That is why some Pacific Harbor Line employees organized a bicycling challenge in October.

Locomotive Engineers Scott Bailey, Mike Casey, Leroy Pasis, James Rodriguez and Trainmaster Craig Cherne found time in their schedules to put a few miles on their bikes before the end of each day. Casey initiated the ride as many of the participants saw it as a fun way to stay in shape.

Who would finish with the most miles at the end of the month was the big question — but determining who had traveled the farthest each day wasn't difficult. They used the MapMyRide mobile cycling application on their smartphones, which allowed them to make note of one another’s mileage and build up their journeys in real time.

Although they rode individually, being able to see one another’s mileage spurred the participants to travel a little farther every day. Cherne said participating was an easy decision for him to make.

“I enjoy the outdoors,” he said. “The ride from Long Beach to Huntington Beach along the Pacific Coast Highway is just beautiful. There are bike paths where you can ride to the mountains and not see traffic.”

Taking the challenge, Cherne said, benefited his work life, too. “It keeps you fit,” he said. “Biking keeps my legs strong, and I don’t have trouble walking around the yard or getting on equipment.”

The competition held special significance for Rodriguez. A few weeks before he was asked to join the challenge, he began changing his diet. He rode 531 miles in October — a first-place finish. The results of the ride continue to assist him with his daily work.

Locomotive Engineer James Rodriguez enjoys seeing the greater Los Angeles area by bike. He won the bicycling challenge with 531.97 miles.

In total, challenge participants gave it their “all” to bike the following miles during October:
- James Rodriguez — 531.97
- Craig Cherne — 488.87
- Mike Casey — 412.17
- Scott Bailey — 300.09
- Leroy Pasis — 114.68

“It helped tremendously,” he said. “It is a combination of eating right and the biking — the pounds came off naturally. I have tons of energy and wake up feeling refreshed. It motivated me to keep eating right and get healthy again. It was perfect timing.”

Crews equipped for top service

It has been said that success is where preparation and opportunity meet.

Understanding that concept, Pacific Harbor Line employees demonstrate a collaborative effort daily as they prepare their teams for customer service success.

“All of our jobs involve a lot of planning,” said Stephane Perri, senior director of transportation. “Each customer has a required window to meet. Our immediate supervisors go over paperwork, and we review that information so we can serve the customer in a timely manner.”

Transportation crews work in one of the most important freight terminals in the United States. PHL switches an average of 35,000 units of carload freight annually and provides rail-switching services for nine on-dock intermodal terminals. With such commitment to service in the San Pedro Bay Ports, PHL is a reliable and trusted partner of both Class I railroads.

During the holiday season and on a daily basis, port activity and freight delivery present crews with unique circumstances. To meet customer expectations, job briefings begin with special emphasis on safety and focus on rule adherence. PHL employees pay attention to the details and perform their tasks safely to achieve success in serving their customers, Perri said.

The preparation to serve customers by PHL also can be seen through maintenance of way employees’ efforts. They ensure track is up to standard so train crews can operate safely. Such actions maintain a safe, clean operating environment and contribute to PHL’s commitment to high environmental standards.

Employees replace ties on the curves and service switches across 59 track miles. Roadmaster Jose Rodriguez said MOW performs weekly track inspections along with verifying that storm drains are clear in case of rain. If issues are found, coordination happens with Badger Bridge dispatchers to plan maintenance windows.

“We are dedicated to the ports,” Rodriguez said.
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PHL hosts representatives from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Port of Los Angeles and Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority.

Pacific Harbor Line was pleased to recently collaborate with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and Port of Los Angeles. PHL hosted a diplomatic corps meeting and a passenger rail tour of the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach with international diplomats representing more than 15 countries.

It was the first visit to the Port Complex for many guests, and the first time on the passenger rail tour for attendees. Visitors were impressed as they viewed and were briefed about PHL's operations, its customer base and the fundamental role PHL plays in serving the complex.

PHL also hosted a representative from the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority and took the tour into the Alameda Corridor.

PHL hosts LA Chamber, diplomats

Going pink to fight breast cancer

Continued from page 1

accomplishment and reward from giving,” Flores said. “We also put pink ribbons on our locomotives.”

Next October, employees hope to see even greater participation to help spread the message.

“On behalf of Melissa and myself, I thank everyone who was involved — BLET 214, UP On Dock, BNSF IBU and the PHL Management Team,” Flores said. “We give special thanks to President Otis Cliatt and HR Manager Elvia Maciel for continuously supporting our ideas and events.”

Pacific Harbor Line employees raise $2,000 for the Susan G. Komen Foundation to help in the battle against breast cancer.

Pacific Harbor Line President Otis Cliatt delivered an informative presentation about the railroad industry Oct. 31 at California State University, Long Beach.

Cliatt spoke to senior and graduate level students and the Society for Advanced Management (SAM). In his presentation, “Exploring the Rail Industry,” Cliatt presented a short history of Pacific Harbor Line, supply chain and connections between shippers, terminal operations and railroads and the need for continued communication and information sharing. He explored how a disciplined work ethic is required due to the safety and regulation aspects of a railroad career.

“I’m a process-oriented leader with a passion for accuracy, the follow-up/follow-through process, safety and training,” Cliatt said. “The most rewarding part of speaking to students for me is always seeing the energy they bring and the thirst for knowledge. My goal was that all students would leave with an increased knowledge of railroads and rail operations.”

Students were grateful for an in-depth look at the essential aspects of transportation services provided by Pacific Harbor Line and the railroad industry. Cliatt thanks Tyler Ford, vice president of corporate relations for California State University of Long Beach’s Society for Advanced Management, for the providing the opportunity to share his knowledge with attendees.

Cliatt leads with student learning

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Peña returns from Kuwait

Locomotive Engineer Frank Peña has a lot to smile about. When he returned from overseas military service, his Pacific Harbor Line co-workers held a Nov. 2 welcome home party at the terminal.

A sergeant first class in the Army National Guard, Peña drills regularly in Long Beach. In September 2015, he left home for Kuwait, where he worked nine months with Iraqi and Jordanian forces.

He provided technical expertise and experience to the 30th Military Engagement Team in Jordan for the Trilateral Attack Aviation Information Exchange. He gave a series of six classes relating to sustaining and supplying aviation units. He returned home to California in October 2016.

Peña is grateful to PHL for making his welcome home party memorable.

“They had the banner up, and I saw a lot of new faces,” he said. “I was not expecting it. We always talk about the brotherhood, and the company makes you feel like they are your family away from family. I thank everyone at PHL for their support and inviting my family to the welcoming event. I also thank the BLET 214 brotherhood for their support, Trainmaster Craig Cherne for keeping me up to date while I was away and HR Manager Elvia Maciel for inviting my family and making them feel part of the PHL family.”

Peña’s return stateside held even more meaning — he was able to hold his infant son, Ethan, for the first time.

Meza obtains October honors

Armando Meza, who has provided top-notch service for Pacific Harbor Line since 1999, was honored as October Employee of the Month.

As a locomotive engineer, he regularly works dock jobs and lends a helping hand to co-workers. Becoming familiar with a route and the people at each destination becomes part of giving a great customer experience.

“Throughout the years, you develop relationships with managers, superintendents and co-workers,” he said. “You are able to contact your sources and get the job done effectively.”

Meza strives to meet two goals daily: deliver goods and services and return safely. Working with a team that has the same goals makes each day exciting.

“When you make safety a habit, it becomes second nature,” he said. “The camaraderie and challenge are there. We are there to take care of the customer and be safe.”

Meza has made friendships with many of his co-workers and thanks Assistant Engineer Hank Henriquez for his teamwork. The two worked together on many jobs.

“We learned from each other,” he said. “We got a lot of work done together to serve the customer. I thank him for his time and being safe.”

In 2017, Meza looks forward to continuing to spend time with his family and friends.
Pacific Harbor Line trainmen serve two of the most important locations in the United States. The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are front and center when it comes to international trade.

Serving them in such a large, busy area takes focus and concentration. For Locomotive Engineer Joel Toston, the employees he works next to each day make the difference.

“I wouldn’t be a good engineer if it wasn’t for my co-workers,” he said. “We focus on getting the job done and satisfying our customers.”

For setting an example for others, Toston was chosen as November Employee of the Month.

“One of the best strategies for us is to job brief,” he said. “We are taking our time to be safe. We look at the safest, most efficient routes to take. We have constant communication and work to get better at our craft. It has become second nature.”

Toston is grateful to those he works with, especially Locomotive Engineer Amadio Maestas.

“I couldn’t have been Employee of the Month without him,” Toston said. “We work well together. I trust him and have full confidence in his capabilities.”

An 11-year employee, Toston strives for a positive, safe 2017.

“We want to learn and grow in every aspect of the company,” he said.

Excellent customer service requires an excellent infrastructure. Keeping track in superb condition is all part of a day’s work for Pacific Harbor Line maintenance of way employees.

One of them, Foreman/Machine Operator Raymond Gutierrez, was proud to represent his craft as he was chosen as December’s Employee of the Month.

“It’s all about safety,” said Gutierrez, an employee since 1999. “I think about the job at hand. If anything occurs on the tracks, we get it back in service for train movement. A train can’t be late, and we want to keep them moving.”

Maintenance projects occur on a daily basis; they are varied and require much attention. The job includes everything from inspecting switches to patching asphalt alongside rail and street crossings. He appreciates the team he works with each day to make it happen.

“As long as we are safe and productive, we’re happy,” Gutierrez said. “What’s good about the job is that I live about 38 miles away. Our place of work is a safe spot. You travel to the job site and follow the tracks. We spend a lot of time here and co-workers become like family. We get along great.”

Congratulations to the following assistant engineers who were promoted to locomotive engineers in the fourth quarter. With nine weeks of classroom and field training, they are ready to serve customers with safe, reliable and efficient service.

- Daniel Anderson
- Gianni Camello
- Jared Houchen
- Steven Tippett
- Justin Ward
The following employees have earned Eagle Eye honors in 2016 for working outside of their normal job responsibilities to observe and report potential defects in track or equipment. Doing so helps avoid potential safety hazards.

- Manuel Alvarez
- Eric Carroll
- John Carper
- Jose Covarrubias
- Dallae Daeley
- Jose Gonzalez
- Carlos Maravilla
- Eddie Mendoza

Alan Jackson is a familiar face to Pacific Harbor Line train crews. Not only does he help plan their daily jobs, he comes from their line of work. A four-year employee, the Seattle native served as an assistant engineer and locomotive engineer before taking an assistant trainmaster assignment recently.

“I spent most of my time on carload jobs,” he said. “I’m familiar with the jobs and the routes. Now my responsibility is to keep the yard organized and set up the work for switch crews — everything from dock jobs to terminal jobs. Organization — lots of notes and nonstop communication — is important.”

Jackson uses his yard knowledge to keep train crews safe. As he manages the Extra Board where employees await their job assignments, he balances both the needs of the customers and the crews who serve them.

Each day brings new challenges and opportunities. Details are vital as he coordinates freight movement. He knows firsthand that PHL is the “Gateway to the World.”

“We are the largest port in North America, and it is a big responsibility,” Jackson said. “The port complex is a natural, deep-water port. It can handle the large ships. Between that and the weather, it doesn’t slow us down. It is one of the unique things about Southern California.”

The safe movement of freight can only occur with the safe movement of train crews. Jackson enjoys meeting with crews and discussing important rules and details.

“Daily job briefings with crews are a big key to safety,” he said. “We also go over our toolboxes — a certain rule in the rulebook. It keeps crews refreshed on the rules.”

Jackson plans to continue learning all he can about his new role to serve crews in the best manner possible.

Assistant Trainmaster Alan Jackson makes the most out of each work day to ensure the safe movement of train crews and customers’ freight.