ASLRRA Honors Career Dedication to Railroad Safety
Cleo Johnson, Jr., Mississippi Export Railroad, Safety Person of the Year
David Nagy, Springfield Terminal d/b/a Pan Am Railway, Safety Professional of the Year

ORLANDO, Fla. – April 8, 2019 – The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) today honored two outstanding individuals for their career commitment to railroad safety at the 2019 CONNECTIONS Convention in Orlando, Florida.

“Safety is foremost at every railroad. A railroader wants their peers to come home safe every night, while taking care of customers and their freight,” said Chuck Baker, President of ASLRRA. “We are honored today to recognize two individuals whose decades-long commitment to safety has positively influenced the safety culture at their respective railroads.”

Cleo Johnson, Jr., Maintenance-of-Way (MOW) Forman, Mississippi Export Railroad, was honored as Safety Person of the Year. This award recognizes a non-management employee of a member railroad who has no reportable personal injuries, works with their company to make safety programs effective, exhibits a high degree of safety awareness, and contributes off-duty time to activities promoting safety awareness and initiatives in the community.

David Nagy, Safety Professional of the Year, is a Director and the General Manager for the Springfield Terminal Railroad. This award recognizes an employee of a member railroad who has led the charge for safety improvements across the industry.

In his 24-year career with the MSE, Johnson has served in a variety of roles including trackman, speedswing operator, tie remover/inserter, track inspector, and ballast regulator. In the beginning, Cleo worked side-by-side with his father learning the railroad industry and the importance of safety. He continues to attend safety courses to improve his knowledge provided by the Gulf Coast Safety Council, local industries like Chevron Pascagoula Refinery, and others.

“Cleo leads by example - always having his personal safety equipment on, thinking steps ahead for safety vulnerabilities, and coordinating between departments to guarantee everyone knows where the trains, equipment, and employees are at all times. Largely due to Cleo’s vigilance, his department has not experienced an injury in over a decade,” stated Kate Luce, President and CEO, Mississippi Export Railroad.

As MOW Foreman, Johnson is responsible for 60-plus miles of railroad track. Johnson also supervises eight employees and three local industry track workers. MSE has received the ASLRRA Jake Award for the last twelve years, of which eight have been awarded with Distinction.

The Safety Professional of the Year was awarded to David Nagy, Executive Director of Safety, Springfield Terminal d/b/a Pan Am Railway. The Safety Professional of the Year is awarded each year to the railroad management employee who demonstrates an exceptional work ethic and dedication to safety.

Nagy started as a track man with Pan Am Railway, 19 years ago. He was quickly promoted to a position of Train Dispatcher, then Chief, before beginning his current role in Safety. Today, Nagy is responsible for employee and community safety consciousness on a regional railroad spanning nearly 1,700 route miles, over five states, with approximately 900 employees.

“His experience in the ranks has provided him with a unique perspective on the need for and implementation of Safety standards. This diverse experience enables him to bring such a
passion and understanding to his role,” said Judy Page, Safety Office Manager in Nagy’s letter of nomination. “Through his direct efforts, our system-wide safety record has earned both the coveted E. H. Harriman and Jake Awards through the years.”

At Pan Am, Nagy has developed training programs for both personnel as well as community first responders. He works tirelessly on growing relationships with surrounding Police and Fire departments offering on and offsite training events. He continually seeks unique programs to keep training fresh and engaging while contributing value to the employees of Pan Am and the community.

To be honored with a Jake Award, an ASLRRA member railroad must perform better than the Class II and III industry average injury frequency rate as reported by the FRA during the prior year. Jake Award winners “with distinction” also have an FRA-reported injury-free performance during the same time. Jake Awards are awarded at ASLRRA’s regional fall conferences.

About ASLRRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the nation’s 600 short line and regional railroads and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 47,500 miles of track in 49 states, touching in origination or termination one out of every four cars moving on the national railroad system, serving customers who otherwise would be cut off from the national railroad network.