ASLRA 2018 CONNECTIONS Delivers Unparalleled Education and Networking Opportunities

Nashville, Tenn. – April 11, 2018 – The short line industry gathered in near-record breaking numbers this week at the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association’s 2018 CONNECTIONS Convention (ASLRA), held at the Gaylord Opryland, Nashville, Tennessee. The convention was bookended with presentations from Matthew K. Rose, Executive Chairman, BNSF Railway, who helped build BNSF Railway into the second-largest freight railroad network in North America, and Greg Williams, Editor-in-Chief, WIRED Magazine, a leading authority on technology trends and the impact business and society.

With thirty-six educational sessions geared specifically to ten different industry tracks, and an exhibit hall hosting 240 booths, the return on investment for attendees was higher than ever.

“Our CONNECTIONS convention continues to be the premier venue where the short line railroaders come together to get up to speed on relevant and timely topics, share best
practices, learn from our supplier members, and network with peers,” said Linda Bauer Darr, President, ASLRA. “The 2018 event also included keynote speakers from outside the short line industry, providing a broader perspective on the changing landscape of technology and transportation writ large.”

This year’s registration (over 1,800) was surpassed only by ASLRA’s Centennial Celebration in 2013.

In addition to annual safety awards, ASLRA was also pleased to honor several members for excellence in the areas of Veteran’s hiring, innovative business success, and scholarship.

**Veterans Hiring**

The Veteran’s Recruitment Award recognizes ASLRA members who have demonstrated a commitment to hiring veterans, as evidenced by the percentage of employees who are veterans.

This year’s award winner is the Louisville & Indiana Railroad Company (LIRC), a subsidiary of Anacostia Rail Holdings. This short line railroad has a 30% ratio of veterans in their workforce and 30% of their 2017 new hires are veterans. The company honors their veterans in many ways including distributing Veteran Lapel pins and highlighting veterans in the company newsletters, and adding a Veteran Recognition logo to two of their locomotives. In 2017, the company made a monetary donation to Paralyzed Veterans of America for materials for a new deck at their facility and sent a group of employee volunteers to build the deck.

“The railroad industry knows that veterans have unique talents that make them ideal candidates for railroad jobs. We are committed to exploring how our industry can best be of service to the Veterans community by offering a place in the economy with meaningful income that can utilize the skill set that Veterans have attained during their time in service. We want to give Veterans an easier transition to employment after they serve,” said David Hankins, Chair of the Veteran’s Recruitment Committee, during the award presentation.
Marketing Awards

Also during the CONNECTIONS Convention, three short lines were lauded for outstanding performance in business. The Marketing Awards highlight outstanding business performance by a railroad in providing innovative service to meet customer needs. To win the award, the railroad must demonstrate one or more of the following: utilization of the railroad’s unique operating characteristics to deliver value, partnership with other development authorities, Class 1s, or companies, and delivering economic success to both the railroad and the community it serves. In 2018, ASLRRRA honored the following railroads:

- **Lake State Railway Company** - for revitalizing marginal 85-lb track with declining volume, recapturing carloads that had moved to trucking, identifying new transload customers, and restoring regular service to Grayling, Michigan. The results speak for themselves – an increase of 135% in carload traffic, five new transload customers, four new line customers, 20% increase in headcount, and plans for another 50% increase in volume in 2018.

- **Louisville and Indiana Railroad Company (LIRC), a subsidiary of Anacostia Rail Holdings** - during a 105-mile project that included new rail, an upgrade to 286,000 compliant rail, and a rebuild to accommodate 49 mph trains, the railroad brought a critical new facility online. The U.S. Army’s Camp Atterbury had repurposed its mission over the past decade to become a primary proving ground for entire units to engage in multiple facet exercises. The LIRC had to train all facility personnel on railroad movement, as well as rebuilding the facility. The LIRC is now capable of moving six unit trains of Army assets in two weeks!

- **Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad** – opportunity knocked when a shipper of anthracite coal asked for a rail siding to be constructed for service. The seven-year project required assistance from Norfolk Southern, significant investment by the customer and Reading and Northern, a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and a multi-year approval process with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers. The project was completed in 2017 and the railroad is in the process of re-claiming the movement of 150,000 tons of coal,
taking 6,000 trucks off the roadways. Its customer is adding additional capacity and is poised to become a major supplier to steel mills in the region leading to job growth at both the customer and the railroad.

“The marketing awards demonstrate the essence of the Short Line Story – leveraging the uniqueness of the operation and its partners to deliver value to each customer, resulting in return on investment for companies, and driving growth in the communities in which we operate,” said Doc Claussen, ASLRA Vice Chair, who introduced the award winners.

The Susan C. Murray Scholarship, was awarded to Emma Lezberg. Emma is the daughter of Robert Lezberg, project manager at Simmons Machine Tool, an ASLRA Associate Member Company.

The scholarship, sponsored by PocketList.com and IHS Markit, is awarded annually to a daughter or granddaughter of an ASLRA member in recognition of Murray’s life and professional success. Murray helped launch ASLRA’s very successful exhibit hall -- now in its 31st year, allowing railroaders and suppliers to work together to build and provide innovative solutions to the short line industry.

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About ASLRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRA) 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.