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CONAGRA BRANDS
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Table Spreads welcomes Cell 5

The new Cell 5 is focused on processing.

The development allows employees to focus on machines that its lead, Steve Perkins, regards as central to Table Spreads' ability to succeed and called the "heartbeat" of operations.

"This gives us a chance to produce a consistently stable product," he said. "The customer isn't eating the packaging. If we don't batch properly, the rest doesn't matter."

Cell 5 encompasses the oil room, re-melt room and milk room, along with all the line processing equipment — namely, all of the equipment involved in taking table spreads from a liquid into a finished product, which is everything before the filler.

With about 50 percent of Table Spreads' equipment now in Cell 5, Perkins, Process Engineer Grant Pajak and Maintenance Planner Ryan Neal agree the new structure will allow for greater focus on vital machines and processes.

"Processing can make or break you," Neal said.

The added attention will lead to the development of more standards and planned maintenance (PM) that will eliminate top losses in areas the trio believe could use greater consideration, such as the milk room. One-hundred PMs already have been developed, but that's just the start.

From left, Process Engineer Grant Pajak, Cell 5 Lead Steve Perkins and Maintenance Planner Ryan Neal

"A big focal point in the creation of this cell is that there will be more processing tags," he said.

Pajak believes the change will boost efficiency and allow the team to implement changes. The opportunity to make enhancements is exciting for the team, which includes Line Technician Brandon Guess, who will be dedicated to Cell 5; another line technician will eventually join him.

Perkins, essentially Cell 5's first employee, approaches the vast opportunity with enthusiasm and has been working to ensure its success since before it debuted during August in the wake of he, Neal and a host of others resolving the broken emulsion issue.

"It's challenging and rewarding at the same time," Perkins said.

The team believes that with reformulations to key product lines on the horizon, now was the right time to restructure and add Cell 5. Neal said that evaluating the limitations of components and communicating them to Research and Development will help make sure that changes are adopted in a smoother manner.

Pajak, Perkins and Neal realize the new cell will only be as good as its batch operators. They credit Production Associates Ray Hotseller, Dave Pierce, Fred Ralston and Brian Rusler with shedding light on the manufacturing process that weren't well known, communicating best practices and having a positive impact in and outside of the cell.

Milk room enhancement

The milk room recently was upgraded with planned maintenance.

One of the first projects to enhance Cell 5, the milk room's steam system was refurbished.

The upgrade was necessitated by ingress of water and condensate from the steam system into the milk batching tanks. The replacement of isolation valves facilitated the repair and replacement of the steam system.

The enhancement also will boost employee safety.

Eighteen-month journey ends in success for Neal, teammates

Servo failures have plagued Table Spreads, causing downtime and expensive repairs for more than five years.

Maintenance Planner Ryan Neal led a host of teammates who have worked on the issue for more than 18 months. Together, they've conquered the problem on Line 33 and will inevitably address it on other lines.

"Months of work have paid dividends," he said. "It's been a long road, but we've come up with a standard."

A key aspect of the multi-point solution was separating the actuator and motor that make up the servomotor assembly. This reduced wear and added to performance and longevity by eliminating strain on the equipment.

The servos are used to fill tubs and work similar to a syringe in how they draw product into a cylinder with one movement and place it into packaging with another.

After extensive analyses of how the equipment worked, multiple root causes were identified, including overloaded motors. Encoders were experiencing interference. Brake voltage was low at the motor, which was attributed to the distance between Line 33 and the drive cabinet. Pistons would continue to stroke even when product wasn't being worked, causing needless strain on the equipment. Implemented this spring, a new brake procedure, which Neal developed with the help of Cell 5 Lead Steve Perkins, prevents the servomotor from actuating when not in use.

Operations Manager Dave Lewis started a request for a kaizen, a continuous improvement tool. Neal and Cell 4 Lead Becca Conner began one of the longest breakdown analysis anyone at the plant can remember.

Servo failures are addressed.

Numerous consultants and subject matter experts were brought in to help, including Senior Principal Engineer John Tashijan.

"We needed a deeper dig," Neal said.

He credits failure mode, effects and criticality analysis (FMECA) with being the turning point that led to the discovery of root causes. It was discovered that the motors were not rated for the environment in which they were being used, leading the company to trial new motors and actuators. Another discovery was that with all the breakdowns and rebuilds of servos, replacement encoders were not of a single standard.

"It was difficult to troubleshoot because there were a lot of variables," Neal said. "We had to learn how it worked. It's very satisfying to come up with a solution."

After eight months without faults or failures, the solution has proven an unmitigated success; several standards have been put in place. At about $6,000 per servo rebuild and nearly a quarter million dollars in annual repairs, addressing the issue is a big win for the plant and the company, which will reapply what was learned elsewhere. Without the fix, brand new servomotors at the plant would have suffered the same fate as their predecessors.

"We benchmarked a lot of key learnings and the whole company has benefited," Neal said.

The solution has been applied to one of eight servos, four each on Lines 30 and 33. A capital project is in the works to address the others.

Conner praised Neal for being the heart and soul of the effort and tirelessly dedicating countless hours to finding the solution. In turn, Neal praised Conner and Line Technician Chris Bradley, Maintenance Planner Johnny Henry, Line Technician Bryan Smith, Senior Engineer Ronnie Sneed, Line Technician Gary Stein and Engineering Manager Vince Stout for their immense contributions.

"There were a lot of people involved, and I am proud of the whole team," Neal said.

Table Spreads spotlight: Stick line Production Associate Mike Kellermeier

What people are saying about Mike:

He's a determined operator who takes ownership of his machine, troubleshoots issues on his own and immediately requests assistance for other issues. He runs his line at an exceptionally high efficiency.

Why do you take an ownership attitude?

"If this place doesn't succeed, I don't have a job."

— Production Associate Mike Kellermeier

Team earns successful audit

The plant recently passed its Interstate Milk Shippers (IMS) audit.

Thanks to the successful audit, which occurs every two years, the plant will remain on a list of facilities approved to distribute dairy products across the United States.

IMS is a voluntary federal-state program administered by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that's mission is to protect consumers by ensuring a safe milk supply. A United Sates General Accounting Office report stated that "the program evolved from early concerns for adequate public health protection due to a lack of uniform application of principles and procedures to ensure sanitation of milk produced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries."

Quality Team Lead Adrienne Shoemaker called the audit "intense" and credited a team effort with the successful result. She noted that no human-controllable issues were found or deviations from good manufacturing practices (GMP).

Performing the audit, which occurred Sept. 28 through Sept. 30, were Indiana State Board of Animal Health's Sara Horning, a dairy plant specialist, and Nathan Campbell, the agency's deputy director. The two are deputized by the FDA to perform the audit. While the audit is only once every two years, Shoemaker interacts with them on a regular basis.

"We want to ensure we're on the same page," she said. "They have the rules and update them regularly, and we need and want to follow them."

Shoemaker passionate about food safety

Quality and food safety go hand in hand for Quality Team Lead Adrienne Shoemaker.

She supports the Reddi Wip laboratory and Sanitation.

Shoemaker earned a biology degree from Purdue University and has four years dairy industry experience. She is also a certified Safe Quality Food (SQF) practitioner and hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) coordinator.

She was attracted to Conagra's opportunities for growth as well as its corporate culture and the scope of its operations.

"Having the support of corporate is huge," she said. "Conagra really walks the walk in terms of leaving things better."

She developed a passion for food safety while interning for a company that produces baby formula.

"I have no intention of letting a customer get sick," Shoemaker said.

She appreciates the support of her new co-workers and admires how well maintained the plant is.

"Everyone has been welcoming and eager to teach me," Shoemaker said.

Quality Team Lead Adrienne Shoemaker

Fast fact:

- She enjoys hiking at Turkey Run State Park and Holliday Park with her dog, Oppenheimer.

Engagement Team continues to enhance culture

Accomplishments:

- The plant was named one of Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana's top 100 donors. Another food drive is in the works and those who donate will be entered into a drawing for fun prizes.

RW Line Tech Leroy Ellis, first-shift chili cook-off winner

Production Associate Don Oliver, second-shift cook-off winner

Recently organized:

- Word search (with prizes)
- Chili cook-off

In development:

- Formalized recognition program that will reward employees who go above and beyond.
- Winter Celebration is being planned.

Employees enjoy the cook-off, during which attendees feasted on hot dogs, chili and cornbread.

RCO skills training to have immediate impact

Manager of Continuous Improvement Mark Flugel, a member of the corporate team, recently visited the plant to help bring the Rapid Changeover (RCO) process to Indianapolis.

RCO is billed as a tool that helps refine and optimize changeover processes and create standards that boost consistency. Implementing the process will help employees transition efficiently between SKUs, reducing the time between the last case of one and first case of another. This allows the plant to optimize its run strategy and be more flexible to customer demands by allowing for more mid-week changeovers. That lowers the inventory required for both finished and non-finished goods. As Flugel explained, those results are very much in keeping with the Conagra value of agility. Employees also suggest RCO is a safety enhancement as it reduces steps and exposures.

Over the course of three days, he led classroom-style sessions and practical training on the floor. In addition to teaching a cross-functional group — including employees from Bakery, Reddi Wip and Table Spreads with two months to 20 years of tenure — the RCO process, Flugel also trained employees on the changeover daily management system (DMS), which helps monitor the effectiveness of changeover methods and alert them when standards are deviated from, allowing them to take action. This assists employees in enhancing and maintaining the gains they make implementing new best practices.

Manager of Continuous Improvement Mark Flugel orients employees on the RCO process.

To facilitate the training process, Line 33, where 3-pound tubs are produced, was used as a model line. The line was identified as one that had opportunities for enhancement in terms of changeover. Some modifications to the line's shipper magazine increased variability in changeover times and signaled a red flag. Line 30 has a similar changeover process.

Flugel said that it was beneficial having different perspectives in the group and noted that RCO had a lot of success enhancing changeovers. He expressed his confidence that would be the same at the plant. Flugel also noted that RCO was a relatively quick way to free up time, calling it a "capacity utilization enabler." While processes like Autonomous Manufacturing Development (AMD) can require extended periods of time to begin netting gains, RCO can offer immediate returns.

The process required preparation and study of the current changeover process, including spaghetti diagrams that track every movement of employees performing a changeover. Flugel made clear the importance of tracking trends to being able to reapply successful methods and take next steps.

The answer for soft product is implemented

More control over cooling temperatures will mean greater elimination of soft product for Table Spreads.

Production Associate Sara Mengsteab

Line 15 was recently upgraded with a modification that allows skid tuning for each SKU. That means employees can adjust the level of ammonia supplied to Votator heat exchangers used to cool product coming from emulsion tanks. The modification is coupled with a Sanlock upgrade. With the model line's success, the modification will be re-applied to other Votator lines. The next line to receive the modification is being determined, but Cell 3 Lead Glen Hughes expects it to happen sometime before the end of the fiscal year.

He explained that one size does not fit all in terms of optimal cooling temperature for table spreads, which is especially true with government-mandated reformulations.

"It's a big deal," Hughes said. "We have struggled with this issue since changing to non-hydrogenated formula."

He credited Production Associate Sara Mengsteab with having a positive impact on the modification of Line 15.

"She's been there for the entire run making key suggestions," Hughes said.

Pajak: Food manufacturing demands diverse skill set

Conagra's diverse portfolio is attractive to those who've dedicated their college career to engineering food and its production.

That's why Process Engineer Grant Pajak knew he wanted to be a part of the Conagra team.

Process Engineer Grant Pajak

"Food is a really good blend of science, art and marketing," he said. "It has to taste and look good, be both safe and fun. How all these different things come together requires various disciplines and skills."

Pajak studied chemical engineering and food and beverage science at Michigan State. Math, biology, chemistry, design and finance were all among the myriad fields he studied in preparation for a career in the food manufacturing business. His college career even required him to design a chemical plant.

Now he's learning a lot from colleagues, who are actively assisting his development.

"Everyone has been super helpful and inviting," Pajak said.

Production associates have been an important support for him as he's unfamiliar with the equipment they're experts at operating. They've helped him learn the names of machine components allowing him to communicate freely.

"They've been extremely valuable," he said.

The world of centerlines has dominated the early going for him. His first job every morning is checking the centerline sheets and all the many variables therein. Figures that deviate from the standard are an alarm. Whether or not the figures are within standard, the desire to innovate is a key drive for Pajak .

"Sometimes the machine has an issue, but sometimes a process needs to be rethought," he said.

Fast facts:

- Enjoys home brewing, winemaking and cooking. He applies some of the things he learned in school to those hobbies. His specialty is Mexican cuisine.
- An experienced bassoon player and fencer.
- New to Indianapolis.

Carter: Food safety starts with dock

Receiving Dock Associate Billy Carter has a simple philosophy when it comes to safety and quality.

"It starts here with us at the dock," he said. "Just like the folks from Sanitation, I have to make sure this is a clean place. It's like Nike, 'just do it.'"

Fast facts:

- Carter has 12 grandchildren who he enjoys spending time with.
- He is an accomplished bowler who has given lessons to multiple Indianapolis' professional athletes, including former Colts' standout Reggie Wayne, and comedian Mike Epps.
- Enjoys math and technology and the challenge of learning new things, such as the plant's SAP-based inventory software.

It also includes looking out for the safety of his co-workers. Carter starts his day by inspecting his forklift, making sure things are in their proper place and there are no obstructions on the dock that can expose employees to injury.

"You have to be focused and come to work with work on your mind," he said.

Carter believes good morale enhances focus.

"I enjoy the camaraderie," he said. "Everyone gets along and focuses on getting the work done. From top to bottom, everyone has a part to play. We have to set ourselves up for success."

What is the key to having a good day at work?

"I give 100 percent, so I feel good about myself at the end of the day."

— Receiving Dock Associate Billy Carter


Receiving Dock Associate Billy Carter

Carter regards himself as a people person, and that skill comes in handy on the dock. With each new day, truck drivers visit the dock with dry goods for him to unload.

"They all have different personalities," he said.

Admiration is mutual for Cousin, Adedeji

With less than a year on the floor, Table Spreads Production Associate Fatima Adedeji is still learning the ropes, but her development has been exceptional.

Cell 3 Lead Glen Hughes has noticed her strong work ethic on the stick lines.

"She gives 200 percent all the time," he said.

Adedeji has wowed teammates by memorizing the standard work checklist she uses for startups and earned the praise of one of her mentors, Production Associate Cherelle Cousin.

"Fatima has been a pleasure to work with," she said.

Cousin added that all employees she works with want to learn.

"It's just a matter of finding their learning style," she said.

Left: *Production Associate Fatima Adedeji*
Right: *Production Associate Cherelle Cousin*

But Cousin noted that Adedeji has proven exceptional in her desire to acquire knowledge, making it easier to teach her.

Adedeji credited Cousin for being key to her development.

Training is something Cousin takes seriously.

"It really makes it easier on all of us if there are subject mater experts all over," she said.

Service anniversaries

1 year
Ronnie Sneed
ShaVon Black
Amanda Connerley
Thaung Tin
Benjamin Rogers
Kentrell White
M.C. Gallion
Virgil Heather
Willie Russell
David Durham
Richard Maddox

5 years
Candiance Day
Rhonda Collins
Jonathon Souders
Kevin Strezlec

10 years
Steven Gulley
Sheila Weir
Justin Myers
Monica Coffer
Lamar Hardy
Belinda Fanning
Lawrence Bussell
Corin Micou
Garry Stephens
Linda Dennis
Jacqueline Royal
Jerome Russell
Melvin Washington

15 years
Michael Strack
Marcus Adams
Randy Lanham

20 years
Don Moncrief

25 years
Timothy Criswell

30 years
Bruce Brown

40 years
Usmanghani Zakaria

45 years
Harold Pauley
Martin Ewing
Donald Bowsher
Larry Jones

Yield loss projects in the works

Reddi Wip yield enhancements have been made and more are on the way.

Continuous Improvement Specialist Robert Wade credited work streams focused on continuous improvement for helping eliminate loss of raw materials, including nitrous.

Controlling the temperature of nitrous, which starts as a liquid and is then vaporized, helps get more of it in cans, so there's been considerable effort placed on keeping nitrous in an ideal temperature range.

Success on the nitrous front is already at hand thanks to a major infrastructure enhancement. Wade, Process Engineer Chris Brajdic and AMD Support Kevin Wojcik used rented infrared technology to spot leaks in the plant's elaborate nitrous distribution system.

Employees work to ensure nitrous goes where it belongs: in cans.

"It's quite a feat to keep all the piping leak free," Wade said.

On an infrared camera, leaking nitrous appears as black smoke. Wade, Brajdic and Wojcik took turns looking for leaks and cataloging their locations. Line technicians then quickly addressed the issues. The project, which enhanced safety and efficiency, was complete in two days.

Another yield loss prevention initiative relates to purging. After Reddi Wip dairy distribution systems are cleaned, they have to be purged of hot water and cooled to facilitate production. Currently, cream is used to purge the hot water and cool the system. Wade and his teammates are presently developing a way to use purified cold water instead by routing it through the system's heat exchangers. Some new equipment will need to be acquired to make this happen.

"We're putting it all together," Wade said.

Playbook guides future of milk room

Your favorite football team can't succeed without a solid playbook, and the same is true for the milk room.

The playbooks serve as start-to-finish guidelines for how employees in the room should batch and clean.

Cell 5 Lead Steve Perkins, CSD Coordination Support Specialist Henry Tin and retiree Jim Page worked together to develop the playbook this summer. They've since been distributed to operators in conjunction with sit-down meetings, during which employees could learn about and discuss changes.

Bauer working with team to update CL

Family is the most important thing to Process Engineer Adam Bauer.

Becoming part of the Conagra family helped him move closer to his own family. Both he and his wife, Emily, have roots in the area. They enjoy Conagra products, such as Orville Redenbacher Popcorn — a favorite of Emily's — and Blue Bonnet table spreads.

"It's nice to see them using products I help bring to market," Bauer said. "I like that the company is innovative and willing to reinvent brands."

Working Line 22, he's enjoyed being in an energetic environment. Bauer has been focused on driving standards, particularly by unifying the application of centerlines for similar machines. The goal is maximizing efficiency by examining processes and ensuring best practices and standards are applied wherever they can offer benefit. He is learning a lot and by collaborating with others contributing to the goal, including discussion of existing centerlines. Sometimes centerlines have needed updating, and communicating with operators has helped discover opportunities.

Process Engineer Adam Bauer

"Everyone has been super knowledgeable and hardworking," he said. "There is a strong sense of urgency and desire to see results. Working together, we can get the most out of the machines."

Bauer knows that getting the most out of machines requires a willingness to change and a dedication to continuous improvement, which is at the heart of Conagra Performance System.

"In simplest terms, CPS is a way of making sure we're doing the best we can," he said.

Fast facts:

- A Purdue graduate who studied mechanical engineering.
- Enjoys disc golf, following Purdue sports and time with family and friends.

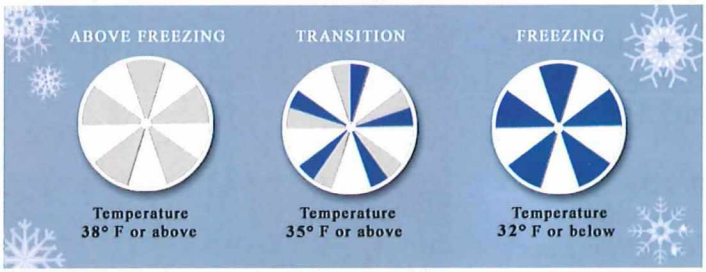
Visual aid to help prevent slips, trips and falls

Slips, trips and falls are a concern for almost any work environment — especially one in the frigid Midwest.

With freezing temperatures inevitable, Environmental Health and Safety Manager Jeff Reinke said the plant, as always, wants to be proactive when it comes to safety.

He ranks slips, trips and falls as a leading cause of incidents at the plant and wants to do whatever is possible to eliminate potential exposures and mitigate hazards. That's why the company has acquired Ice Alert System temperature-sensitive reflectors. The reflectors change colors at different temperatures allowing employees to visually determine the possibility of ice conditions.

As the air temperature dips below 38 degrees, segments of the reflector that were gray turn blue. Once the air temperature reaches 32 degrees or below, all the gray segments turn fully blue.



The reflectors change color as it gets colder.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend:

- Wear shoes or boots with traction
- Be careful when entering or exiting a vehicle
- Assume that all wet and dark areas on pavement are slippery or icy

Multiple reflectors were purchased. Where they will be located is being discussed, but Reinke believes placing them near entry points may be beneficial to give employees and visitors as much notice as possible.

He called the items an aid for situational awareness and said he hoped they would prompt employees to take precaution and change their walking behavior to account for slick conditions. He noted that safety experts across the country now advise people to mimic the way penguins walk, which has been described as a shuffle or waddle; it involves taking short strides with hands out of pockets and keeping the body's center of gravity over the foot that is striding forward.

Conagra Brands Indianapolis appears under direction of Ken Dobin, plant manager. For news coverage, contact Tom at the newsletter office by phone 402-475-6397, fax 402-475-6398, mail information to 2201 Winthrop Rd., Lincoln, NE 68502-4158, or email tom.johns@newslink.com. This material is intended to be an overview of the news of the plant. If there are any discrepancies between this newsletter and any collective bargaining process, insurance contracts or other official documents, those documents will govern. Conagra Brands continues to maintain and reserves the right, at any time, to alter, suspend, discontinue or terminate all plans and programs described in this newsletter. This newsletter is not an employment contract or any type of employment guarantee. Thanks to everyone at the Indianapolis plant for taking time to contribute to this newsletter, including but not limited to, Sarah Akin, Becca Conner, Ryan Neal, Jeff Reinke and Adrienne Shoemaker.

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Austin brings Marine skills to plant, appreciates teammates

Line Technician Zachary Austin brings a skill set he cultivated as a Marine to the plant. He enjoys working with machinery, as he did in service to the country, and he's excited to join the Table Spreads team after learning the ropes on the Reddi Wip side.

"A fun job is not a job," he said.

Initially, Austin worked on cars. As a Marine, he worked on F-18 fighter jets. After five years, he completed his service as a sergeant in April 2017 and began work at an auto parts store. His time as a Marine helped him develop leadership, time management and mechanic skills. Colleagues say he has hit the ground running since arriving at the plant, with Reddi Wip leads adding that he's been an excellent addition to the team.

Line Technician Zachary Austin

In addition to the practical things he learned as a Marine, Austin credits his military experience with making him expect more of himself. It's one of the reasons he's proactive instead of reactive. Instead of waiting for a trouble call, he'll watch machines run to better understand them in preparation of repairing them; he believes his level of engagement has helped him troubleshoot autonomously. Austin, who said asking questions has been vital to his development, credits his colleagues with being a great resource and offering answers. Among those who have mentored Austin are Line Technicians Marcus Adams, Sam Bailey, Andrew Bowman and Mark Richmond.

"They've helped someone with no manufacturing experience get used to a big plant that produces all the Reddi Wip in the country," he said.

Austin is proud to be part of the team.

"I take pride in everything I do," he said. "I'm not someone who is going to take shortcuts or do things halfway."

Austin realizes that just as pilots depended on the jets he maintained and repaired, that production associates will depend on him as well.

Austin's travels

Austin, inspired to serve by his military veteran grandfather, traveled the globe as a Marine and enjoyed learning about and interacting with different cultures. While stationed Iwakuni, Japan, for three years and Beaufort, S.C., for two, he visited Australia, Guam, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand. He most enjoyed the natural beauty of Australia and even encountered a 10-foot-long crocodile while kayaking there.

"I have a passion for the outdoors and peace and quiet," Austin said.

Living in Japan also was a valuable experience; he enjoyed the kindness.

"The food was great, and the culture is awesome," he said. "Everyone is so polite. It takes some getting used to."

Austin, a Franklin, Ind., native, said he's taken note that the plant is home to many veterans, which he appreciates.

Fast facts:

- Married to wife, Morgan. Gentry, 1, is their first child. The family enjoys sightseeing in nearby Brown County.
- Enjoys making high-performance modifications to his truck. "I love making things better and faster," he said.