



# TO SPREAD THE NEWS

SECOND EDITION 2022

## Indy approaches Phase 1

The plant is nearing a milestone that's been years in the making – becoming a Phase 1 plant.

The last hurdle for this will be the Leadership Pillar passing its phase assessment. An audit is scheduled in mid-May, and Plant Manager Jeremy Majeres is confident the pillar will pass thanks to numerous hours on the floor and extensive buy-in from employees.

If the pillar does pass, the plant immediately achieves Phase 1, with a flag-raising ceremony and employee celebration to follow. The focus then will shift to Phase 2, which is focused on enhancing employee capabilities.

Phase 1 notes the establishment of a strong culture, one in which new employees learn the Conagra way and Conagra Performance System (CPS) tenets. This allows them to hit the ground running and contribute to continuous improvement for safety and productivity standards. Majeres believes CPS is clearly ingrained in plant culture.

"It's part of every behavior we try to emulate," he said. "It's really taken root in the way we work."

For Majeres, reaching Phase 1 proves how the team is committed to future growth and innovation.

"At Indianapolis, we've laid the foundation for years to come," he said.



## EHS penultimate pillar to pass assessment

While there's always more work to do, Environmental, Health & Safety (EHS) Pillar's recent successful phase assessment has made reaching Phase 1 appear to be a mere formality.

The pillar was audited March 17-18 by three corporate visitors, Safety Directors Joel Carillo and Dan Murray and Senior Director-Environmental Manager Tracy Kayhanfar.

They were impressed with the plant's daily risk prediction process, specifically the level of employee involvement and accuracy. Robust use of Focused Improvement (FI), such as Unified Problem Solving (UPS), also was acknowledged.

EHS Manager Braylon Perry was pleased with the process and said it's part of establishing and maintaining a zero-injury culture.

"Passing the assessment is a really big deal because it shows we're getting better," he said. "Still, there's a lot of opportunity for growth, and the sky's the limit."

EHS Manager Braylon Perry

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The daily risk prediction system is praised during the assessment.

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Cell 3 team

## Cell 3 uses new attitude and methods to boost efficiency

A stellar Period 10 for Cell 3 has its team members taking account of what went right.

The cell ran at 87% efficiency, which not only is above the goal of 81.8% but beats the Compelling Business Need (CBN) call for 85%. The statistic measures unplanned losses, such as machine and processing failures or breakdowns. A run with no such losses would have perfect efficiency. With

Cell 3 producing sticks exclusively and dealing with exceedingly tight product tolerances, the accomplishment is especially satisfying, according to Cell 3 Cell Lead Matt Bailey.

"To not only exceed the cell goal but also to accomplish what the CBN is calling for, it shows we're doing our part," he said.

Bailey and his team have identified a few crucial areas that moved the needle in the right direction. Processing-related

issues that resulted in downtime were reduced. Bailey emphasized the maintenance plan, which he credited for finding defects and ensuring they don't turn into breakdowns. By keeping machines running well, Maintenance has been able to avoid having to address emergent issues. This allows them to be proactive, he said.

More than anything, a new attitude may be the reason for the excellent period. Cell 3 changed a Daily Management System (DMS) changeover metric, which placed an emphasis on running well immediately. Every Monday is a start-up day; before the change, performance on Monday took somewhat of a backseat to just get running. The goal on Mondays was starting by 11 a.m. Now the goal is 8 a.m.

"Instead of taking a hit on Monday, that's a good day now," Bailey said.

The new way of measuring startup included a more intentional checkout process. Checkouts essentially were composed of line technicians turning things on and performing lubrication before startup. Now, the list of items on the checkout sheet is comprehensive and continuously growing, evolving as line technicians actively add tasks that help them seek out loss-causing issues before



Cell 3 Cell Lead Matt Bailey

startup; the problems they catch and address allows lines to hit the ground running. Maintenance Planner Vance Blazier has led the effort to enhance checkouts and maintenance planning as a whole.

"All the things Maintenance is doing will not just help us on Monday but also the rest of the week," he said. "When we started rolling out the new checkouts, we saw a lot of buy-in from line technicians. They're taking ownership of the process."

When lines in the cell have been down, additional pre-inspections have been performed, including additional checkouts. That process is being formalized.

Bailey praised operators for wanting to hand a strong performing line to subsequent shifts.



Maintenance Planner Vance Blazier



# 5S on track

5S serves as a foundational element of Conagra Performance System (CPS).

During a recent visit, Vice President-Operations Dean Poppe emphasized 5S as essential to the plant's Phase 1 ambitions.

It's become apparent across the Conagra network of facilities that a new approach to 5S is necessary. Instead of viewing it as an organizational tool, it's now looked at as a loss elimination tool. The system, then, is dictated by how people work; standards are created based on input from subject matter experts on the floor.

Previously, an exempt employee would own an area and be responsible for its 5S condition. As part of the new philosophy, areas are co-owned by hourly



Before



After



Before



After

employees. The process of adding co-owners to areas within the plant is not complete, but there have been positive results where it has been implemented.

"It's been a great success," Autonomous Manufacturing Development (AMD) Pillar Lead Jermell Williams said. "You immediately can tell the difference between a co-owned area and an area that isn't co-owned. That's why we have a big push to add co-owners."

As operators take a greater role in 5S, it's creating a better work environment for them.

"5S definitely has an impact on safety, quality and productivity," he said.

Williams noted that clutter can lead to slips, trips and falls, affect

**5S definitely has an impact on safety, quality and productivity."**

*—Jermell Williams, AMD Pillar Lead*

employees' ability to focus or tempt them into using the wrong tool when they can't find the right one. In addition to helping employees focus on the task at hand, 5S lessens exposure by reducing steps.

While Poppe's visit came early in the process, he did leave impressed. He noted how he wanted to see the evidence of the standard — even if it wasn't presently being met in some cases — because that would indicate the plant is on the right track.

## FI Boot Camp continues to grow

Focused Improvement (FI) Boot Camp continues to grow.

Initially designed to teach Indianapolis employees FI tools, including Unified Problem Solving (UPS), Statistical Process Capability and Work Process Improvement (WPI), the event has become a date circled on employees' calendars across the country.

The latest iteration, March 22-24, drew a cross-functional group of more than 25, only two of which call Indianapolis home.

Continuous Improvement Engineer Taylor Duffy helped lead the event, which had a classroom and hands-on element.

"People were excited," she said. "Some had used the tools and wanted clarifications, while others were just beginning the journey. There was good participation."

Plant leaders across the Conagra network were

asked whom they wanted to send to the event. Some who were interested in attending had to be turned away due to capacity issues, so there's talk of expanding Boot Camp and having it at other venues. Conagra enterprise personnel attended to see how the event was staged in the hope of reapplying it elsewhere.

"It's really cool to be involved in something like this," Duffy said. "It's great to maintain connections with the people I meet."

In two months, Duffy will check in with those who attended and discuss their use of FI tools.

Even if the event expands, Indianapolis likely will continue to play a featured role in Boot Camp. Duffy cites the location's ideal training spaces. She noted there always will be a need for Boot Camp at the plant to aid manufacturing development associates. Duffy adds that including operators in training potentially is on the forefront.



## Cox takes on new role

Zackary Cox is a problem-solver by nature.

His affinity for working with his hands and taking things apart to troubleshoot them led to his success as Cell 4 line technician.

Now, as Cell 5 maintenance planner, he'll be charged with higher order problem-solving.

"This is a way bigger area to what I was assigned to as a mechanic," he said, noting that the milk and oil rooms have extensive processes.

Enhancing safety and efficiency through standardization will be an area of focus for Cox. He said the Compelling Business Need (CBN) will guide his efforts and help him identify opportunities.

His responsibilities include scheduling, work, budgeting, interacting with contractors and leading Line Technicians Nicholas Collier and Brandon Guess.

Night shift line technicians, including Tyler Grizzle and Cole Persinger, also support Cell 5.

"Our line technicians are good people who work well together and are very knowledgeable of Cell 5's processes," Cox said.

The team has been supportive.

"Employees here are friendly, helpful and team-oriented," he said. "They understand what it takes to get product out the door and strive for that."

He credited Cell 2 Maintenance Planner Katelyn Race for setting a strong planned maintenance foundation for Cell 5. Cox said it established a structure that had been lacking and gave Cell 5 its own identity from a maintenance standpoint. Race also trained him before taking on her new role in Reddi-wip.

"She's very knowledgeable, understanding and well spoken," Cox said.

He also praised leadership, including Cell 5 Team Lead Andrew Saling and Table Spreads Process Engineer Carson DeJoode.

"Andrew always is there to help when you need it, and Carson is a good team player who wants to improve things," Cox said.

*Maintenance Planner  
Zackary Cox*

## Braley, Vollmer help put people in a good position

Fit For Work Injury Prevention Specialist Renee Braley and Occupational Health and Wellness Specialist Angela Vollmer are here for you.

Both seek to raise awareness of ergonomics and how it can keep employees from experiencing repetitive stress injuries and other potential occupational risks. Braley has created an introductory document for that purpose. There are plans to weave ergonomic training into the onboarding process for new employees.

Vollmer noted that while a common definition of ergonomics is "the study of people's efficiency in their working environment," she and her teammate are concerned primarily with reducing effort and the potential risk that comes with it.

"We want employees to know the steps to take if they're experiencing issues," Vollmer said. "Even if the problem isn't work-related, they can speak with us."

Practices like body position and preshift stretches can play an important role in occupational health.

"Even something like microbreaks can be very beneficial," Vollmer said, adding how this can be something as simple as rolling one's shoulders to release tension caused by a repetitive motion.

She encourages employees who work primarily at their desks also to consider ergonomics.

"Simple things you don't take into consideration, such as holding a phone in the crook of your neck or sitting in a desk chair that doesn't fit well, potentially are problematic," Vollmer said.

She offered standing desks as a possible solution or merely organizing one's desk so accessing things doesn't require awkward poses or gestures.

Vollmer stressed early intervention, noting that she and Braley want to offer assistance as soon as possible.

"All the time that passes before you come to us is time we could be helping," Vollmer said.

*Occupational Health  
and Wellness Specialist  
Angela Vollmer*



*Fit For Work Injury  
Prevention Specialist  
Renee Braley*





# Smith helps lead union

Line Tech II Bryan Smith is the newest of five plant United Food and Commercial Workers Local 700 stewards.

"My responsibilities are to uphold the contract, first and foremost, and help our hourly brothers and sisters with any issues they have," he said. "I will do the best I can for our members."

Smith has been at the plant for 13 years. He'd worked for two other employers after leaving the Army.

"This is my first union job," he said. "I like being part of this union. It does well for its people."

With his fellow stewards, Smith looks to further enhance relations between management and labor and bring about positive change.

"I like my fellow stewards; they're good people," he said.



Line Tech II Bryan Smith

## Human Resources brings in Falkenburg, Grieser

As Human Resources backfills its manager and generalist roles, two experienced professionals have stepped in on an interim basis.

Human Resources Manager Marla Falkenburg is on loan from the Rensselaer, Indiana, plant, which is home to Orville Redenbacher Popcorn.

"It's exciting," she said. "I get to meet a lot of people and encounter different processes."

Melinda Grieser, who works as a human resources manager on a contract basis and has more than two decades of experience in this specialty, will help fill in the gaps created by the two department vacancies. She enjoys helping people, finding business solutions and negotiating the balance between business and people needs.

"I also love the opportunity to learn something new," Grieser said.

Both she and Falkenburg will be on hand until they can be replaced permanently.

Falkenburg will split time between Indianapolis and Rensselaer, which is nearly two hours northwest. Her weeks will involve three days in Indianapolis and two days in Rensselaer. She said she'll give exclusive focus on the plant she's at during each day to ensure needs are met at each location.

Falkenburg has noticed commonality between the two facilities.

"Like Rensselaer, there's camaraderie here and people have each other's backs," she said. "People pull together and actively seek to help one other."

Grieser also notes the camaraderie in Indianapolis. She praises Conagra's corporate values and commitment to diversity, which she believes is a strong asset to an organization.

"Everyone brings something different to the table," she said. "We all see things differently, and anyone on the team can introduce something important."

Grieser is a big fan of Reddi-wip.

"My husband thinks I buy stock in Reddi-wip," she said. "I could probably do a commercial for it."

From left, Interim Human Resources Manager Melinda Grieser and Rensselaer Human Resources Manager Marla Falkenburg





# Weir joins EHS

Environmental, Health & Safety (EHS) Specialist Joshua Weir had Olympic aspirations.

When he comes to work, he passes the velodrome where he became an accomplished sprint cyclist.

The interest in cycling for his family started when the Indianapolis native's father began commuting to work by bicycle.

"He got my mom into it, too," he said.

As an 11-year-old, Weir found himself visiting Bicycle Art, a local bike shop, and eventually competing in Central Indiana Bicycling Association events as part of a junior racing team. He went on to become a member of the U.S. Olympic Development Team in 2000, training with athletes who eventually competed in 2004 and 2008 Summer Games. While he continued to ride and race in college at Indiana University Bloomington, he decided to earn a gold in fatherhood.

Given the sponsorship opportunities and training requirements, professional cycling wasn't a life choice that offered him the stability he needed. So after discussing vocational options with a family friend who'd dedicated his 30-year career to safety, it prompted him to earn a master's from his alma mater in safety management. He parlayed that into workplace safety roles with Alcoa, General Motors and Amazon.



EHS Specialist Joshua Weir

Working at the Indianapolis plant allows Weir to return to his hometown and be part of a successful company with a bright future.

He's excited by the opportunity to drive safety culture at the plant and enjoys working in a collaborative environment.

"Everyone here has been very friendly, which says a lot about Conagra culture and this site," Weir said. "I feel comfortable asking questions to everyone and anyone."

## Congratulations to those celebrating milestones between July and December

### 40+ Years

James Boles  
Donald Bowsher  
David Brown  
Ken Heatherly  
Dale Heitzman  
Fred Pittman Jr.  
Usmanghani Zakaria

### 30+ Years

Bruce Brown  
Roger Hunt  
Kim McNutt

### 25 Years

Cleveland Bowman Jr.  
Melissa Lane

### 15 Years

Mark Clark  
Monica Coffey  
Linda Dennis  
Belinda Fanning  
Corin Londale Micou  
Clyde McFadden  
Willie McKind Jr.  
Joseph Murphy  
Justin Myers

Jacqueline Royal  
Jerome Russell II  
Garry Stephens  
Shawn Turner

### 10 Years

Tanya Brasher  
Candiance Day  
Wendy Durham  
Tial Iang  
Kim Jackson  
Jim Lane  
Brandon Lavel Easler Sr.  
Francine Lee Powell

Cherrie Mitchell  
Ruben Morton  
Tha Thluai Cin  
Sam Thompson

Bawi Uk  
Glenda White

### 5 Years

Zachary Austin  
Paul Boyd  
Bryant Distel  
Robert Mays III  
Diego Morales  
Alex Reyes

Dea Robinson  
Benjamin Rogers  
Kentrell White

### 1 Year

Adam Apollos  
Matt Bailey  
Allyson Gower  
Nicholas Kalinin  
Suzanne Love  
Katrell Moss  
Braylon Perry  
Rebecca Staniszeski  
Brian Woods

### Recognition list for individuals or teams

Trevor Adkison  
Neli Andrade Gonzalez  
Adam Apollos  
Paul Artis  
Richard Aung  
Matt Bailey  
Jermaine Banks  
LaVonda Blakes  
Denise Bledsoe  
Jim Boles  
Lewis Bonner  
Paul Boyd  
Teri Bradberry  
Israel Calhoun  
Patty Carson  
Tha Cin  
Adrian Clarke  
Mark Clark  
Joseph Coker  
Nick Collier  
Amanda Cousin

Candiance Day  
Linda Dennis  
Taylor Duffy  
Jacob Earnest  
Leroy Ellis  
EHS Team  
Event Team  
Danielle Foley  
John Garrett  
Mike Gray  
Steve Gulley  
Troy Hardister  
Ken Heatherly  
Mike Hightower  
Scott Hughes  
Tracy Jackson  
Nick Kalinin  
Mike Kellermeier  
Gary Kientz  
Dan Kingery  
Jim Lane  
Melissa Lane  
Brian Lanham

Marvin Martin  
Herlinda Martinez  
Eric Maseka  
Robert Mays  
Tanya McClaire  
Clyde McFadden  
Sara Mengsteab  
Ruben Morton  
Katrell Moss  
Daryl Nibbs  
Mayco Ordenez Azanon  
Willman Pena  
Dave Pierce  
PM Pillar Team  
Kevin Porter  
Francine Powell  
John Powell  
Mark Richmond  
Ben Rogers  
Rhonda Russell  
Chiffon Sissons  
Jon Shelton  
Dave Shrake

Scot Smith  
Victoria Smith  
Dave Smitherman  
Jeff Stanfield  
Marshall Starks  
Mike Strack  
Kent Taylor  
Gerran Thomas  
Tamara Thomas  
Shawn Turner  
Bawi Uk  
Zak Uzimagani  
Evodio Velasquez Resendiz  
Angela Vollmer  
Kim Wafford  
Eric Wagner  
Terri Williams  
Donte Wills  
Shawn Wise  
Dan Witt  
Randy Womble  
Brian Woods

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your retirement Richard  
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# Equalization tank project advances

A multiyear equalization tank replacement project is beginning a crucial phase.

The plant's present equalization tank is undersized and nearing the end of its functional life.

Equalization tanks normalize water flow as a crucial initial step in treating wastewater. As the name suggests, the tank equalizes various sources of wastewater with various consistencies and pH levels to create a consistent product. Downstream wastewater treatment equipment functions effectively when processing wastewater with consistent characteristics.

The site for the installation will be in a parking area southwest of existing wastewater treatment equipment, including the equalization tank. The site was chosen after a December 2021 structural analysis nixed initial plans to move the entire wastewater treatment infrastructure farther afield to a grassy area south of the barn. That plan proved cost ineffective. While the present site

will cost some parking spaces, plans are to replace them in an area closer to Gate 1.

The project was submitted for approval February 2022 and is targeted for completion summer 2023. In April and May, pre-engineering work will begin, which includes a site survey and utilities mapping. Core drilling for a soil compaction study then will ensure the site can handle the massive weight of the 400,000-gallon tank that eventually will be installed there; with associated components, it will weigh 4 million pounds and require a 16-foot deep foundation.

The existing 30-year-old tank is 85,000 gallons and originally was intended just to process Table Spreads wastewater. With age, its agitators have grown less effective. The new tank will feature side-mount agitators and coarse bubble mixing.

Engineering Manager and Early Management (EM) Pillar Leader Jordan Panich said the new tank will "absorb more process upsets"



*New equalization tank installation site*

and help the plant run more consistently. He likened the project to putting a roof on a house because it's primarily about keeping the business running as opposed to enhancing performance. Nonetheless, he noted a side benefit will be lower wastewater surcharges.

The old equalization tank essentially will be used until the new one is online. A brief cutover will be facilitated by a temporary system, which will be in place by May to protect against catastrophic failure. Once the cutover is complete, the old tank will be demolished, freeing up space for future wastewater treatment enhancements.

## Heatherly set to retire

With 46 years to his credit, Benhil Operator Ken Heatherly, who joined the plant at the time it was constructed, is set to retire. He plans to travel with his wife of 47 years, Brenda, and visit family and friends. The National Parks are among the destinations he looks forward to visiting in his camper, as well as California. Utah and the Rocky Mountains.

### **What will you miss about the people?**

The camaraderie and fellowship. The people here kind of became a second family, even with some of the contractors who built the plant in the 1990s. Jeff Napeir was one of those contractors, and we became good friends and enjoy hunting and fishing together.

### **What do you enjoy hunting?**

White-tailed deer, turkeys and other game birds. I also enjoy bass fishing. I eat what I catch and harvest, and I also practice taxidermy. I've had many great moments hunting and fishing.

### **What makes you proud of your career?**

I was proud to be a part of the food chain in America and producing a quality product, one that I helped put on the tables of others and enjoyed on my own.

### **What's your advice to others?**

Be the best you can and look forward to retirement. I thought it wouldn't happen, but it does; so plan for it. It's the American way.

*Benhil Operator Ken Heatherly*





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 122 S. 29th St., Lincoln, NE 68510-1403, 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, Matt Bailey, Renee Braley, Taylor Duffy and Jermell Williams.

## LCOF bringing the team together

Leadership Coaching on the Floor (LCOF) is helping bring exempt and hourly employees together.

Plant Manager Jeremy Majeres said the plantwide program that involves all employees is bridging gaps, encouraging dialogue and boosting morale as well as aiding development.

"Team members are building capabilities in each other and stewarding the behaviors and culture that drive the business forward," he said.

With LCOF, an exempt employee will broach conversations with four to five hourly employees every week with the goal of developing a rapport. The process gives employees direct interaction with leadership and an outlet to share ideas and concerns.

"Having an avenue for conversations drives solutions," Majeres said. "It also builds trust within the organization and ensures we are all aligned as to our aspirations and goals. That paves the way for continuous improvement and loss elimination and ensures the plant remains a place that is safe, productive and enjoyable."

A recent roundtable meeting was held to solicit feedback from hourly employees about LCOF.

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## Wheeler praises LCOF

Mix Room Crew Lead Dell Wheeler is a fan of Leadership Coaching on the Floor (LCOF).

"You get to know more about what's going on," he said.

By working with Cell 2 Maintenance Planner Katelyn Race, Wheeler has learned more about the role of Maintenance at the plant.

"It's given me a new perspective on what they do and how we can better assist each other," he said.

Wheeler believes his interactions with Race have been mutually beneficial. He's been able to share his mix room expertise and offer insight into an improvement project involving the batch tanks. LCOF has made it easier to take an ownership attitude.

"It makes you feel valuable to be able to share like that," he said. "Leadership Coaching on the Floor is nothing but growth. Communication among everyone is vital. When everyone is open, it makes transitions easier."

Wheeler is proud of the mix room working dynamics.

"I have a good team," he said.

"We jump in and get the job done. Everyone works safely and is on board with the safety process. We're always backing each other up, and it's why we work like a well-oiled machine."



Mix Room Crew Lead Dell Wheeler