



# TO SPREAD THE NEWS

FIRST EDITION 2021

## Vision and values set

Corporate Senior Continuous Improvement Director Craig Andrews recently facilitated a meeting for Indianapolis' hourly and salaried employees to collaborate on establishing the plant's vision and values.

In response to her attendance, Conagra Performance System (CPS) Manager Sarah Akin said, "We prioritized what we wanted to see as a group. It's important to have our vision and values documented so we have who we want to be and where

we want to go aligned and in front of us."

During the meeting, participants held small group discussions on Conagra's values as well as their own. They also brainstormed and prioritized a list of possible plant values.

Employees then broke into three small groups to brainstorm ideas for visions, shared them with the entire group and drafted a final version of

Reddi to serve our customers and spread love to every table.

### Values:

- Respect
- Teamwork
- Accountability
- Family
- Integrity



vision and values as a team.

Small groups were cross sections of hourly and salaried employees. Akin noted that employees' vision for the company, as well as their values, were similar.

Andrews explained that the plant's vision is a seven- to 10-year directional statement, illustrating where employees want to go as a team.

"When you understand your own values, you can use them to make decisions about how to live life and work," said Andrews, who noted a vision statement should be inspirational, evoke passion and emotion, as well as engage the team.



Employees collaborate to establish vision and values.

"When you understand your own values, you can use them to make decisions about how to live life and work."

- Corporate Senior Continuous Improvement Director Craig Andrews

## PLANT ON CUSP OF NEW ERA FOR AMD

Autonomous Manufacturing Development (AMD) Step 4 is on the way.

"It's a big deal," Continuous Improvement Manager Jermell Williams said. "We are preparing to graduate to the next step."

A model team will be established later this winter. Some of the prework already is underway, including preparing forms, templates and training material. A work point analysis and quality assurance matrix overview also will be performed.

The step enhances employees' skills by teaching them how to conduct inspections at the component level.

Introducing the step will strengthen plant consistency and help achieve the Compelling Business Need (CBN) goals. Mastering the step is vital to making it to the next Conagra Performance System (CPS) phase.

Step 4 will build upon previous steps, which include returning equipment to base equipment; eliminating source contamination and hard-to-reach areas; and establishing lubrication standards. Step 4 goes deeper into how machines work, helping employees discern the nuances of components, which include fasteners and drives and electrical, pneumatic, lubrication and air systems. It also familiarizes them with hand tools.

Much of Step 4 relates to helping employees determine what deterioration looks like in components and how the various systems work together. This allows employees to be proactive. As employees add skills, the CILs they perform can become more comprehensive and sophisticated. A key to Daily Management System (DMS), the more sophisticated that CILs become the more sustainable progress will be.



## Line 22 AMD team making progress

Line 22's Autonomous Manufacturing Development (AMD) team has added a new member and is back on track with Step 1 after a COVID-19-related hiatus.

The team is nearing its stop goal of 4.58 stops per hour.

Process Engineer Haley Adams, the team leader, is joined by Continuous Skills Development Coordinator Marci Smith, Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) Manager Dia Stevenson and Machine Operators Glenda White and Dave Pierce as well as Sanitation Crew Chief Kurstin Eckert, who just joined.

Smith coordinates defects and one-point lessons and manages the activity board.

Stevenson coordinates safety, quality and metrics. White is in charge of centerline and 5S. Pierce heads CILs. And as of the Dec. 12 meeting, Eckert was placed in charge of sources of contamination.

"I really like our team," Adams said. "It's a good cross section of the plant. They offer diverse perspectives and come up with good solutions."

The team has been meeting since August. Its progress was interrupted by COVID-19 but is back at full force as of December. The team members meet every week for four hours and use at least half the time for activities on the floor.

Line 22, one of the plant's older lines, includes a bottle erector, filler, capper and case packer. Optimizing the line's case packer has been an area of focus as most of its stops involve the machine. The team has performed multiple unified problem-solving sessions to reduce case packer stops and also have leveraged mechanics, control techs and various Conagra Performance System (CPS) supports to devise lasting solutions.

Adams credits the development of a theory of operations — the product of many hours observing



*From left, Process Engineer Haley Adams, Sanitation Crew Chief Kurstin Eckert and Continuous Skills Development Coordinator Marci Smith*

the unique, mechanically driven line where squeezable product is bottled and packaged — with helping aid progress and establish a unified language.

"The line is so unique that we are starting from scratch in many ways," Smith said. "There wasn't a lot to go on, and it's a new challenge to apply tools in a new way."

Smith is a veteran of AMD teams for Line 30 filler and Line 15. In addition to Line 22's team, she's presently on Line 31's team. Eckert also has extensive experience; he's a veteran of Line 5 and 15's teams and also is presently on Line 19's team. He and Smith agree that it gets easier to go through AMD's steps with experience.

As the team continues to work, they've banked gains. A root cause analysis revealed product buildup on the case packer's conveyor belt was causing bottles to slide, leading to delays. A joint venture between the team and Sanitation has led to midweek cleaning of the belts. By returning the belts to base condition, buildup-related issues have decreased.

Another enhancement is related

to the timing of the lane diverter before the case packer. An issue with the lane diverter was a top cause of stops. The bottle stop and lane shift were happening simultaneously. The process has changed to include a pause that prevents jams. The slight change in timing has amounted to a significant win.

"I like getting a diverse group of people together and thinking about problems," Adams said. "I look at this line all day every day, and it's really valuable to have other people's takes on it."

### Adams changing lines

Process Engineer Haley Adams has been assigned to lines 19, 22, 23 and 28, where specialized product is filled and packed. She's moving to lines 30, 31, 32 and 33, which are all square tub lines.

"It will be a different way of having to look at things," Adams said. "I'll need to dig deep into one type of line and reapply things."



## New product spurs equipment modification

With the belief that ketogenic diets will continue to create demand for no-sugar products, a new variety of Reddi-wip is in the process of making its way to shelves.

Research suggests the new formula will sell well as a six-count case so Line 2's case packer was overhauled to have capability to pack that size — something that no case packer at the plant has done before.

Cell 1 Cell Lead Adam Bauer and Process Engineer Nick Hammes report it was no small undertaking and categorized the needed changes as "extensive."

"It's probably the biggest modification in Reddi-wip we've done in quite some time," Bauer said.

While the overhaul was supposed to happen during the two-week Christmas break, it proved more challenging and was completed during New Year's break.

The case packer performed well during a recent trial. It's now slated to be used this spring to run 2,000 sale samples, which will be sent to corporate to simulate to-market transport.

One of the overhaul's key features is that its dual servomotors allow push-button adjustment of the case packer's flights. This allows quick changes between different case sizes. During the trial, the case packer demonstrated the ability to easily transition to 12-count small, 12-count large or six-count small.

Representatives from the case packer's manufacturer, Douglas Manufacturing, were called to assist with the overhaul, which was performed by a contractor and supported by the Reddi-wip Maintenance team, Bauer and Hammes. Mechanic Shawn Wise also helped with the process, assisting with preparation. Hammes credits maintenance technicians with maintaining "a refuse-to-lose attitude" through a frustrating period when the overhaul was proving more challenging than hoped. He also likened the overhaul to putting a 2020 engine in a 2004 car.



## New valves making a difference

New filler valves are paving the way for longer runs.

Maintenance recently installed 32 valves on each of the Reddi-wip lines; the new valves do not have stroke limiters, which eliminates a variable that has caused downtime. The old valves required the limiters because of their large openings. Stroke limiters were prone to breaking and caused over- and under-fills, which demanded mechanical intervention.

Energized by air, the new fill valves are more reliable thanks to a simple completely open or closed manner of function. This is possible because the valve's smaller opening doesn't require a limiter. Since the change occurred in November, only two valves have required replacement. Until the week of Jan. 4, none had needed replacement.

It's possible that the new valves will bear even more fruit and may significantly reduce residue that ends up in the screens. At the request of Maintenance, Quality is examining if the reduction means longer runs before sanitation is required. It's possible the new valves can help double the time between required sanitation.

## Cell 1 trio jelling

Cell 1 Lead Adam Bauer, Process Engineer Nick Hammes and Maintenance Planner Rick Maddox have worked together since shortly after last year's Labor Day.

Bauer suggests 2020's overarching theme was "challenging," and that it stands to reason Cell 1 faced some rough patches last year.

He characterizes the issues as of the "fluke, one-off" variety. As the team coheres, Bauer believes the cell's future looks bright.

He referred to Hammes as a "budding technical expert" who is responsible for understanding the nuances of all equipment and all losses so he can develop daily plans for enhancement.

Maddox is charged with planning all work orders and maintenance work as well as upgrades and repairs. Bauer oversees the entire cell and supervises team leads.

"I make sure everything is in a good spot in regard to maintenance and ensure the equipment is running well," he said.



## New stretching program is set to expand

Angela Vollmer, the plant's new Fit For Work athletic trainer, is helping employees stretch and prepare for their shift. By limbering up, they mitigate the risk of potential

ergonomic injuries.

Vollmer introduced the program during Reddi-wip second shift's huddle meetings. With support from Production Supervisors Kim Jackson and Chris Brajdic, the program has been a great success, said Dia Stevenson, Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Manager.

The EHS team will help expand the Fit for Work program to all shifts during the next quarter. The program is voluntary and designed to aid employees on and off the job by contributing to their overall health and wellness.

Fit for Work is a partner that is focused on Early Intervention ergonomic initiatives.

Vollmer works with employees at the plant for about 20 hours per week.

"The EHS team thanks Vollmer and the Reddi-wip team for giving this program a strong start," Stevenson said.



Employees take part in the Fit for Work stretching program.



Fit For Work Athletic Trainer Angela Vollmer

## Event Team helps spread winter cheer

It wasn't the normal circumstance for the plant's annual winter celebration, but the Event Team worked hard to ensure it was as festive as possible.

Associate Continuous Improvement Specialist Cherelle Cousin, who leads the team, gave "all the credit" for pulling off a COVID-19 safe and fun party Dec. 16 to her teammates of four years.

The team includes First Shift Machine Operators Amanda Cousin and Buffy Crutchfield, Second Shift Machine Operator LaQuonda Brooks, and Third Shift Machine Operators Jackie Ray, Larry Lloyd, Sam Thompson, Daniel Cuttino and Chiquita Witherspoon. Other honorary members chipped in as well, including Finance's Meredith Jones, Sanitation Crew Lead Bill Jefferson and Eric Wilcox, a contractor who helped decorate.

COVID-19 changed things, including requiring no more than 25 gathered at a time across 10 tables with dividers; no more than three were allowed at any one table. Despite the social distancing measures, Cherelle Cousin was happy with the results. This meant meals had to be staggered to ensure all employees had a chance to celebrate.

"It was still amazing," she said. "The people were grateful to have it."

Revelers raved about individually wrapped Bundt cakes and also enjoyed a meatier feast with multiple main courses, including roast beef and fried chicken. Sides included scalloped potatoes, green beans, corn on the cob, fried

biscuits and Caesar and macaroni salad.

"There was a lot of effort," Cherelle Cousin said. "I think the main reason we wanted to have an event is to give people some sense that there's a rainbow at the end of the storm. It's also a good reminder that we've been blessed — we've never been down and haven't missed a beat."

In addition to the Event Team, she thanked leadership for their support.

Cherelle Cousin said she's hoping for a summer celebration that's closer to normal. The team hopes to add community outreach events, such as aiding food banks or participating in charitable walks.



Employees enjoy the festivities.



The Event Team works to ensure a successful meal.



Associate Continuous Improvement Specialist Cherelle Cousin



# Project to aid temperature recording

Ensuring quality table spreads recently became easier.

A data-recording device known as a chart recorder has been installed, and two more are slated for installation. These three chart recorders will replace five older ones that aren't as reliable as necessary. Additionally, when the old chart recorders would break down or require maintenance, it proved difficult to source parts for them.

"It really becomes a hassle to continue maintaining them, and they're so critical to quality in the milk room," Project Leader Rocio Hamlin said.

The chart recorders document the internal temperatures of the milk room's tanks as mandated by the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance and internal standards. They also are used to measure the internal temperatures of clean-in-place (CIP) circuits to ensure cleaning solutions are hot enough for sanitation purposes. Chart recorders work by having pens affixed to moving shafts that etch marks onto a slowly rotating paper chart.

Hamlin supervised a contractor during the installation of the first new unit. Resistance temperature detectors (RTD) are used to transmit the actual data the chart recorders document. Existing RTDs will be hooked into the new chart recorders.

There are six milk tanks, two whey tanks and three CIP circuits that require their temperatures to be charted; presently, each CIP has one chart recorder committed to it. Each tank and CIP has an RTD, but chart recorders, especially modern ones, can chart multiple items. That's why three new units have the capacity to perform the duty of the five old units. When the project is completed, capacity to chart an additional item will exist.



Chart recorders

"It really becomes a hassle to continue maintaining them, and they're so critical to quality in the milk room."

- Project Leader Rocio Hamlin

Each new chart recorder has four color pens, which makes the data easier to read compared to the previous charts that were produced by thermal etching pens.

Reddi-wip already has been upgraded with chart recorders of the same style, so this will standardize the process across the plant.

Hamlin said the newly installed chart recorder is working well, and the commissioning, qualification and verification process has started. She added that the project will be completed in phases to mitigate risk.

Hamlin worked with Continuous Skills Development (CSD) as part of the Train the Trainer program to instruct a machine operator on each shift — Tom Unrue, first; Mike Strack, second; and Donald Byrd, third — on how to use the new chart recorders.

Project Leader Rocio Hamlin

Service  
ANNIVERSARIES

## 1 year

Wiletvaldo Calderon  
Israel Calhoun  
Tracy Graham  
Pierre Lokombe  
David Perry  
Katelyn Race  
Michael Steadman  
Dia Stevenson

## 5 years

Mark Boles  
Troy Hardister  
Donaldo Samayoa  
Jacob Shokes  
Torrey Stott

## 10 years

Kevin Garner  
Teddy Romano  
John Rouleau

## 25 years

Dean Griffin  
Danny Kingery  
Becky Rigdon-Jones

## Scot Smith

Carmen Tyler  
Gary Wampler

## 40 years

Raymond Hotseller  
Victoria Smith



## Baker embraces new opportunity

When one door closed for Table Spreads Production Team Leader Alvin Baker last summer, a window of opportunity opened.

After working for Sylvester, Georgia's Peter Pan peanut butter plant during its final year of operation, Baker was encouraged by senior leadership to continue with Conagra, especially Indianapolis, as it would offer him the ability to learn various aspects of food manufacturing.

Similar to his role at the Sylvester plant, Baker is now responsible for coordinating employees, driving daily production and ensuring food safety and quality rules compliance.

Baker said he maintains an open-door policy and considers himself a conduit that facilitates communication between senior leadership and hourly employees.

"If I can't address a concern, I escalate it," he said. "I make sure I'm always approachable and slow down to listen to employees' concerns."

While the production temperatures and raw material are different, Baker said there are many similarities between manufacturing peanut butter and table spreads, including packaging and use of similar machinery such as votators.

Another similarity is the importance of planning, training and communication.

"It's important to take in employees' opinions and also communicate appropriate feedback," he said. "Hourly folks do a good job and come here to contribute."

Similar to his work at Sylvester, Baker enjoys the sense of accomplishment he feels when he sees his team come together to achieve safety, quality and production goals.

While there are opportunities for enhancement and a few remaining obstacles to overcome, Baker believes the team is heading in the right direction. He credits senior leadership with implementing a good plan.

"We are navigating toward that goal," Baker said. "I'd like to encourage people to communicate more, and continue to build the team and work together to accomplish the CBN."

He credits Operations Manager Mike Roth, Cell Lead Keith Vanderwalle and CSD Lead Darren Lloyd with aiding his professional development.

"I've learned a lot since coming here," he said. "They've all been encouraging and put me in a position to succeed going forward."

Baker, a Vidalia, Georgia, native who hadn't owned a jacket or seen snow before arriving in Indiana, is adjusting to a new climate. His two sons, however, enjoy playing outside in the snow.

"They grew up in the country and like the city," he said. "There's a lot to see and do."

### Line 19 experiences AMD success

Baker and his AMD teammates have had a strong impact on Line 19.

Minor stops have been reduced by 50%.

Baker is the team's leader; it includes Quality Specialist Jordan Strand, Sanitation Crew Lead Kurstin Eckert, Machine Operators Traice Allen, Mayco Ordonez and Brandon Steady, and Administrative Assistant Roseanne Bransford.

"I'm most impressed by their knowledge," Baker said. "They know the line inside and out and how it's worked historically. They are aware of what things can be added to that line to make it more efficient and easier to operate."



"I make sure I'm always approachable and slow down to listen to employees' concerns."

- Table Spreads Production Team Leader Alvin Baker



## DeJoode works to enhance startups

Cell 5 Process Engineer Carson DeJoode knew he'd fit in at the plant after interviewing with Cell 5 Cell Lead Grant Pajak and Operations Manager Mike Roth.

"It felt like a conversation with friends," he said.

Conagra's varied brands and the opportunity to return to the Midwest were attractive to DeJoode as well. But working at the plant also is a chance to leverage his bachelor's degree in biological engineering education from the University of Illinois and master's degree in biomedical engineering from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

DeJoode will help ensure the milk and oil rooms get raw

ingredients to the production floor and that the emulsions for various table spread recipes come out correctly.

While set points for pressures and temperatures are well established, issues do arise and can result in anything from product being slightly out of specification to something more severe, such as inverted emulsions — a situation in which a batch essentially is water with a few oil droplets in it.

DeJoode said one focus area to prevent yield loss is enhancing the efficiency of startups. To make progress, he will use his critical thinking skills across five lines.

"On startup days, it's a pretty fast pace and I bounce around between lines," DeJoode said.

Unified Problem Solving (UPS) is a tool he utilizes a lot to make progress. It helps him develop countermeasures to address issues. DeJoode also is involved in Early Management (EM), which aids in



Process Engineer Carson DeJoode

improving processes or introducing new ones.

In addition to gaining a sense of accomplishment from seeing lines run efficiently, DeJoode takes satisfaction in contributing to the world's food security. He appreciates working with employees who take the plant's mission personally and step up to challenges.

DeJoode enjoys bicycle rides and hiking with his fiancée, Dayna, and taking his smart, rambunctious puppy, Indie, to the dog park. Indie is a bernedoodle, which is a cross between a Bernese mountain dog and a poodle.

"On startup days, it's a pretty fast pace and I bounce around between lines."

- Process Engineer Carson DeJoode

## Kozel collaborates to solve problems

Process Engineer Andrew Kozel enjoys problem-solving with his co-workers almost as much as he likes the smell of Reddi-wip Chocolate.

Responsible for ensuring Reddi-wip's lines run efficiently, Kozel's goal is to increase yield and reduce loss. While he's still learning the process, Kozel works closely with Cell Lead Andrew Saling and the operators to identify losses that are easy and profitable to address.

"The operators are very knowledgeable," Kozel said. "I really respect their decision-making and willingness to show me the ropes while also being receptive to working with me."

Previously, the Detroit native worked at a plastic packaging company in Wisconsin. It was his first job after graduating from Michigan State University with a degree in chemical engineering.

Kozel said the transition to food manufacturing has been relatively easy for him as he's retained many of the interpersonal and problem-solving skills he developed in his former job. Much of what he learned in college about heat exchangers, pumps and processing equipment, as well as his ability to read piping diagrams, also

"The operators are very knowledgeable."

- Process Engineer Andrew Kozel

returned to him shortly after starting at the plant.

Kozel is the only member of his immediate family to study science and pursue a related vocation. Adept at math and chemistry, he was guided by teachers to consider chemical engineering.

"It was challenging, interesting and fed my mind in the right way," he said.

The path ultimately led him to Conagra, and he said the company aligns with his values.

In addition to the camaraderie with his co-workers, Kozel said, "Something I really enjoy is going to the store and seeing our product on the shelf, even brands we don't make here."

He also likes watching Michigan State football and basketball, hiking and camping. Kozel's 9-month-old Spanish waterdog is a focus of his leisure time as well.



Process Engineer  
Andrew Kozel



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, Cherelle Cousin, Rocio Hamlin, Nick Hammes and Terri Snodgrass.

CONAGRA BRANDS - INDIANAPOLIS  
4300 W. 62ND ST.  
INDIANAPOLIS IN 46268

PRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MAIL USA

## HR welcomes Trujillo

Upon completing her master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology from Purdue University, Leidy Trujillo desired to find a vocation that allowed her to foster an effective organization, ensure employees have a voice and see that protocols are followed ethically.

Trujillo believes she's found that perfect combination as a human resources generalist for Conagra. Along with recruiting hourly employees, she is responsible for employee relations, payroll, data analytics and reporting for corporate structure.

Trujillo said her recent academic studies have helped her see how effective organizations are structured, perform ethical prehire and on-the-job assessments, and leverage data to enhance decision-making.

"I really took away from my education the value of diversity, mentorship and development," she said. "I've also learned that money isn't everything when it comes to rewarding employees and showing them they're valued. Employees care about the culture of the organization and how they're treated. Human contact goes a long way to ensuring that."

Trujillo regards herself as a people person and said that listening is especially vital in the world of human resources, citing the adage that humans have two ears and one mouth.

"We have an open-door policy," she said. "We're here to answer all kinds of questions and help with the issues that can complicate their livelihood. We care about employees and want to make their everyday lives better."

Trujillo characterizes her department as holistic,



noting her team's desire to have a positive impact on various aspects of the organization and promote a culture of inclusivity.

"We all take ownership of our work," she said, adding how Conagra's values align with her own, especially integrity and leadership from all.

Away from work, Trujillo enjoys time with her fiancé, Andrew, and her 9-year-old rescue Shih Tzu, Asher.

"I like to spend a lot of time in nature," Trujillo said. "I'm also a big reader. You can usually find me with a book in my hand."

### COVID-19 guidelines and protocols

Trujillo will handle COVID-19 guidelines and protocols.

She urges employees to be proactive and immediately contact Human Resources if they feel like they're exhibiting symptoms of the coronavirus.

"It's important to reach out and prevent putting others at risk," Trujillo said. "We all have to maintain ongoing communication related to the virus."