They say, “Two’s company and three’s a crowd.” Yet that saying doesn’t apply in the world of refrigerated warehousing.

With growing customer demand, USCS officials already project that the company’s Bethlehem and Hazleton, PA, sites will approach or reach capacity by mid-2014. That’s why the company broke ground this November in Quakertown, PA.

U.S. Cold expects to complete the 6.5 million-cubic-foot warehouse next summer. Quakertown is north of Philadelphia and south of USCS’ other operations in Bethlehem and Hazleton. It’s located just off Pennsylvania State Road 309 and is close to Interstate Highways 78 and 476.

“Aside from adding additional space for USCS to sell in the market, this third Pennsylvania site will add density to an already robust consolidated shipping program,” notes Steve Cunningham, Vice President and Area Manager-Pennsylvania. “This new location will allow us to continue to grow our multi-vendor consolidation program and, in turn, drive down shipping costs for current customers. This also helps us attract new business.”

Senior Project Engineer Michael Adkins says the Phase One building will have four convertible rooms capable of -20°F to +40°F temperatures; but much of the first phase will be dedicated to refrigerated storage. As such, USCS plans not to erect a wall between the refrigerated, enclosed truck dock and storage area.

“This will help operating efficiencies by making it easier and faster to retrieve product and provide greater visibility within the facility as a whole,” says Mike. “The rooms also are designed in a way where we can come back and install additional walls and/or doors at a future date.”

Phase One will have 27 dock doors. Mike notes that USCS has a 40.1-acre parcel of land with a three-phase build-out capacity of 15 million cubic feet. The site is also rail served.

Steve adds, “Quakertown will utilize CO₂ refrigeration technologies, like its sister sites in Hazleton and Bethlehem. As always, our objective is to use the latest and greatest advances in energy-saving building components and refrigeration equipment to build an ultra-modern distribution center.”

New Quakertown, PA, warehouse to open next summer.
President's Message

Strong Growth, More Opportunities

It’s hard to believe that I’m writing this fourth-quarter message for The Shield. As always, the year has flown by and we have many reasons to be thankful. As a result of the finest team in the public refrigerated warehousing industry, I am pleased to report that the company continues to grow and expand. Most importantly, this provides opportunity and variety for our associates and allows us to better serve and support our customers’ needs.

Most of our growth has been fueled by additional opportunities with existing customers. These opportunities are the result of best-in-class service levels coupled with a fair economic offering to our customers.

I’ll note that our distribution centers benefit from an excellent, multi-vendor freight consolidation program that reaches all 48 contiguous states. This program has effectively helped customers reduce overall logistics costs. This is one of the reasons we’re seeing continued growth and opportunity. We also have a strong logistics team that provides analysis and modeling for our customers and assists them in designing their distribution networks.

This year, we opened new warehouses in Omaha, NE, and Dallas, TX. These facilities modernize our presence and update service offerings in the central Midwest and in the Dallas-Ft. Worth-Arlington Metroplex region. We’ve also opened additions in Fresno, CA; Wilmington, IL; and Lake City, FL. Last but not least, we also expect to open a new addition in Laredo, TX, by year’s end.

As a result, United States Cold Storage will finish 2013 with more than 215 million cubic feet of very modern and efficient storage space.

As always, I would like to thank all of my USCS associates for their loyal support, dedication and friendship. I also want to extend a special thank you to all of our customers who make all of this possible. Best wishes for a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year.

~ Dave Harlan

’Tis the Season for True Giving

We know that this time of year is all about giving, yet we often focus on gifts that are more material in nature. Now, a message from an industry executive, an old friend of mine, reminds me that—at its core—this season truly should be about giving more of yourself.

My friend’s two-year-old granddaughter, Sophia, has a very rare and life-threatening disease of the immune system called Giant Cell Hepatitis with Autoimmune Hemolytic Anemia. There are fewer than 100 cases of children with this condition known worldwide, so the disease and its treatment are not entirely understood. It is considered to be an aggressive autoimmune disease that generally strikes children before age two and can progress rapidly to severe anemia, liver failure, or both.

Thus far, after an international search for a matched bone marrow donor, her doctors have not been able to find a ‘perfect’ match for her. Using a donor who is not a ‘perfect’ match decreases the likelihood of success and increases the possibility of short- and long-term complications from BMT. Therefore, my friend also has put the word out to our network of public refrigerated warehousing members.

During this season of giving, I simply would like to ask each of you, and with your help hopefully others, to please consider registering as a bone marrow donor at bethematch.org. Anyone age 18-60, of any race or ethnicity, and in general good health, could be a match. If you are of Jewish descent, especially Iranian and/or European descent, then the chance of a match may be higher.

Even if you are not a match for my friend’s granddaughter, you may be a match for someone else, which gives you the power to save someone’s life—and that is why registering is so important. In closing, I’d simply ask you to consider this type of special gift, a heroic gift during this special season.

~ Dave Harlan
Cold Comfort: USCS Progressive in Human Resources, Benefits

United States Cold Storage may be associated with cold buildings and cold products. Yet it treats its employees with a certain warmth not often found at other companies. That much is evident in the company’s Human Resources’ benefits programs.

Lawrence Sokolowski is USCS’ Vice President of Human Resources & Insurance.

“Long before the passage of the Affordable Care Act, USCS strived to ensure that its Employee Benefits Programs were good, comprehensive, and as inexpensive to both the employee and employer as possible,” says Larry. “We accomplish this by monitoring service providers and adjusting programs to promote wellness and healthy living, not just programs to treat diseases.”

Larry explains that it’s less costly to prevent an illness than cure a disease. That’s why USCS has long provided preventive screening procedures, tests such as mammograms, colonoscopies and flu shots, at absolutely no cost to employees and covered dependents. All employees can receive a preventive physical at no co-pay or deductible, when using an “in-network” provider.

“USCS was on the leading edge of this process,” says Larry. “That has resulted in a slight increase in preventive healthcare costs in the short term. We believe that, over the long run, these preventive programs minimize cost by identifying conditions early before they become a major concern. Take for example, colon cancer. If an employee goes for a regular colonoscopy and polyps are found, they are removed and the employee is closely monitored; versus a case where no colon screens are completed and the employee now develops an advanced IV Colon Cancer.”

USCS is a self-funded Health Program, which means USCS uses its own funds to pay health and/or disability benefits to employees. In contrast, a standard fully insured plan involves an employer that contracts with an insurance company and pays a set premium per employee. The self-funded program permits greater flexibility in plan design but, on the other hand, assumes direct risk for benefit claims payment.

“We monitor costs, services and USCS employee input to evaluate how any incumbent (insurance coverage provider) is performing,” notes Larry. “These insights help us spot any problems in advance and act accordingly. For example, we made our most recent change (to Blue Cross/Blue Shield) when we saw this network could provide as good, or in many cases, better care, with a broader network of physicians than our previous program administrator. We also made sure that the new network we selected provided the least amount of disruption. That is, we wanted to ensure that the smallest number of employees would lose their primary care doctors to the new network.”

Larry notes that USCS has, indeed, implemented several voluntary programs suggested and supported by employees.

“We recently added a Base Plan to the company’s health care offerings. This Base Plan, a less expensive plan, which has deductibles and coinsurance, is intended to provide a second option to meet the participant’s health care needs. Our employees expressed a need for more choices and we responded by introducing the Base Plan at the start of 2013. The Plan has begun to get traction, especially with younger, healthier workers,” he says.

Larry encourages all USCS employees to be active participants in the process.

“Our ultimate goal is to provide the best healthcare services at the best price for the employee and the employer,” he says. “Be a good consumer, understand the programs we offer. Read the mailings we send and, when in doubt, use our e-mail, hr@uscold.com, to ask us any questions.”

“I cannot drive a forklift, but if I can keep the workforce healthy, to do what they do best, we all win,” Larry concludes. “As small as it is, my department is dedicated to responding to the concerns of not just the employee but to his or her family.”

Got Questions? Help is Just a “Click” Away at HR@uscold.com
It’s the perfect story of a “win-win” relationship. For more than 25 years, US Cold Storage has served frozen Mexican foods processor Ruiz Foods. More importantly, the companies have literally grown together as partners—both near and far.

Based in Dinuba, CA, just south of Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley, Ruiz has become a leading Mexican foods processor-supplier with national distribution across all channels. It works with USCS operations in Pennsylvania and Tennessee (and more, soon!) to reach all corners of the United States. In doing so, Ruiz utilizes USCS’ logistics and consolidated transportation services.

Closer to home, there is also a daily, steady flow of ingredients and finished goods shuttling (by third-party carrier) to and from Ruiz plants in Dinuba and Tulare, CA, to USCS Tulare North. Likewise, Tulare and Ruiz work closely together to seamlessly coordinate and ship many orders of finished goods.

Ruiz recently recognized that partnership and presented a silver “Ruiz Family Award” to USCS Tulare for its 2013 service.

Terry Lee has been with Ruiz for 26 years and serves as the company’s Director of Logistics and Demand Planning. As such, he says his entire career has been spent communicating and working with several USCS’ California managers and officials—including Rod Noll, Vice President & Area Manager-Western Region; Brian Ford, General Manager-Tulare; and Randy Dorrrell, General Manager-Bakersfield.

“We do have a great partnership,” echoes Brian Ford. “Servicing the account requires our Tulare North Facility and our warehouse team to be very flexible with our operating hours and daily shuttle needs. Dan Tinoco, Derek Alvarez, Anthony Ortiz, Kelsey Knudsen—and all of the Tulare North US Cold team—consistently do a superior job and service the Ruiz Foods account.”

“Here in California, we have something of a ‘round-robin’ shuttle program with raw materials and finished goods—and we’ve got it honed down to the hour,” notes Terry. “Our lines of communication are open and if there are any changes, everyone is in tune and it works well for all parties. Brian and his team are a big part of our success and overall, USCS has been a great business partner for us around the country.”
USCS Tracy’s DeAnda Celebrates 30 Years

Rod Noll, Tracy DeAnda, Stan Moya, Steve Palefsky celebrate Tracy’s 30th USCS anniversary.

When you’re with a company 30 years, they name a warehouse after you. Of course that’s not true but 2013 saw Customer Service Manager Tracy DeAnda celebrate her 30-year anniversary with United States Cold Storage—and at USCS Tracy (CA) no less.

Tracy remembers many details clearly.

“I started in Union City under Jerome Scherer on Sept 23 1983,” she says. “I was told about a receptionist position by Jodi Kautz, who was working for Cal Pac [a customer] out of the middle dock office.” That was the start of a career that’s led to many more roles including posts in data processing, accounts payable and customer service (as supervisor, manager). She also has served as a trainer for AS400 warehouse management system conversions.

“I had no idea what was ahead of me at such a young age,” Tracy says. “I have worked alongside many knowledgeable people who have taught me so much through the years. I have had the opportunity to travel to other plants and take part in several training teams. I am very grateful to those who felt my knowledge and experience was something I could share with others. I look forward to the new things coming and the experiences that they bring—and, to many more years with USCS.”

“Tracy has been with USCS Tracy plant for 13 of her 30 years with the company,” says Stan Moya, Vice President and Manager-USCS Tracy. “She came to Tracy as the Customer Service Manager and has developed her team over the years to be the best in class’ in customer service.

“Her hard work and dedication to excellence makes her a USCS role model for all to follow,” he adds. “I am proud of her success and accomplishments over the years and I look forward to many more years working with Tracy. Congratulations Tracy, on your 30th year anniversary!”

Karen Lavelle Retires After Two Decades

Karen Lavelle

A familiar face for many USCS’ Mid-west employees, Karen Lavelle, Business Development Administrator-Eastern Region, will retire at the end of 2013. She will complete a full 20 years of service that started at USCS Lyons, IL, in 1993.

“I want to thank my family of USCS co-workers,” says Karen. “Twenty years is a lot of time, so my co-workers are my second family. They have been with me for all of life’s ups and downs and I will miss you all very much.

“There are two people, however, that need special mention,” she adds. “The first is Jerry Pohl (who retired in 2006), who was the Midwest Area Manager when I started in customer service at the Lyons facility in March 1993. Jerry took me out of customer service to fill the role of his secretary. This was a huge stepping stone in my career. The second person is Mike Radnoti. Mike briefly worked as the Lyons’ General Manager and I supported both Jerry and Mike.

“When Mike was recruited for National Sales, he asked if I could continue to support him. Mike convinced the company that a full-time sales assistant was needed. The position of Business Development Administrative Assistant – Eastern Region, was then created. I cannot thank Jerry and Mike enough for opening these doors.”

Karen says she particularly enjoyed her new role because it afforded her greater contact with USCS facility managers, area vice presidents and customers.

Looking ahead she adds that she looks forward to traveling with retired friends, visiting out-of-state family members and spending much more time with four grandchildren (ages 9, 7, 4 and 2).

“Last, but certainly not least, our family has a beautiful, spacious log cabin home in Indiana where I usually spend most of my weekends,” she adds. “I will probably spend a lot more time going back and forth there. There’s always an open invitation for my USCS friends to visit!”

The Shield 4th Quarter 2013
Warehouse Operations

Operations – Area Insights

The Shield talks with 11-year USCS veteran Dave Butterfield, Vice President and Area Manager — Midwest Region. Dave oversees four sites in Illinois and Indiana.

Q: What were the biggest “headlines” or activities in your region during calendar 2013?

Dave Butterfield: I can think of three, starting with productivity improvements. Our sites embarked on efficiency programs. Employees and managers together have been identifying areas to take “waste” out of movements and increase warehouse productivity. We also started “grass roots” meetings where employees can meet — one on one — with their general managers and all topics are open for discussion. Finally, we enjoyed a strong business. Thanks to our customers, Midwest region capacity remained strong throughout the year.

Q: What were your region’s biggest challenges?

Dave: I’d say it was targeting the correct “mix” of space — between what each Midwest site needed and what space was available for current and potential new customers. We continue to grow with existing customers because we offer more value-added services. These improvements also attract new business, which makes any value-added service even more effective and efficient. Then, these types of programs save our customers money and time.

Q: What were a few of your biggest successes during the year? Why?

Dave: Again, I can think of three key headlines. The first is that we had no serious injuries. I always want our people to feel safe, continue working for USCS, and provide a living for their families. Secondly, we started a consolidation program in Lebanon. Offering this value-added service to our customers opens another opportunity to grow USCS’ market in Indianapolis area. Thirdly, we’ve seen several people advance in their careers. They’ve moved internally from various warehouse positions to office and/or training openings, or to corporate positions in sales and information technology development, or to management positions and to other key roles with larger productivity initiatives. These are all great signs and they point to the developing future for USCS.

Q: What were a few of your regional goals for calendar 2014?

Dave: There are four points here. We want to remain focused on customer service and accident prevention. We also want to continue developing our employees and interact with all our associates in more of a “deep-dive” interaction.

They say actions speak louder than words. So when it comes to expressing thankfulness — what better way than to go out and jog to support a good cause?

A group of 20 USCS Tulare (CA) employees, temporary workers and family members joined in the city’s annual Thanksgiving Day “Turkey Trot” Race Against Hunger. The event raises funds to feed local children and their families and USCS representatives participated in each of three activities: a half-mile kids fun run, two-mile walk and a 5k run.

“This was our second year taking part in this event,” notes Jennifer Hulsey, Customer Service Manager. “We challenged ourselves to at least double the number of participants from USCS Tulare and we more than met that goal. Jim Pena, Operations Manager, also joined us for the first time and was happy to be part of this important community event. In addition to helping a good cause, he thought it was a good way to get in a healthy walk before taring into a turkey dinner. He says he looks forward to doing this again next year, as do the rest of us.”
You could say that USCS’ Transportation department likes to keep the wheels spinning—whether it’s on the road or, more figuratively, in a thinking and learning environment.

Transportation officials hosted a special USCS University session developed especially for transportation employees. Specifically, officials identified “super users” of USCS’ Transportation Management System (TMS). These individuals provide some level one TMS support to the larger transportation teams at their warehouse locations.

Taking the mid-October classes in Voorhees, NJ, were “Alpha” class employees Julie Gannon, Transportation Manager-Tracy, CA; Vince Berkery, USCS Logistics Operations Supervisor-Voorhees, NJ; Alyssa Heckman, Transportation Billing Lead-Voorhees, NJ; Julio Cifuentes, Transportation Coordinator-Minooka, IL; and Jennelle Cressman, Transportation Coordinator-Bethlehem, PA.

Coordinating the program is Jamie Sherfeste, Logistics Systems Lead.

“The idea was to expose the students to all applications within TMS and give them an understanding of the theory behind each one,” she says. “Strong TMS users are able to enhance the customer service experience and further contribute to success of USCS’ multi-vendor consolidation programs.”

The Initial Transportation “101” courses included TMS theory and application sessions on pooling concepts, load building, network modeling, rate development and customer and carrier management. Additional subjects covered related software reporting and communication technologies and platforms.

Jamie says the transportation department will host a second “Beta” class of employees during a week in February, 2014.

For their part, Alpha classmates Jennelle Cressman and Julio Cifuentes say they enjoyed the initial program and are looking forward to their continuing education.

“I thought ‘Transportation University’ was a great learning experience and was very beneficial,” says Jennelle. “It gave me a much better understanding of our consolidation program and helped me be a more successful load planner.

It was an honor to be able to participate and represent US Cold Bethlehem, PA.” Julio agrees.

“The whole experience was great and packed with good information. Some topics and technologies are ones we use every day,” he says. “In other cases, they showed us programs and some [transportation software] screens that are coming out soon. Keith Mowery, Director of Transportation & Logistics, gave an overview and helped prepare us for what we’ll see in the future with an expanding warehouse network … It also was nice to meet other transportation coordinators.”

Jennelle adds, “I’ve incorporated quite a few university topics in my day-to-day load planning responsibilities,” she continues. “One example involves using WMS to track EDI orders and those expecting 204s so they are able to successfully drop into our TMS system. Now that I learned how to acquire such information, I can relay that information to our customers if we are missing orders and be proactive.

“Another example would be using customer rates. Now that I learned how to calculate customer rates and what we are going to be billing for certain orders, I can make better decisions while load planning and it’s made me more conscious of carrier choice.”

Keith Mowery, Director of Transportation and Logistics, concludes, “As the USCS transportation offerings continue to become more diversified and system driven, it is important that we provide the proper education to personnel from across the country who execute these functions on a daily basis. It was great to bring our super-user group together.

“In part, our goal was to provide classroom instruction, which will help employees perform their job at a higher level,” he says. “We also want to provide an environment that enables the development of strong personal relationships, which is critical to the USCS culture.”
Employee News continued

Schwait Joins USCS Finance, Accounting

United States Cold Storage welcomes Jeffrey E. Schwait, who joined the company this fall as Internal Auditor.

“We are pleased to welcome Jeff to USCS’ finance and accounting department,” says Jim Slamon, Vice President and Secretary. “Jeff brings four years of experience with Ernst and Young, where he progressed through positions of increased responsibility. He brings a focus of attention to a risk-based approach to the audit function, which will include analytics and the integration of various software tools in the process.”

Jeff earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting in 2009 from Lehigh University’s College of Business and Economics. After graduating, he joined Ernst and Young and served as a staff auditor and more recently, as senior auditor. He is also a certified public accountant.

“I wanted to join because when I looked at USCS, I saw a company focused on excellent customer service and continued growth— involving both its business and its people,” says Jeff. “… As Internal Auditor, I look forward to traveling to many of USCS’ warehouses and meeting people from across the organization and the country. With facilities nationwide — each with its own unique qualities — every trip will be a great learning opportunity. I look forward to being able to help each facility with the various aspects of plant and corporate controls and procedures.”

Welcome and congratulations Jeff! ♦

Jeffrey E. Schwait