

## NS employees talking about Diversity



Alonzo Parker  
Assistant Manager Intermodal Equipment  
Intermodal Operations  
Norfolk, VA

Alonzo Parker is an Air Force veteran who began his NS career in June 2007 as an OST. Prior to his current position, he was Mechanical Supervisor in Bellevue.

Q. Diversity at NS is often thought of in terms of gender and race. Your experience has taken you from OST training to Bellevue Yard to Intermodal Operations at our corporate headquarters in Norfolk. Describe for us how you view diversity in the NS workforce and workplace.

A. From day one of training the need for diversity is explained to each new employee to continue to successfully propel NS into the future. The OST program is a tool that NS has developed to deliver diversity to areas all across our system. For example, Bellevue has a small African American population, but 12 miles away Sandusky has a relatively large number of African American residents. A diversity committee is now in place at Bellevue to go out to the surrounding areas and educate those communities regarding opportunities NS offers people of all races, ages and genders. I had the chance to be the “face of NS” on the Bellevue diversity committee and was surprised by what one candidate said “I did not even think NS hired people that look like me.” It was an amazing opportunity to share with others what I do.

Q. You began your NS career as a Mechanical OST. How did that training and your time in Bellevue prepare you for your current position in Intermodal Operations?

A. My training and time spent at Bellevue prepared me for my current position by understanding how the mechanical department interacts with the transportation department. How long it may or may not take transportation to build a train or cut a car out. How long it takes to repair certain defects on a car. Understanding the challenges a Trainmaster and Yardmaster face on a daily basis. How to not only think outside the box but to know what is in the box first. At Bellevue, I was responsible for approximately 90 employees at any given time on a shift. This means 90 different personalities. This comes in handy when dealing with a Division Manager, Superintendent, Trainmaster and Yardmaster all on one phone call!

Q. As a military veteran, do you believe NS is a good path for servicemen and women once their military career has been completed?

A. I believe that NS is a great career after the military for a few reasons. First of all you must be willing to relocate to any of the 22 states we operate. In the military I was stationed in Idaho and had to travel all over the world. NS operates in 22 states and there is opportunity to live and work in any of them. NS is also a 24 hour 365 days a year operation, which means you may not always work 9-5 Monday through Friday. These hours mirror the hours of operation for the military. The layers of management also mimic the military's "chain of command" which helps prior military members adjust quickly to the way of business at NS.

Q. You are a member of YoungNS. What impact do you think this employee group will have on our company?

A. When used as the resource it is intended to be it will be great. The group is set up for employees who are new to the company to interact with one another at a variety of functions outside of work. This group is not to be confused as just being a group for young people, as it is open to any NS employee. By having current employees with a number of years of service connect with newer employees, YoungNS will foster new relationships that may develop mentorships throughout NS. This dialogue between these two groups must happen and it must happen quickly as a large percentage of all NS employees will become eligible for retirement within the next 5 years.