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Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy | Tuan Duong and his son Colin, 9, work on a project with spaghetti and marshmallows at the take your daughters and sons to work day at Traffic Planning & Design in Pottstown.



Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy | Craig Mellott, left, and Eric Hammond help the kids with a project at Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day at Traffic Planning & Design.



Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy | Rob Prophet with his daughter Haley, 8, at the Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day at Traffic Planning & Design.



Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy | Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day at Traffic Planning & Design.

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Tuesday April 28, 2015 12:01 AM

Berks employers set a great example by taking care of employees

By Jennifer Hetrick

Some employers in the tri-county area set a great example for how to do more for their workers than what's typically expected in a healthy job environment.

And several of them have been in the lineup of Pennsylvania's Best Places To Work program in 2014.

Here are some examples of what they do for their employees, to show not only the most genuine respect for all of those who work for them at a very human level, but often an extension of care for their families as well.

Sealstrip Corp.

Douglass Township, Montgomery County

When the economy took a hard turn for the worse in 2008, two Sealstrip Corp. employees lost their homes, explained company President Heather Chandler.

Sealstrip's administrative manager went out of her way to locate temporary housing for the employees until they could get back on their feet again financially, she said.



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money. This means they actually get paid to learn and push their education to a higher level.

A wellness committee made up of employees encourages healthy lifestyle choices and hosts lunch-and-learns monthly. The committee's efforts also have helped three employees stop using tobacco products, Chandler explained.

In rare fiscal years when profits aren't made, if bonuses aren't feasible to give, employees usually receive several days of vacation time to use in the new year as gratitude for their hard work, she said.

Raylon Corp.

345 Morgantown Road

Working hard and playing hard at Raylon Corp., as CEO Howard Hafetz described it, means employees literally have a "fun committee," he said.

The committee organizes an end-of-summer happy hour, said Hafetz, with throwback pictures of employees before autumn comes each year.

For a chili cook-off the committee arranges, the top prizewinner receives a gift card to Giant Food Stores, while the runner-up is given a bottle of Tums and also Pepto-Bismol.

Wii Fridays and karaoke sing-offs are also a part of keeping fun in the picture at work, Hafetz said.

"Wii Sports Resort" and "Wii Paintball" often are played by employees between noon and 2 p.m. Fridays.

And helping employees to help others is a value at Raylon, too.

"Each Raylon team member can give four hours each month to do community service, on our nickel," said Hafetz, "doing important work, such as delivering Meals on Wheels and walking dogs for the Humane Society."

And then there's health insurance.

"Health care is very important and most costly," Hafetz said. "So we stopped making top-down decisions and have created a health care panel made up of volunteer employees who are now shaping and selecting our plan each year."

Remcon Plastics Inc.

208 Chestnut St.

In 2013, Karen Kramer joined Remcon Plastics Inc. as its director of employee engagement and implemented a dream-manager program.

Since establishing the program, the company's president, Peter J. Connors, said Kramer has been continually building the trust of employees. Since she's a great listener and a certified life coach, Connors said, she is almost like an in-house therapist.

Employees discuss with Kramer any goals they want to achieve personally or in the workplace, but they also go to her when they feel a need to just talk out an issue or something that's bothering them, without having to report it to HR.



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A good vibes committee plans company picnics, a spring fling potluck, a Christmas party raffle, Reading Royals and Reading Fightin Phils outings and more.

"It's amazing how many men in the plant love to cook," Kramer said about the potluck.

"Everyone gets a prize at the raffle," Connors said.

Some examples of prizes are gift cards, iPads, Xboxes, computers and large-screen TVs.

The last employee whose name is called gets a cash prize. Near the end, a final few workers get excited about the prospect of being the remaining winner.

Utilities Employees Credit Union

Spring Township

Annual merit increases are given to employees at Utilities Employees Credit Union even during the recession, said company President and CEO Pat Zyma.

"Our benefits package is often touted by our employees as exceptional," Zyma said. "We offer a health care plan, for which the credit union pays 100 percent of the individual employee premiums, and we support our employees' retirement savings through providing a 401(k) match and year-end contribution to the 401(k)."

Under a CU-fit wellness program developed and named by employees at the credit union, one employee who is an active runner created and managed a couch-to-5K program.

Others created a CU-fit book club as a way to encourage mental wellness through reading and discussions.

A lunch-and-learn series, focusing on themes such as nutrition, exercise and container gardening, also came together as ideas from employees for the benefit of everyone in the workplace.

Employees also coordinate hiking and bicycling get-togethers as a part of the program, Zyma said.

A scavenger hunt during a fall training workshop also promotes teamwork and ties into the fun.

"And we offer our employees catered breakfasts and lunches throughout the year to let them know that we appreciate all they do for the company," Zyma said.

Traffic Planning and Design Inc.

Lower Pottsgrove Township

All staff members of Traffic Planning and Design Inc. are given 100 percent flextime.

This includes senior management and even cooperative education students at the company's eight different offices.

This approach is offered so that all employees can reasonably manage their work-life balance, but those hired generally need to be able to work independently and also be self-starters, said Elyse Royer, marketing coordinator.

"Rather than dictate set work hours or a flex schedule like most companies, each employee is



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Complimentary flu vaccinations for employees, spouses and dependents are another benefit.

Other complimentary services to employees are notarizing and IT assistance, Royer said.

"We officially have a one-week maternity leave policy," said Royer. "However, our flexibility policies and ability to accrue paid time off and build up comp time allow new parents the time they feel they need with their children."

Royer said that Traffic Planning and Design "truly lets the parent decide when they want to come back and when they want to work." n

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