

Honorees: A happy employee is a productive employee

Awards » State honors firms with employee-friendly workplaces

By Mike Gorrell
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Companies honored Tuesday shared a philosophy enunciated by Monica Whalen, president of The Employers Council, which provides human resources and management assistance to firms large and small.

"You have a happy employee, you have a productive employee," said Whalen, whose nonprofit association was one of 25 recipients of 2009 Work/Life Awards from the Utah Department of Workforce Services. The awards recognize companies that take care of the physical, emotional and financial needs of employees and, in so doing, motivate them to work hard in return.

How important is that to success these days?

"How important is it for the sun to come up?" responded Sue Johnson, president of Futura Industries, a custom aluminum parts manufacturer in Clearfield.

Her company, which employs 189 people, has won 10 Work/Life awards in the program's 11-year history. Consequently, Workforce Services bestowed an honorary "Legacy" award on Futura, one of four companies singled out for the consistency of winning at least five times. The others were ARUP Laboratories (nine times), Nicholas & Co. Inc. (eight) and 1-800 Contacts (six).

Honorees ranged in size from PowerQuip Corp., an energy-oriented manufacturer's representative in Layton with eight employees, to ARUP and its 2,400 employees in Research Park next to the University of Utah. Located between Iron and Weber counties, the companies who were honored have 8,168 employees in all.

The 25 selected were among 200 applicants, including 107 first-timers. "The competition is getting tougher," said state Office of Work and Family Life Director Lynette Rasmussen.

To earn 2009 awards, companies did employee-friendly things such as adopt flexible schedules so people can arrange their working hours around the times they are needed at home. One opened a child-care facility on site, others made it easier for employees to bring kids to work when they had to. Some provided great health-care benefits or pension contributions. A few donated to charities their employees were involved in.

Often, it was just little things good for morale: Waffle Wednesdays, yoga every Friday, dress-down days for a small employee contribution to a company fund that helps employees in need.

"We just like having a fun place to work," said Rex Hale, president of Q90 Corp., a small custom software developer in Springville whose break room includes videos and toys for kids to play with when they come to the office. "There are some extra expenses, but they're worth it because we don't have a lot of down time" due to absenteeism, he added.

Seeing the company cares makes a difference, said two ARUP employees attending the awards ceremony at the Sheraton Salt Lake City hotel.

Laboratory supervisor Miles Merrell appreciated ARUP's inexpensive health-care plan and company acceptance of domestic partnerships, even if the state of Utah doesn't officially recognize them. And Julie Tucker-Kranendonk praised the way ARUP encouraged employees to rise through the ranks, noting her

ascension from technologist to senior technologist to pricing analyst.

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Work/Life Award Winners

Small companies (less than 50 employees)

Brown and Caldwell, Midvale (14)

Cirque Corp., West Valley City (41)

The Employers Council, Salt Lake City (9)

PowerQuip Corp., Layton (8)

Q90 Corp., Springville (15)

Statera, Cottonwood Heights (9)

Utah Foster Care Foundation, Murray (34)

Medium companies (50-500 employees)

Access Development, West Valley City (138)

Cirris Systems Corp., West Valley City (53)

Equitable Life & Casualty, Salt Lake City (158)

Futura Industries, Clearfield (189)

Goldenwest Credit Union, Ogden (249)

The Leavitt Group, Cedar City (178)

Marriott Vacation Club, Salt Lake City (480)

The MGIS Cos., Salt Lake City (79)

Pepsi Bottling Group, Salt Lake City (223)

Software Technology Group, Salt Lake City (125)

Spillman Technologies, West Valley City (203)

ThomasArts, Farmington (98)

Large companies (more than 500 employees)

1-800 Contacts, Draper (849)

ARUP Laboratories, Salt Lake City (2,400)

CHG Healthcare Services, Cottonwood Heights (750)

InterContinental Hotels Group, West Valley City (736)

Nicholas & Co., Salt Lake City (530)

TURN Community Services, Salt Lake City (600)

Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services

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