

Offering the Best Care

Employees and Patients Receive Top Treatment

By Candace Gwaltney

The presence of health care organizations on this year's Best Places to Work list is hard to ignore – 11 of 70 finalists come from this competitive industry. Six of those organizations are first-time applicants and honorees.

While the organizations vary in size and specialty, one theme resonated with each – a culture that features compassionate employees whose voices are heard within the company.

Compassion trumps all

It may sound simple; health care is about caring. These Best Places to Work honorees have found that putting that concept in the forefront improves not only care, but employee satisfaction.

"Hospitals in general are all about providing the latest and greatest in technology, but what we have found is that it's not the equipment; we've got all those things," says Dean Wagner, director of human resources at Good Samaritan Hospital. "What's really important is that you have a staff that is compassionate and can convey that care and concern to the public and patients."

That's what makes employees succeed at the Vincennes hospital, agrees CEO Matthew Bailey. "They truly epitomize our namesake, the Good Samaritan."

Based in Kentucky, Hosparus employs 51 people in Indiana to provide hospice care. The company was founded 30 years ago by a group of volunteers who believed people deserved a better way to live their final days before passing away.

"I think our employees are joined in a special way because they're passionate about the way we care for others, and they want to treat people the way they treat members of their own family," says spokeswoman Stephanie Smith.

In turn, Hosparus cares for its employees by offering a flexible paid time off program. Employees earn 26 paid days off in their first year of employment. These days encompass vacation, holiday and sick time and can be taken as needed.

"The work we do often is very emotional," notes David Cook, associate vice president of operations and administration. "While I think if you talk to a lot of the care team staff they would say that's what makes it rewarding, it's important for those folks to be able to

step away from that from time to time and get refreshed before they come back to work."

At Schneck Medical Center in Seymour, employees are engaged in the organization and want to see it succeed, notes vice president of human resources Bill Lewis. For example, employees donated \$250,000 for a new cancer center through the hospital's foundation.

More than a memo

While Indianapolis-based Public Safety Medical is a small company with about 30 employees, maintaining internal communications remains a priority. The organization provides preventative health care for public safety agencies through health screenings and other services.

"The intent is to take care of those men and women who take care of us and protect us," explains founder and medical director Dr. Steven Moffatt.

Support staff works in the company's offices, while the medical staff spends a lot of time off-site with clients. Employees work strategically as a team to bring all processes together, creating a close working bond among staff.



Schneck Medical Center (top) and Hosparus (bottom) emphasize that compassionate employees are an integral part of workplace culture.

"With our employees one of the primary things we strive for is their trust, and we recognize as leadership we need to earn their trust," Moffatt adds.

Trilogy Health Services operates 35 long-term care facilities throughout Indiana, employing more than 3,000 Hoosier workers. Communications is essential for gaining buy-in for company and facility goals, explains founder and CEO Randy Bufford.

"The more investments we make in two things – training and communications – the better we get with our employees," he notes.

Employees receive company and campus newsletters. A bulletin board conveys messages about goals and their progress. Facility leaders also will pull aside five or six employees for a break where they receive coffee and donuts while learning about a new initiative or goal. Touching employees in this small group setting helps maintain a consistent message, Bufford asserts.

At Hancock Regional Hospital, company culture is shaped from the moment a new hire walks through the door. A program called "New Bunch" allows employees in their first year to provide feedback from day one.

Maintaining that open line of communication for employees "builds that culture of trust," explains Heather Brothers, Hancock Regional recruiter.

Employees at Hosparus have the opportunity at staff meetings to ask the tough questions and receive immediate answers, notes vice president of human resources Marcia Johnson. While that interaction took a while to get used to, it's



Public Safety Medical employees spend much of their time onsite with clients providing preventative health care. Office and medical staff rely on open communications to work as a team.

statewide level and nationally," notes Good Samaritan's Bailey. "We felt that we needed to make sure that we reach out and touch as many potential health care employees as we possibly can. And I think it makes our employees feel good to be a part of a winning team."

Trilogy Health first applied for the Best Places to Work program in Kentucky in 2008, winning the No. 1 spot among small employers. This year the company decided to participate in Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio. The program is an "opportunity to have that seal of approval in future recruiting," Bufford affirms.

As a Hancock Regional recruiter, Brothers says the hospital takes a different approach to attracting employees than some of its peers.

"While we are in direct competition with other hospitals, we don't actively recruit people away from the employer where they are," Brothers notes. She says their therapists, nurses and other health care workers receive calls daily from other organizations.

Brothers says the hospital CEO sees the organization as a ministry, not just work. This concept shapes culture at the 100-bed facility.

"We're a smaller organization and we can rarely pay more than the larger health care organizations; they have to want to come to Hancock for something other than the money," Brothers explains. "Time and time again I have candidates that say, 'Something just feels right about this.'"

As Public Safety Medical expands into Ohio, communicating the company's success is important for attracting new team members. Being a Best Place to Work will become a part of that culture, Moffatt notes.

"By being recognized, it almost carries a weight of its own and brings greater awareness to the people we do bring in that these are the criteria that do make us a great place to work and by choosing you, you are continuing that mission," adds Lauren Moffatt, human resources manager. "It's kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy."

proven to be a communication tool that staff appreciates.

Competing for the best

While these organizations compare in mission, they are still competing for the most talented health care workers. Many note that participating in Best Places to Work not only recognizes their current employees, but also will help recruit new staff.

"We are in a very competitive environment; we are competing for health care professionals not just in Southern Indiana, but on a



Good Samaritan Hospital physical therapists give community members free massages during the 2007 Knox County Relay for Life.

Training and retaining

Schneck Medical Center strives to provide the best patient

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care while creating a workplace that encourages professional development, Lewis declares.

The organization has made a commitment to promoting from within and helping employees grow. A very active tuition assistance program assists employees in that process.

Separately, the hospital's clinical ladder program allows nurses to specialize in certain areas of nursing or move into research or administration, he adds.

Vice presidents, directors and managers participate in a yearlong health care management program through Indiana University. That outreach was implemented to improve consistency among managers, so employees feel they are treated fairly.

"We really have an outstanding leadership team that has been through a lot of training on how to relate to employees," Lewis asserts. That's been a huge advancement to help retain employees, he surmises.

Participation also plays a huge role in retaining employees,

Bailey suggests.

"I think one of the keys is keeping your employees empowered to be a part of the change process," he says. "I don't think there is another industry that is changing as fast as health care. I think one way we recruit and retain our employees is making sure they are actively participating, because health care certainly is a team sport; it is not a spectator sport."

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Good Samaritan Hospital at www.gshvin.org

Hancock Regional Hospital at
www.hancockregionalhospital.org

Hosparus at www.hosparus.org

Public Safety Medical at www.publicsafetymed.com

Schneck Medical Center at www.schneckmed.org

Trilogy Health Services at www.trilogyhs.com