

NONPROFIT FORMULA

Competitive Benefits and Supportive Cultures

By **Crickett Gibbons**

Employee health care premiums covered 100% with health savings account contributions. Reimbursement for gym memberships. Retirement account investments plus matching funds. These are often among benefits made available by a variety of Best Places to Work organizations.

But these perks, and others, are also among the offerings from some of the nonprofits on the 2018 list. Leaders from the United Way of Central Indiana, The Rescue Mission in Fort Wayne, Hamilton County Tourism and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) in Indianapolis know they must focus on attracting and retaining talented individuals by providing competitive benefits.

“We are very aware we are a nonprofit and often cannot compete with the private sector in terms of wages, so it has been a conscious effort to make sure our benefits package is competitive,” notes Tina Rodgers, assistant director of resources at Hamilton County Tourism. “We have great people here and we know that, and we want to keep them.”

Ann Murtlow, president and CEO of United Way of Central Indiana, points out, “We want to be able to attract the best talent. We want to be competitive in the way we approach our treatment of our people ... and we want to make sure we are competitive in terms of benefits and our compensation. We have tended in the past to be sort of a training ground and then people get picked right out by other organizations, and we want to be a place where people want to stay and make a career.”

Each of the four organizations has clearly established and well-integrated fundamental beliefs. These values create workplaces where employees know what’s important, and they help set the tone for a positive culture.

For example, “our core values spell out ‘REAL,’ ” notes Treasa Turnbeaugh, CEO of BCSP. “The REAL core values stand for respect, excellence, accountability and leadership. We live by those core values, regardless of your place on the organization chart. Everybody is treated with equal levels of respect.”

Communicating and collaborating

Turnbeaugh stresses another key aspect that goes along with respect. “It’s important to have a culture where everybody communicates. Sometimes communication breaks down, and the only way to correct that is to communicate some more.”

At the United Way of Central Indiana, the organization’s guiding principles equate to CARE – courage, accountability, respect and excellence – with communication and collaboration being additional critical pieces.

Murtlow credits United Way’s bright, open new space with “bringing the organization’s culture





A social space at United Way of Central Indiana (top left) makes it easy for employees to meet in groups and encourages accidental collaboration. The Fort Wayne Rescue Mission (above) rents part of Headwaters Park during the Three Rivers Festival for an annual family picnic. Hamilton County Tourism employees (left) recognize each other for exhibiting core values by awarding Tourism Tender, which is exchanged for gift cards or other items. The Board of Certified Safety Professionals closed during its Philanthropy Day last year when everyone helped decorate the Ronald McDonald House for the holidays.



to fruition.”

In designing the new home, “I wanted a place that exuded energy, where accidental collaboration could happen at every turn, that really spurred creativity, that was a space people wanted to be in, really enjoyed being in,” she stresses. “It’s super important for our groups to all be working together to fulfill our fourth value, the excellence value. Really tight integration is important and that can’t happen if we have people operating in silos.”

In January 2017, more than 100 employees traded drab offices where most worked behind closed doors for a new setting with various seating and meeting areas and open workspaces. The only offices – for six senior staff members – are in the middle of the building with glass-enclosed sides.

“It’s not a place anymore where people feel the need to just shoot somebody an email. You get up and walk and go talk to somebody,” Murtlow comments.

At Hamilton County Tourism, the two C’s – communication and collaboration – are core values, as is stewardship.

“We take stewardship of the innkeepers’ tax dollars very seriously. The challenge with most nonprofits is you have limited resources,” Rogers affirms. “So how do you recognize or reward your employees for the great work they do in a meaningful way while making sure you’re earmarking the majority of those resources to your mission, to the tourism marketing and the destination development?”

Individually speaking

One way Hamilton County Tourism recognizes its 22



employees is with Tourism Tender, which looks like money but is designed with the organization’s brand and CEO’s face on it. The tender is exchanged for small items or gift cards at the end of the year.

“We keep track or make notes about someone who went above and beyond exhibiting one of our core values,” Rodgers explains. The tender is presented at a staff meeting. “It’s a nice public, verbal recognition.”

United Way also combines peer-to-peer recognition and core values with its Care Bears – four stuffed animals each representing one of the fundamental beliefs. An employee who receives one of the bears passes it along

to a colleague within a month, sharing the specific reason in a celebratory e-mail announcement.

“To an employee, it feels good to be noticed for outstanding behavior and be recognized by a peer,” adds Jessica Di Santo, director of communications.

Turnbeaugh points out that BCSP offers opportunities for year-end bonuses to all 40 employees in addition to recognizing tenure.

At The Rescue Mission, two employees who “exemplify the kind of unity, effectiveness and excellence a healthy organization should exhibit” are honored with a Vision Award, according to CEO Donovan

Coley. In addition, staff members identify co-workers to be highlighted in the monthly newsletter and for The Rescue Mission’s Extra Mile Awards.

Both recognitions are handed out at the annual Christmas bash, where 12 individuals are playfully “honored” with a featured spot singing one of the days in “The 12 Days of Christmas.”

“We have a lot of fun singing during chapel or our regular staff meetings. We can identify the ones we think will be our major stars at the Christmas party,” Coley says with a chuckle.



United Way team members (top left) show their superhero nature at the 2017 Big Kickoff. The Board of Certified Professionals (top right) dedicates its new building after moving to Indianapolis in November 2016. Team-building activities, like foot golf, are a highlight during the Hamilton County Tourism (bottom left) annual retreats. Employees who don't participate in The Rescue Mission's Ugly Christmas Sweater Day are awarded a sour candy cane.

Enjoyment – with a purpose

Having fun and celebrating together are integral parts of these workplace cultures, whether it's to recognize accomplishments, inject a little whimsy or relieve stress.

"With the kind of work we do, improving lives for people who are struggling, there is never enough. There are never enough resources to do everything that needs to be done. We serve one person today; there are always 10 more to serve tomorrow. So in that respect, it is very rewarding, but also can be very draining," shares Murtlow with United Way.

For that reason, "mental health is really important. That's why we want to have fun while we work, and I say that very deliberately." She adds that while activities may be enjoyable, they "are fun in a way that builds our ability to work together and makes us a stronger organization."

For Thursday afternoon's seventh inning stretch, a different guest artist sings "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" over the intercom, reminding employees to stretch at their desks. Mental health movie Monday and a Friday afternoon dance party to let off steam bookend the week. Free weekly yoga also helps employees relax.

Wellness programs often provide stress relief and even incorporate a bit of fun. At BCSP, for example, chair massages are provided "for a little celebration and a little relief after a big project is completed – or even in the middle of a project," Turnbeaugh offers.

"We do a lot of celebrating," she adds. In addition to birthdays, "we celebrate successes with ice cream socials, catered lunches or staff spending time together." Sometimes it's as impromptu as sharing encouraging words and a round of applause at a stand-up meeting.

At Hamilton County Tourism, major annual goals for each department are posted on the walls. "When a department reaches one of their goals, they will go out in the hall and check it off and have a little celebration," Rodgers says.

Investing in employees

Opportunities for professional development engage employees while supporting organizational growth.

"We've made a conscious effort in the last few years to increase our professional development budget," Rodgers states. Funding for conferences and other professional development has doubled in the last two years, she adds.

At The Rescue Mission, 60 staff members – 70% of its workforce – take part in the annual Global Leadership Summit. Everyone participates in monthly Between the Summit workshops that focus on one of the teachings from the leadership event. These gatherings and regular retreats are facilitated by consultants.

As a certification organization, BCSP supports certification, ongoing education and professional development for all employees, Turnbeaugh comments.

Along with leadership workshops and tuition reimbursement, United Way employees can apply to join a year-long cross-functional group that focuses on specific internal initiatives. These projects provide visibility into other parts of the organization and opportunities for professional development, Murtlow offers.

Giving back beyond own walls

One strength of all nonprofits is the service they provide, according to Coley at The Rescue Mission, along with "our ability to get to the root cause of society's ills."

Service isn't limited to their own missions, however; they also donate resources and time to help their local communities through service projects, fundraisers and paid time off to volunteer.

"Even though our goal, our mission, is to bring visitors here, we also very much feel a part of the community. So we don't focus just on the visitors," Rodgers says about Hamilton County Tourism. "We are also aware we are part of shaping our local community and want to be good partners."

Employees earn community service hours they can request to use like paid time off, and they have the option to join a small group to work together on a project.

"It was also a way for us to work across departments and get to spend time with people on staff we don't normally work with day to day, so teams are formed from different departments," Rodgers outlines.

She stresses the organization's tourism and marketing mission. "We take pride in the impact we have in our community, and we know our work helps drive the local economy."

Coley echoes that sentiment, emphasizing that The Rescue Mission's efforts to address homelessness directly affect the quality of life in Fort Wayne. "We are a partner that is geared toward making a strong impact on the economic life of our community."

RESOURCES: Board of Certified Safety Professionals at www.bcspp.org | Hamilton County Tourism at www.visitHamiltonCounty.com | The Rescue Mission at www.theRescueMission.net | United Way of Central Indiana at www.uwci.org