





FAMILY FIRST

'It Starts With the Team Member'

By Charlee Beasor

Every year, there is growth in the variety of perks, benefits and amenities offered by companies named to the Best Places to Work in Indiana list.

And while foosball tables in the office, free meals, on-site massages and stocked kitchens – to name a few – are designed for relaxation and stress relief, some companies provide benefits to help reduce the sources of stress that can emanate from outside the office.

For example: That's Good HR, an Indianapolis-based staffing agency, allows a few of its employees to job share in order to work through family commitments. Children are also welcome to accompany their parents to the office when childcare or school schedules change.

Edward Jones now has 16 weeks of paid parental leave for primary caregivers. Hanapin Marketing in Bloomington gives six weeks of paid parental leave for new moms and dads.

At Indianapolis-based CREA, a return-to-work program permits new parents to assume a reduced schedule for four weeks after returning from maternity leave (for full pay).

Companies such as Horseshoe Casino Hammond, Indianapolis marketing agency Blue 449 and CLA, with offices in Evansville and Indianapolis, possess healthy maternity programs for pregnant mothers.

This is just a glimpse of what the 2019 Best Places companies provide in terms of family-friendly policies and childcare offerings.

'CREA babies'

When CREA, a syndicator of affordable housing tax credits, surveyed its employees about benefits in 2016 (after parting with a former sister company), one thing jumped out to Katy McShane, senior vice president and director of human resources.

The change in ownership meant that the company's previous median age in the late 50s dropped to a number hovering around the mid-30s.

"There are a lot of CREA babies that come around every year," she exclaims. "We are averaging about 10 a year."

Stefanie Brown, vice president of marketing, jokingly adds, "Somebody's always pregnant. As soon as somebody has a baby, we're like, 'Who's pregnant now?'"

"So that obviously became very important," McShane continues. "We stepped back and said, besides other health benefits and tuition reimbursement, this is something that matters to our employees. Stefanie was actually the first employee to utilize the benefits."

The company offers paid maternity leave, access to short-term disability benefits and two weeks paid parental leave at 100% of base salary, as well as adoption leave.

Brown fondly recalls the return-to-work program, giving new mothers the opportunity to experience a reduced four-day schedule for the first four weeks after their leave.

"Everyone transitions (back to work) differently; it's a nice perk to have to transition to work after you've been gone for three



From employee and family outings and allowing children to accompany parents to the office during the workday when school is canceled to taking time off to care for babies or aging parents, these Best Places to Work in Indiana companies focus on family.



Horseshoe Casino Hammond is a 24/7 operation. Company leadership invests in the health and wellness of its employees, and recently instituted additional paid parental leave.

months,” she adds.

Wellness/mothers’ rooms are also available at CREA. The newly expanded headquarters boasts three of these locations, compared to one previously.

“(Parents) feel valued and comfortable coming back to work, being able to do the things they need to do for their child,” Brown asserts. “I’ve worked here for 10 years and (Jeff Whiting, president and CEO) has always said, ‘Put your family first.’ Even when I didn’t have kids and I needed to go see my mom, he said, ‘Do that.’”

“He’s been the driving force with making people feel comfortable being able to take care of their families.”

Tailored approach

CREA has just over 100 employees in its Indianapolis headquarters and six regional offices nationwide. The strategy is to survey employees every few years to keep an eye on what’s needed in terms of benefits.

That’s Good HR takes a similar approach. With only 15 to 20 women working at any time in the privately held staffing firm, the importance of flexibility became evident immediately.

Greta Cline is partner and co-owner of That’s Good HR, and in charge of finance and operations. When she and business partner Mary Springer bought out the company’s former majority shareholder in April of 2017, the company became a Women’s Business Enterprise.

“We have learned with the flexibility and combining positions and job share, you get as much or more productivity from that as making someone sit there for 10 hours a day. They have skin in the game. They want to keep the flexibility. They’ll work harder when they’re here. It has really worked for us.”

Constant evaluation and development of human resources policies is critical.

“Your tailored approach today doesn’t mean that’s going to fit tomorrow and the needs change. ... As kids age, the needs change and you just always have to be (flexible).”

Susie McKenna, director of marketing and communications, points out that the employees who share a job were recently promoted.

“This was not a barrier to their career. These are opportunities for growth. It makes them fresher in the office, more productive when they’re here and protective of their time here,” she notes.

A recent snow day saw the That’s Good HR office bustling with children – some of them even pitching in and learning what it’s like to work in an office setting.

“There’s a sweet spot of age where it works

better,” to have children in the office, says Cline. “But definitely, our recent snow day that we had, we had a big day planned and so it was great that was available because we didn’t have to change our events for that day and what we were going to get accomplished in here.”

Adds McKenna, “You’re modeling for your children the importance of work and also that you can work for people who support you.”

24/7 world

It can be difficult to ensure a healthy balance between life and work when your business never closes. The leadership at Horseshoe Casino Hammond is up to that challenge.

The casino offers four weeks of paid parental leave, a healthy pregnancy program for mothers and access to an on-site wellness clinic for employees and families to utilize when they or their children or spouses are sick. These are among numerous other health and wellness-related programs.

Dawn Reynolds Pettit, regional vice president of human resources, says the emphasis on balance benefits not only the employees, but also the company.

“We’re a 24/7 operation. We are busiest when other people are off – on holidays, nights and weekends. Our employees are oftentimes away from their families. We work very diligently to help bridge that gap,” she outlines.

The parental leave policy is new for 2019, and the company began communicating about it to employees late in 2018. It’s been a “home run,” Pettit notes.

“It’s four weeks of paid parental leave at full salary for any mom or dad for birth, adoption and fostering. And it does not have to be taken at the time of the birth,” she adds.

Continued on page 60



At That’s Good HR, moms of humans and “fur babies” alike are taken into consideration, along with those who take care of family members and other personal situations.

Family First

Continued from page 50



CREA's Katy McShane, senior vice president and director of human resources, says the company's emphasis on "CREA culture" has provided her with plenty of data that the efforts pay off, namely through a consistently low turnover rate.

"We do like them to take it all at once. That way they have a whole month where they can focus on family, which is critical. And then come back and re-engage in the workforce more fully."

Pettit adds that another element is Horseshoe Casino Hammond's partnerships with local community organizations that deliver discounted rates for childcare, including the YMCA.

"Families are critical. I always say work is what we do so we can have a life and enjoy our life. It shouldn't be the other way around. We are providing services and resources and the best quality of life for families in the community," she shares.

Despite the idea that having second- or third-shift workers gone on long leaves of absences would prove difficult for the employer, Pettit asserts that isn't the case.

"We have learned along the way how to schedule accordingly. We have a great centralized scheduling team that schedules for almost all of our departments, so there is coverage in place while allowing (for flexibility)."

That's Good HR also ensures consistent coverage when employees are absent for family reasons or long periods of time. The framework is already built into what the company does as a staffing firm.

"We follow our own advice and we do hire a person to fill that role, which helps everyone else not feel the stress," Cline explains.

Financial impact

Not all companies are able to extend the benefits outlined here.

"There is a cost to it," Cline says. "And we're constantly working and thinking about ways to be more productive with flexibility."

"It's not always perfect, but we feel right now that it's still worth it in the long run."

For Pettit, the fact that the casino has been named to the Best Places to Work in Indiana list nine times is all the proof she needs.

"We only achieve that (listing) by providing all the resources and engaging with our employees, showing our employees walking the walk and talking the talk of the benefits and incentives we offer," she says.

"It starts with the team member and if you don't take care of the team member, you're never going to have all the other things you want to have and achieve as a business," Pettit contends.

"We don't have a secret sauce. We get out there and see what our employees need and show appreciation. And if we take care of what they need, they can take care of our customers and the customers take care of the business. It has to start with the employee; if not, you've got nothing else."

'Fur babies' included

While the focus is on children and family issues, McKenna shares that some of the women at That's Good HR aren't mothers. Some have animal "fur babies," others take care of parents, etc. Flexibility and support exist for those employees as well.

McShane gives a personal example at CREA.

"I had a situation where my dad was ill and lived overseas. And there was not a question asked and any check-in was 'How's he doing?'," she outlines. "There's true personal concern and you feel that, and it's driven from the top down and it trickles through the rest of the organization."

"When we say we're a family-friendly organization, it doesn't mean we have an annual picnic where everybody gets together once a year, though we could add that. Work-life balance, the life part of that includes the family. And I think we do a good job of that."

What has it done for the company's turnover and retention numbers? McShane exclaims, "I have data on it!"

"Our turnover rate has hovered at around 8% for the last few years and probably of the 8%, less than 1% is involuntary turnover. One, we make sure when we bring people on board that they are as excited about us as we are about them. So, we get it right the first time and then people stay because they like the work, they like the organization, they like their co-workers."

"I hear it, but I think the data speaks for itself and even a little bit better."

RESOURCES: Stefanie Brown and Katy McShane, CREA, at www.crealc.com | Greta Cline and Susie McKenna, That's Good HR, at www.thatsgoodhr.com | Dawn Reynolds Pettit, Horseshoe Casino Hammond, at www.caesars.com/horseshoe-hammond