



# ONE (SMALL) HAPPY FAMILY

## Safety Resources, Inc.

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

It's fair to say that not too many would call their workplace a home, but that's precisely how employees at Safety Resources, Inc. (SRI) characterize theirs.

"You don't go to a work office," asserts safety consultant/operations manager Jake Powers. "You go to your second home."

Office manager Lori McAtee seconds that. "Our owner (Kristi VanSoest) – she's just very in tune with making this more of a home away from home during the workweek. And our aesthetics here at the office are amazing."

A beautiful fireplace invites conversation. Artwork abounds. Safety equipment "relics" capture history. Vinyl records adorn a wall near a staircase that leads to an area with arcade games, cornhole boards and a ping pong table.

But the sense of peace SRI elicits within employees transcends

physical surroundings. It's the people, the passion for safety and the potential to grow personally and professionally through career advancement and community involvement.

Safety consultant Ryan Bruner hones in on the flexibility.

"I've worked with some employers where if there was a sick child at school or something like that, you couldn't get away," he remarks. "But here it's, 'Go take care of it.' What do you have on your list today? We'll make sure somebody takes care of that. It gets done and it's great because we all pitch in when things like that happen to one another."

"It's nice – especially when you have a family that depends on you at home and they want to see their dad. They DO see me every day, every night and every morning. It's a beautiful place to work."

### **'All of our employees have a voice'**

Headquartered in Indianapolis and established in 1995, SRI provides occupational safety consulting. Composed of two primary areas (an internal consulting team and an external site division), it serves clients such as construction, manufacturing and service.

"I've been here for 21 years," VanSoest observes. "I came on as a

consultant and sort of moved my way up. And then 15 years ago, I bought the firm.”

Throughout her tenure, she’s remained one of the team.

“All of our employees have a voice,” she stresses. “We implement programs and policies and procedures (based on recommendations) they’ve come to us with and said, ‘Hey, have you thought about this?’ And we’re like, ‘No, we haven’t. That’s a great idea.’ I know everybody says they have an open-door (policy). It’s very popular to say, but we actually listen.”

McAtee, who joined SRI in 2024, values the opportunity to exchange opinions and suggestions at monthly all-staff operations meetings.

“That’s a great way for us to bounce our ideas off one another. Everyone is supportive of you getting time to share your ideas.”

She continues, “Being the office manager, I see a little bit of everything. The guys (most of the team are men) are more focused on their safety professional roles. They’re very supportive of the ideas that I toss their way to make their jobs a little bit easier. Leadership as well is open to any new ideas. That’s only going to help us grow. So, it’s highly encouraged.”

### Above and beyond

Mental health is woven into the culture.

An in-house certified Mental Health First Aid trainer is available to assist individuals. Employees receive six hours of wellness paid time off annually for preventative health and wellness visits.

“Mental health is something that we take very seriously internally within our team and

externally with the companies that we support,” McAtee affirms. “You feel comfortable when you come here. Kristi got the guys slippers one year for Christmas because they come in from the work sites and their boots are muddy. When your mind’s at ease, I think that can help you do almost anything.”

VanSoest wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I care about them,” she emphasizes. “We care about their families. Having them be healthy both professionally and personally is very important for us. Any way we can help, we absolutely do.”

Powers shares how SRI helped his family during one of the most uncertain and frightening times in his life.

“Less than one year after starting at the company, my wife and I found out we were pregnant and had some complications,” he recalls. “Our baby was born almost eight weeks early. We were flown up to St. Vincent in Indianapolis from where we live (approximately 90 minutes away). She had to spend eight weeks in the NICU and my wife had to have a hysterectomy immediately following an emergency C-section. It was a tough time for us (their baby girl is happy and healthy today).

“Kristi paid for a hotel for the whole time we were up there. She offered to take care of our son (who was two years old at the time). She said, ‘Listen, bring him over. I’ll take care of him. Anything you guys need.’

“(That’s) family. She’d give you anything you ask for if she could.”

### Devoting time, talent

Among volunteer causes at SRI are Meals

on Wheels, golf foursomes for charity and St. Mary’s Early Childhood Center in Indianapolis.

“That’s a big one for us,” notes director of operations Brooke Byloff. “They’re underprivileged kids ages three to five. We break up into groups of two, and we get to be in different classrooms and hang out with them. We can read, have fun outside if the weather’s nice and whatever.”

McAtee cites philanthropic pursuits as one of the most fulfilling elements of her job. “That’s a really important aspect – not even just the fact of bringing us together as a team but helping out in the community and being a part of something bigger than what we are. As things come about, we do a lot, especially around the holidays and things like that to help those that are less fortunate than us.”

### Promoting education, rewarding accomplishments

Embodying dedication to the job and a sense of team are rewarded.

Winners of annual peer-nominated leadership awards, for instance, receive a trophy, cash and ‘Flex Fridays’ for the upcoming year. A customer service award and spot bonus program also grant prizes (e.g., money, swag, paid time off and gift cards).

In addition, bonus opportunities are built into professional development efforts. Attending industry-specific events and participating in speaking engagements are ways to contribute to an individual’s bonus. Moreover, SRI pays for any designation an employee obtains.

“When I first started about eight years ago,



Let the good times roll! Whether it’s hitting the greens or good-naturedly vying for gifts with the legendary holiday ball, fun takes center stage.

I didn't necessarily have a lot of safety (experience) under my belt," Bruner comments. "I was able to kind of hit the ground running and they were steering me in the right direction in terms of one, what would help with overall success of the business and two, what's going to help in terms of your specific safety role and your career overall."

**Bring out the fun**

From champagne toasts capping off a new employee's first days to axe throwing and escape room outings, SRI demonstrates that employees are valued.

"We do a day at the (Indianapolis 500) track every year," Bruner explains. "Kristi makes T-shirts. She actually has her own T-shirt maker. We really have fun with that, and we take pictures and decorate our suite that we have. It's a customer appreciation day as well. That's the main sentiment for that day, which is amazing to see."

Highlights at the annual Christmas party include gifts for every employee from VanSoest, stockings full of goodies, food, games and a ping pong tournament.

"The Saran wrap ball is legendary," VanSoest



Employees spread the word – and positivity – about safety both within and outside the workplace.

says with a chuckle. "I put a whole bunch of money in it with (things like) lottery tickets and air fresheners for your car. You keep wrapping it up into a ball little by little. You get in a big circle and roll dice, and when you roll a double, the next person gets to unwrap and whatever falls out of the ball, they keep. It gets loud and competitive and crazy! It's a fun time."

And the camaraderie, believes McAtee,

is second to none. "There's such a strong sense of unity here."

Bruner reflects, "(Working at SRI) – it's something that obviously we have our work to do, but the people really make this place. Being able to feed off of everyone's personalities and what they bring to the table professionally, it creates such a great environment."

**RESOURCE:** Safety Resources, Inc. at [www.safetyresources.com](http://www.safetyresources.com)



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