



50 BEST NONPROFITS TO WORK FOR IN 2012

It's more than money when it comes to recruitment and retention

BY DON McNAMARA

Darlene Kiyon, executive director of Playworks Los Angeles, believes she knows what doesn't attract would-be employees.

"They don't come here for the pay or the benefits," said Kiyon, whose organization was number 14 in the Small Organizations category and 33 overall in *The NonProfit Times*' 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For in 2012. It's all about mission.

For the second year in a row, Wounded Warrior Project was selected the best nonprofit for which to work, as well as being at the top of the Medium Organization list.

This is the third annual *NPT* best places to work survey. Most 501(c)(3) organizations can apply to be considered. For example, management support organizations were not eligible to participate. Emails were sent to subscribers to *The NonProfit Times*' print and electronic editions. An-

nouncements were also placed in *The NonProfit Times* inviting organizations to compete. Best Companies Group of Harrisburg, Pa., conducted the interviews and compiled the score sheets. Those with the overall best scores made the Top 50. Those winners were then subdivided into three categories, small, medium and large.

So if potential employees are not anywhere near a salary level that would put them in America's famed 1 percent, what draws employees to nonprofit organizations and, more important, what keeps them so happy?



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Playworks
Los Angeles

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That isn't really much of a surprise.

"I got to thinking, and in particular we see a high level of engagement from employees of nonprofits" compared to other industries, said Susan Springer, director of workplace assessments for Best Companies Group. "This particular group (nonprofit employees) is very dedicated to the mission: helping people, making a difference, whether locally, nationally or internationally. There's something that's intrinsically satisfying about it."

As in previous years, the 2012 survey included a questionnaire sent to employers to glean information about policies and practices, followed by an employee survey that consisted of approximately 72 statements to which employees responded using a five-point agreement scale.



Grand Rapids Community Foundation

Statements/responses were broken down into subject headings, such as Leadership and Planning, Corporate Culture and Communications, Role Satisfaction, Work Environment, Relationship with Supervisor, Training and Development, Pay and Benefits, and Overall Employee Engagement.

Regarding questions included under Leadership and Planning, 92 percent of all Small Organization survey participants had positive responses, compared to 93 percent of those that made the Top 50. In the Medium Organization category, 85 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, compared to 88 percent of Top 50 winners. In the Large Organization category, 81 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, compared to 85 percent of the eventual Top 50 respondents.

Regardless of size, 84 percent of respondents gave positive reactions under Leadership and Planning, compared to 87 percent for organizations making the top 50. One statement under this heading, for example, was "I understand the long-term strategy of this organization."

Under Corporate Culture and Communications, 83 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, compared to 87 percent of organizations in the Top 50. This category included the statement: "Changes that may affect me are commu-

NPT's BEST NONPROFITS TO WORK FOR 2012 Top 50		
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5	Alzheimer's Association	307
6	Grand Rapids Community Foundation	22
7	New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants	40
8	Animal Legal Defense Fund	23
9	Natural Resources Defense Council	400
10	Make-A-Wish Foundation of Metro New York and Western New York Inc.	38
11	NOLS	158
12	Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc.	43
13	IREX	96
14	Make-A-Wish Foundation of America	119
15	Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona	119
16	Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.	36
17	Home Start, Inc.	73
18	Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida	95
19	PRS, Inc.	65
20	AHC Inc	62
21	Solar Energy Industries Association	39
22	Arts Midwest	21
23	Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands	22
24	Mayo Clinic Health System - Chippewa Valley	301
25	Year Up	255
26	LiveStrong	90
27	The National Society of Collegiate Scholars	23
28	San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind	492
29	Cross Cultral	50
30	Bayaud Enterprises, Inc.	42
31	Masonic Homes of Kentucky, Inc.	543
32	Keep America Beautiful, Inc	32
33	Playworks Los Angeles	30
34	National Institute of Aerospace	91
35	Mayo Clinic Health System - Northland in Barron	383
36	Child Guidance & Family Solutions	187
37	Better Business Bureau serving Central, Coastal, Southwest Texas and the Permian Basin	57
38	Global Kids, Inc.	44
39	American Heart Association	2,694
40	Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse	73
41	Caring Voice Coalition, Inc	57
42	Palm Beach Habilitation Center, Inc.	83
43	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	92
44	Hammer Residences, Inc.	428
45	Pathway Homes, Inc.	95
46	The Mission Continues	27
47	PENCIL Foundation	21
48	Mayo Clinic Health System - Eau Claire Clinic, Inc.	1,512
49	Century Housing	58
50	The Children's Home of Cincinnati	256



Make-A-Wish Foundation

nicated to me prior to implementation."

Under Role Satisfaction, 87 percent of all responding organizations gave positive responses, compared to 89 percent for organizations in the Top 50. This category included the statement: "I like the type of work that I do."

Under Work Environment, 91 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, compared to 92 percent of organizations in the Top 50. This category

included the statement "I feel physically safe in my work environment."

Under Relationship with Supervisor, 88 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, compared to 92 percent of organizations in the Top 50. An example of a statement from this category is: "My supervisor treats me fairly."

Under Training and Development, 73 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, compared to 76 percent in the Top 50. This category included questions such as: "I trust that if I do good work, my company may consider me for a promotion."

Under Pay and Benefits, 80 percent of all respondents gave positive responses, and 83 percent of organizations in the Top 50 gave positive responses. A typical question in the category is: "My pay is fair for the work I perform."

Under Overall Employee Engagement, 88 percent of all respondents and 91 percent of organizations in the Top 50 gave positive responses. This cate-

gory included the statement: "I am willing to give extra effort to help my company succeed."

Altogether, 84 percent of all the organizations that participated had positive responses to the statements, compared to 87 percent of the organizations that made the Top 50 list.

There were also two open-ended questions. "The open-ended questions are meant to give us more insight into the numbers," Springer said. "We're just looking to see if they validate those scores and see if there was any funny business



Masonic Homes of Kentucky, Inc.

going on. So if the numerical surveys indicated satisfaction with, just for example, the 401(k) plan but the open-ended questions indicated something different, we would look further into that."

But, it isn't a 401(k) that inspires nonprofit employees. "The mission is amazing, bringing play to inner-city schools, as well as conflict resolution and leadership, and for me that's extraordinary, the difference we make on a daily basis," said Kiyon. "That really resonates with our staff, seeing the impact they make every day."

According to Steven Nardizzi, executive director of Wounded Warrior Project in Jacksonville, Fla., which led the overall survey and the Medium Size Organization category for the second straight year, "It's the culture here: mission, then values."

Nardizzi said that being selected Number One last year was a source of joy as well as satisfaction for the organization. "It really validated what we're doing," he said.

Validation is encouraging, but once again it goes back to the source. "We have staff on board who are committed to what we're doing," Nardizzi said. "We make a huge effort to keep employees across the organization engaged in the mission."

Still, Springer said, employees are not going to be completely happy if their efforts are not appreciated.

"Employers on this list have been very much active with having employees in the forefront of the focus of their operations," Springer said. "Even with budget cuts and the bad economy, they still have that employee focus on less tangible things. They see value in taking the extra time, the extra step, to say they really appreciate what their employees are doing." *NPT*

Create Funtime

Tailgating, brown bag lunches help build team

By DON McNAMARA

Listen. That's what Diana Sieger, president of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation in Michigan does, and it's probably why the foundation ranked second on the list of Small Organizations and sixth overall in *The NonProfit Times'* 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For in 2012.

"We're not a huge organization. One of the keys is that we're very intentional in listening to what people are telling us," Sieger said. "For example, I make it a point once a day of walking around the building and talking to people. I think that has helped us in creating an environment in which our staff feel as though, regardless of what their position is, their opinion has value," said Sieger. "All ideas are welcome, and not immediately dismissed as 'That will never work.' Everyone is essential."

The foundation has weathered economic troubles in a state hit especially hard, even before the recession. Sieger was proud to note that her organization did not lay off any employees when the recession hit and, although professional development funds were very tight in 2008-09, medical benefits, for example, stayed intact.

The personal touch is important to Trina Owens, an accountant for the Parents as Teachers National Center in St. Louis, which finished sixth in the Small Organizations category and number 12 overall.

"The organization is very supportive as far as my goals and getting where I want to be," Owens said, adding the organization is able to mesh her aims with its own. Helping her hone her abilities might make her more marketable elsewhere, but Owens said, "I love it here. I don't see myself going anywhere else."

Owens has a 6-year-old child and the organization has been flexible when she has scheduling conflicts, she said. That flexibility is open to all employees, said Cheryl Dyle-Palmer, executive vice president/COO of Parents as Teachers.

Small Employers (15 – 49 Employees)		
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1	DoSomething.org	31
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Above: Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Below: Playworks Los Angeles



"We have flexible work hours depending on the work they do," Dyle-Palmer said. "We help them make plans so they can work around their personal schedules. We strive to have a work-home, work-life balance."

Parents as Teachers has a staff development committee, she added.

"It's a very important group in this organization because they plan for all kinds of things that are over and above, but related to the work that goes on here," she added. She cited, for example, professional development sessions with brown bag lunches, at which any topic from the personal to the professional can be aired.

In addition to the serious stuff, the organization schedules fun activities, such as tailgate parties in the parking lot to which community neighbors are invited. Employees get a chance to relax, dress down and even wear sports paraphernalia, Dyle-Palmer said.

Having fun, balancing play and accountability helped Playworks Los Angeles, a local office of a national operation, reach 14 in the Small Organization category and 33 overall.

Coaches go to at-risk schools to gather children in out-of-classroom activities. "They get to play, and who doesn't like to play?" said Darlene Kiyani, executive director of the Los Angeles office.

According to Kiyani, the organization's current retention rate is 77 percent. Of those who left, 60 percent left to accept full-time teaching jobs at the schools at which they had been working, and 20 percent left to pursue advanced degrees.

Kiyani said applicants commonly ask why staffers love their positions.

As for the work itself, "Coaches, when they are at the schools, have a lot of flexibility, but they also have accountability and are responsible for results," Kiyani said. "That contributes to staff morale."

Kiyani said that play is built into staff meetings, and there is recess, for staff, every day. *NPT*



Provide Room To Grow

Opportunity to move up in the organization keeps employees



Lance Armstrong and his Livestrong staff



NASCAR racer
Tony Stewart
makes one
fan's wish
come true.

By DON McNAMARA

It is amazing what you can discover when you're trying to learn something. What the leaders of Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) in Jacksonville, Fla., learned a year ago was that they provide a pretty good place to work. "The first year we participated (in *The NonProfit Times*' 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For 2011), we had no special goal, just to get positive feedback about the organization," said Steven Nardizzi, executive director of WWP. "And, we thought that rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, we would go with the survey being done by *The NonProfit Times* and Best Companies Group."

The result the first time around landed WWP as rated Number One overall and Number One in the Medium Organizations category a year ago. The organization must be doing something right, because it followed by taking the top spot again in both categories in *The NonProfit Times*' 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For 2012.

Nardizzi confirmed that, as with any nonprofit, the basis of employee satisfaction is the mission. After that, it is a matter of nurturing the commitment that people bring to the job.

"We make a huge effort to keep employees across the organization engaged in the mission," Nardizzi said.

The mission is to raise awareness and enlist public aid to help injured service members. Nardizzi said that program staff members are routinely working with wounded warriors and their families but that employees, such as fundraisers and IT people for example, do not see them on a day-to-day basis.

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"We make sure that once a year every employee gets involved with at least one event," Nardizzi said. "They get to see firsthand the results of what we're doing. It keeps them aware, but it also re-energizes them."

One such event is the Soldier Ride, a three- to four-day event that utilizes a variety of adaptive cycling equipment to get wounded veterans out and on the road.

"I just came off one down in Key West and I was re-energized myself," Nardizzi said. He mentioned one wounded warrior who told him after the event how much better he felt about himself.

For fiscal year 2011, voluntary turnover was 5 percent. The stability index, which measures employees who have been with

the organization for more than one year, is 80 percent. The time to fill a position is between 60 and 90 days, depending on the level of the position. Nardizzi conducts all final interviews.

The idea of getting everyone involved also has worked well for Caring Voice Coalition (CVC) of Mechanicsville, Va., which finished at 18 in the Medium Organization category and 41 overall.

"All of the leadership know about our team partners personally as well as professionally," said Pamela Harris, founder and president of CVC, which brings aid and comfort to chronically ill patients. "We even know their family members by name. The piece that really sets us apart is a servant-leadership environment. The pyramid is upside-down, and the bosses

are at the bottom."

Harris said the organization is "blatantly honest" with employees about development and about helping them grow, even maintaining an e-library of more than 600 files, on topics ranging from managing the workplace to managing a Word document.

CVC expects employees to have a passion for the type of work it does, be committed to lifelong learning and be willing to go above and beyond each day for patients.

In return, employees get to relax, although much of that relaxation still involves patients, said Samantha Harris, vice president of CVC. For example, in October employees join patients on a Weekend Wellness Retreat, which in 2011 was held at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Va. Employees sponsor patients they have been tracking.

"The employee eats dinner with the patient, goes to sessions, makes sure they are served," Harris said. "(Staffers) learn what patients go through every single day with their diseases. It is one of the most incredible weekends."

Of 57 staffers with the organization in 2011, four are no longer there. The retention rate for 2011 was 92.9 percent.

Applicants typically ask about organizational culture and environment, the ability to grow within the organization, benefits, and how the CVC affects the community. There is no standard time to fill an opening, Harris said, because the hiring focus is on people who are passionate about the cause.

For WWP and CVC, passion counts, and fun activities are just part of the package that makes the weekdays fulfilling, even enjoyable. *NPT*

Having Their Pick

Using technology to find the correct fit with employees



BY DON McNAMARA

Whether it's in Wisconsin, or Kentucky, or anywhere else, working for a nonprofit is much more than just a job.

"We see the patients in our community as our output -- for nursing, hospital care or rehabilitation -- and all our employees see a connection with the community," said Ed Wittrock, vice president of regional systems for Mayo Clinic Health Systems in Wisconsin. "It's not just people coming to work. It's people coming to work taking care of the community."

The organization is taking care of more than one community, in fact. Mayo Clinic has the distinction of placing two separate units in *The NonProfit Times'* Top 50 Nonprofits to Work For in 2012. Mayo Clinic Health System - Chippewa Valley, where Wittrock has his office, was ranked number three in the Large Organization Category and 24 overall, and Mayo Clinic Health System - Eau Claire Clinic finished at 10 in the Large Organization category and 48 overall.

A committed workforce is fine, but simply relying on employees to love their jobs isn't enough. It takes more, anywhere. "We look at every employee

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as being important to care, no matter what their job title is," Wittrock said. "We believe in transparency in the organization. I just sent an email telling employees 'Here's what we did this month.' We're also working hard to enhance employee involvement in the process of improvement, so they can improve their work day-to-day. That makes sense to employees, if they see they can fix it."

The voluntary turnover rate for Chippewa Valley in 2011 was 6.9 percent and for Eau Claire 5.2 percent. Retention rates for the same time period were 94 and 92 percent, respectively.

An emphasis on first-rate customer service also shows up at Masonic Homes of Kentucky, which finished at 6 in the Large Organization category and 31 overall.

"It doesn't have anything to do with our company, it has to do with our residents," said CJ Parrish, chief communications officer for Masonic Homes of Kentucky. "Our mission is to make a difference in the lives of people, and our employees have a passion for that. "We are resident-focused," Parrish continued. "That's what makes us all get out of bed and come here every day."

The Masonic Homes, which began as

shelters for the widows and orphans of Masons, now offer a full continuum of care from health care to independent living, to anyone, not just Masons. For employees, there are Employee of the Month and Employee of the Year awards with cash payments and recognition ceremonies. Parrish said those initiatives serve to honor an ongoing employee commitment to quality care.

Preliminary figures from 2011 show an increase in retention of key positions, such as caregiver, from 64.15 percent to 68.9 percent, according to Trasee Whitaker, senior vice president/human resources. Whitaker added that most of the turnover comes as a result of regulatory concerns and resulting company policies, which cover such areas as proper care, sanitation, safety, dietary supplements and therapy.

In 2011, Masonic Homes of Kentucky started an application system online that allows for prescreening applicants to ensure a good fit.

"The mission is it," Parrish emphasized. "This is a great place to work for a lot of reasons, but it's an outstanding experience because you have a chance to make a difference in people's lives every day." *NPT*



Top Row: The Mayo Clinic Health System. Bottom Row: Masonic Homes of Kentucky, Inc.