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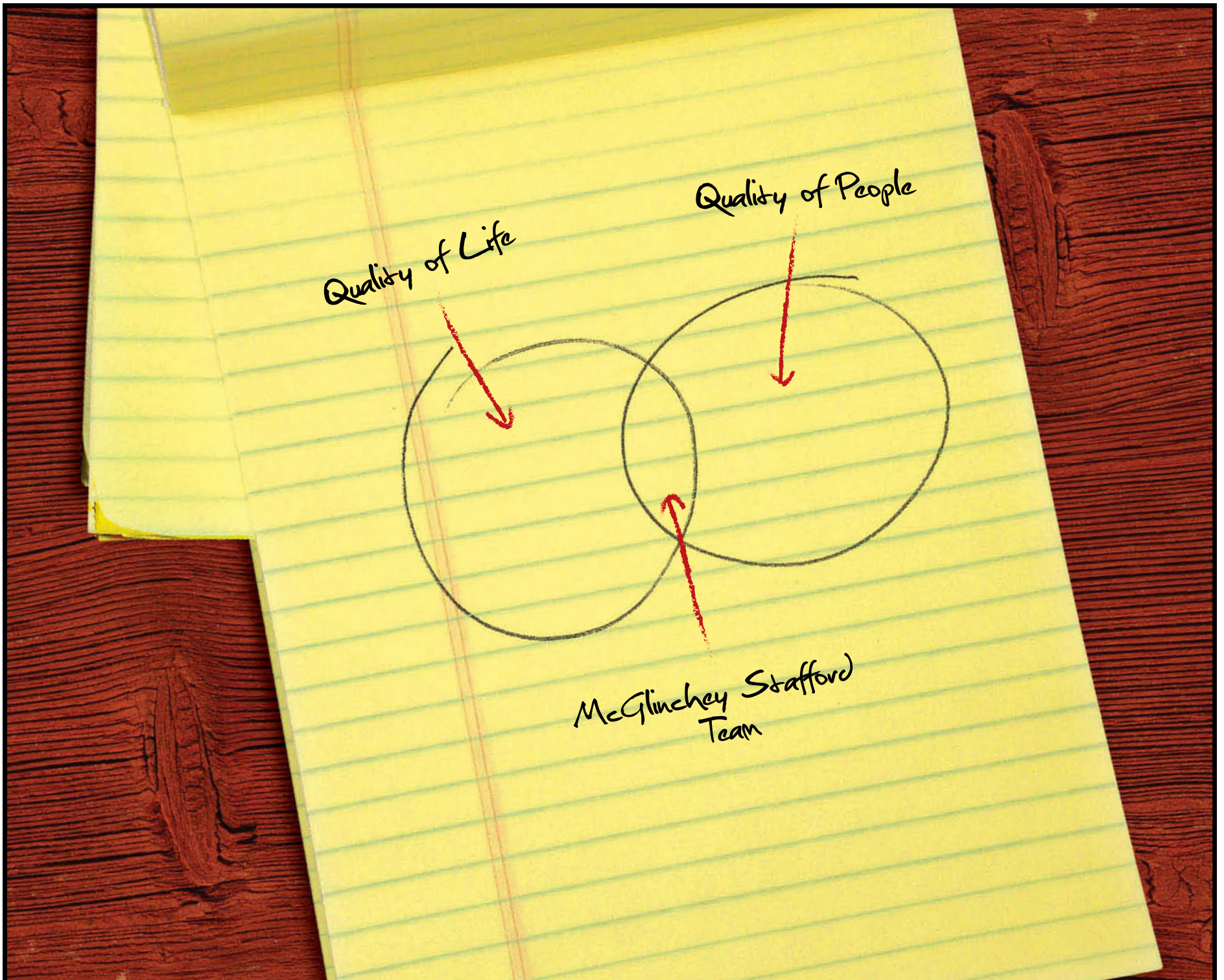
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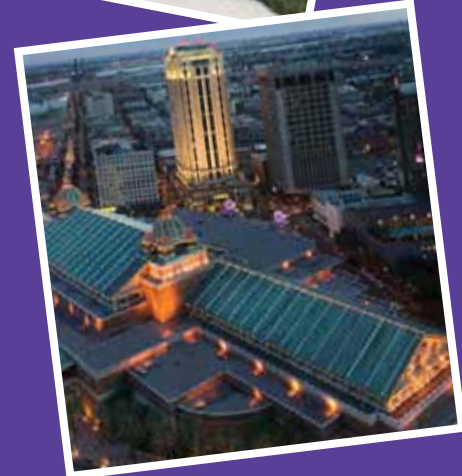
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2007 Best Places to Work

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On the cover: (Top) From left: Accounting clerk Chris Stevens, paralegal D Anderson, legal secretary Bobbie Molnar and legal secretary Sandra Pacaccio review paperwork at Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles. (Bottom) From left: Gail Bordelon, marine accounting executive, Sue Smith personal lines accounting executive, and Debbie Schmidt, in accounting, work out at Ellsworth's gym. (photo by Frank Aymami)

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2006 HONOREES**Large businesses**

1. Ochsner Health System
2. Adams and Reese
3. West Jefferson Medical Center
4. Gilsbar Inc.
5. Omni Bank
6. East Jefferson General Hospital
7. St. Tammany Parish Hospital
8. Deutsch Kerrigan & Stiles
9. Touro Infirmary
10. Harrah's Casino and Hotel
11. Booz Allen Hamilton
12. Phelps Dunbar
13. PetroCom
14. Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
15. Peoples Health
16. Dickie Brennan and Company
17. Diamond Data Systems
18. Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann
19. Frilot Partridge
20. Cox Communications
21. Hilton New Orleans Riverside
22. Peter A. Mayer Advertising
23. Superior Energy Services
24. Durr Heavy Construction
- 25 (tie). Vinson Guard Services
- 25 (tie). First NBC

Small businesses

1. PMOLink
2. Zehnder Communications
3. Ellsworth Corp.
4. Belladonna Day Spa
5. Trumpet Advertising
6. Chopin, Wagar, Richard and Kutcher
7. River Marine Management
8. Keating Magee
9. Deveney Communication
10. Robert Berning Productions
11. Free Gulliver
12. International House Hotel
13. Loubat Equipment
14. Industrial Products Ltd.
15. Aesthetic Surgical Associates

2005 HONOREES

1. Ochsner Clinic Foundation
2. Adams and Reese
3. Kenner Regional Medical Center
4. West Jefferson Medical Center
5. Zehnder Communications
6. East Jefferson General Hospital
7. Albert-Garaudy and Associates
8. Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
9. Omni Bank

10. Deveney Communication
11. Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles
12. Hibernia National Bank
13. FARA
14. Apogen Technologies
15. St. Tammany Parish Hospital
16. Keating Magee
17. McGlinchey Stafford
18. River Marine Management
19. Landscape Images
20. Free Gulliver

2004 HONOREES

1. Kenner Regional Medical Center
2. Adams and Reese
3. PMOLink
4. Zehnder Communications
5. Landscape Images
6. Salco Management
7. West Jefferson Medical Center
8. Harrah's Casino New Orleans
9. Banner Chevrolet
10. PetroCom
11. Gilsbar Inc.
12. Peter A. Mayer Advertising
13. McGlinchey Stafford
14. Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

15. Cannon Cochran Management Services
16. Free Gulliver
17. Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann
18. Edward Jones Investments
19. Correro Fishman Haygood Phelps Walmsley and Casteix
20. Banner Ford

2003 HONOREES

1. Zehnder Communications
2. Ochsner Clinic Foundation
3. Kenner Regional Medical Center
4. Newtown and Associates
5. West Jefferson Medical Center
6. Diamond Data Systems
7. Peter A. Mayer Advertising
8. Harrah's Casino New Orleans
9. Gilsbar Inc.
10. Correro Fishman Haygood Phelps Walmsley and Casteix
11. The Montalbano Group
12. Salco Management
13. PetroCom
14. PMOLink
15. Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
16. McGlinchey Stafford
17. Franco's Athletic Club
18. American Nursing Services Inc.
19. Ruth's Chris Steak House
20. New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau
21. Vinson Guard Service
22. Lambeth House Continuing Care Retirement Community
23. Harvey Press
24. Omni Bank
25. Hibernia National Bank
26. Natives Landscape Corp.
27. Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann
28. Banner Chevrolet
29. Entergy Corp.
30. Mr. B's Bistro
31. Eustis Engineering Co.
32. Where Y'at Magazine
33. Professional Construction Services
34. The Rose Garden
35. Our Lady of Holy Cross College
36. Pel Hughes Printing
37. Gage Telephone Systems of New Orleans

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Best Places program escalates in fifth year



By Christian Moises
Associate Editor

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU wondered if the grass really is greener on the other side?

CityBusiness' fifth year of Best Places to Work looks at how area companies treat their top resource — their employees.

The main factors in selecting the Best Places to Work were how important employees are to the company and how much focus a company puts on providing a positive, productive and rewarding atmosphere for its workers.

Selections and rankings are based on several categories including salary, benefits, employee recognition programs, continuing education and paid time off.

Employee surveys conducted during the selection process gauge employee satisfaction with questions such as: What in your company would you recommend to a job applicant? Are there

opportunities for advancement? Is the company maximizing its talents and skills?

Rankings were also contingent on how much information was made available during the selection process.

Even though every company has something that makes it rise above the rest, this was the most competitive year the selection committee has faced. CityBusiness' rankings include 35 large companies and 15 small companies, with 50 employees as the baseline for large companies.

The top three large companies this year are law firm Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles, technology firm ReadSoft and law firm Phelps Dunbar. In the small company category, insurance firm Ellsworth Corp. was crowned the best followed by consulting firms I-Assure and PMOLink.

Other law firms honored are Frlot LLC, Adams and Reese, McGlinchey Stafford and Johnson Johnson Barrios & Yacoubian.

Five hospitals — St. Tammany Parish Hospital, Ochsner Health System, East Jefferson General Hospital, West Jefferson Medical Center and Touro Infirmary — maintained their status as Best Places to Work.

Newcomers include two construction firms — DonahueFavret Contractors and Walton Construction — and two high schools — John Ehret and Benjamin Franklin.

Special congratulations go to Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group, West Jefferson Medical Center and Zehnder Communications for consistently offering an environment that fosters satisfied employees, landing them on the Best Places to Work list every year since its inception in 2003.

Congratulations to all the companies named Best Places to Work. CityBusiness thanks you for your commitment to the region and creating a work environment that encourages our residents to remain in New Orleans. •

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CITYBUSINESS
2007 Best Places
to Work



General partner Nancy Marshall, left, and legal secretary Dianne Kimble review files for an upcoming case.

1 Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles

Employees: 141

Average starting salary: \$86,500 for attorneys, \$41,355 for paralegal and secretaries

Median salary: \$92,250 for attorneys, \$44,644 for paralegals and secretaries

Benefits: health care benefits, paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition program, fitness program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: 10 days first year

Web site: www.dkslaw.com

DEUTSCH, KERRIGAN AND STILES employees don't have to head down to Bourbon Street for a Lucky Dog at lunch. The Lucky Dog vendor comes to them. The Fourth of July treat is just one way employees at the firm can let their hair down.

Shelly Holland, an accounting clerk who joined the firm about two weeks before Hurricane Katrina, wasn't really looking for a job but heard about the opening and decided to check it out.

"Luck brought me here," Holland said. "Outside of the money, jobseekers won't find a more fair place to work. Having two small children, you're going to miss some work with sick kids. Without question, it's an all-hands-on work environment where everyone is willing to pitch in."

Partner Robert Kerrigan joined the team 1969. His father

was one of the firm's founders, but he wasn't sold on following his footsteps.

"I was told many times by other lawyers it would be a mistake to work in a firm where my father was a partner," Kerrigan said. "But I thought I would be exposed to very interesting and demanding cases, and I thought I'd get into the courtroom quickly, which I did."

The family connection still exists today as the firm makes it a practice of going to its staff and asking if anyone in their immediate family would be interested in open positions.

"It's the care that the firm as well as all the partners give all our employees," Kerrigan said. "It's our desire to see them grow in their jobs and hopefully into other jobs up the ladder."

Kerrigan said the firm always promotes continuing education.

“There are many examples of people who have started with us in the first tier of employment,” he said. “We’ve had operators who have gone to paralegal, runners who have gone to be in charge of a great part of the administrative staff.”

Lisa Daigle is a prime example. She started working at the firm part-time in 1978 when she was a senior in high school in the mailroom and as a relief receptionist. She went full-time one year later as receptionist.

Shortly before taking maternity leave in 1984, she had asked for a transfer but was told there were no openings.

“But they called me while I was on leave and said there was a position as an accounting clerk,” Daigle said, who’s held that position since then.

After almost 30 years with the firm, Daigle doesn’t plan on leaving anytime soon.

“It’s like you’re second family, as you’re pretty much here longer than you’re with your real family,” she said. “I’m not counting down the days, and even though when I think about another 20 years and how long that is, I plan on retiring here.”

But it’s not all work and no play at Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles.

Kerrigan said the firm stresses a work-life balance.

“Do we let our hair down? Yes,” he said.

Some of the ways employees let loose throughout the year include a Lenten fish fry, where the firm hires Docksides Seafood to serve up seafood and other fixings at the office; a snowball party in July; a Halloween party with a costume contest, a Thanksgiving luncheon, a Christmas tree trimming party, where employees decorate the company tree,

“eat, drink and be merry;” departmental Christmas luncheons and a company Christmas party; an annual picnic at City Park that’s catered with door prizes; and a firm-sponsored volleyball team for the secretaries league.

Markell Currault-Holmes, human resources director, said these events prove there are no lines drawn in the sand among attorneys and employees.

“Take our Christmas party,” Currault-Holmes said. “It’s not separated. We have departmental parties, and everyone in that department is involved.”

Currault-Holmes also points to the firm’s vacation day package as one of the biggest perks — as soon as employees start, they receive 10 personal days.

“When I looked into it three years ago, there was no other firm in the city that had that kind of deal,” Currault-Holmes said. “That shows we’re generous with our time. It’s a selling point that impresses many people when they come in.”

Outside the normal benefits package, Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles offers the following perks:

- pre-tax benefit for parking and transit passes;
- an ASI Credit union affiliation available to all employees;
- quarterly firms socials to introduce new employees and recognize employee anniversaries;
- an anniversary recognition program in increments of five years;
- free flu shots;
- monthly birthday parties; and
- an employee referral program, that pays the employee \$500 if the new hire stays for six months. •

— Christian Moises



Facilities manager Hedgemann Carter reviews paperwork.



Special partner Beverly Delaune, left, and paralegal Tasha Sternbergh meet in Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles’ library.



From left: ReadSoft business development representative Susan Brantmeyer, senior Oracle consultant Clif Autin and director of professional services Dan Andersson meet about an upcoming project.

2 ReadSoft

Employees: 40 at ReadSoft North America, 400 globally

Average starting salary: \$52,000

Median salary: \$77,500

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, dental, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, paid maternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: 10 days up to three years, 15 days for three to five years, 20 days for five years or more

Web site: www.readsoft.com

IN THE FIVE and a half years Alayne Pregeant has been with ReadSoft — the Metairie-based document automation software company whose international headquarters are in Helsingborg, Sweden — she's become quite the European jetsetter.

"ReadSoft celebrated our 15-year anniversary a year or two ago, and they flew everyone in the company from all subsidiaries to Lisbon, Portugal," said Pregeant, who as marketing manager is in charge of advertising, public relations and marketing events for the corporation's North American operations. "I've been to Sweden, because that's where our parent

company (ReadSoft AB) is. We had a kick-off meeting in 2004 in London. I've traveled to Ireland."

But free trips to Europe aren't the only perk that comes with a job at ReadSoft. One of the most-welcome imports from the parent company's Swedish corporate culture is the 100-percent financing of health insurance for employees and their families.

"Any time we go to the doctor or get medicine or have an accident, there's no co-payment, no deductible, we don't pay anything monthly — it's just nothing," Pregeant said. "That alone is tremendous."

CEO Bob Fresneda said eliminating employees' financial worries over health care is one way ReadSoft fosters a "family environment." Another is giving a Christmas present each year to every child of a ReadSoft employee. And along with the European business trips comes the opportunity to travel just for fun on the company's dime.

"When we're having a conference in Boston, for instance, we'll try to go up early and go to a ball game or something like that," Fresneda said. "This year, we're taking all of the employees on a cruise in March down to Mexico."

ReadSoft moved its main U.S. office to the New Orleans area from San Diego about five years ago, a result of downsiz-

ing at a time when the computer industry was struggling. Fresneda, who had been in charge of sales in the San Diego office before his promotion to CEO, was at the international headquarters when he was handed one of his most challenging tasks right after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"I stayed in Sweden for a few extra days after Sept. 11 in 2001 and wrote a business plan to move the company from San Diego to New Orleans," Fresneda said.

Senior project engineer Stephen Ragan, who has been with the company two and a half years and handles software development, programming, project management and training, considers ReadSoft's cooperative working environment to be the best part of his job.

"The people here are just tremendous to work with," Ragan said. "There's a big culture of teamwork, a tag-team concept."

Ragan especially appreciates the way ReadSoft's top managers give their employees room to grow on the job.

"They empower us," Ragan said. "They give us the freedom to explore and to reach out and do new things — and even to make mistakes and do dumb things without fear of repercussions — so that we can make this company better." •

— Sonya Stinson



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Associates Charlotte Jane Sawyer and Brandon Davis share an aisle in the Phelps Dunbar library.

3 Phelps Dunbar

Employees: 200-plus in New Orleans, 580-plus companywide
Average starting salary: \$38,000 for staff, \$90,000 for attorneys
Median salary: \$43,000 for staff, would not disclose for attorneys
Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, vision, paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, 401(k)
Wait time for benefits: after first full month of employment
Paid time off: 10 days for attorneys, 16 days for staff (including sick time)
Web site: www.phelpsdunbar.com

MANY COMPANIES STRESS a family environment. For Alexis Polk, a new associate at Phelps Dunbar, this is the literal truth as she works in an office she used to play in as a child.

Polk's mother, Anna, worked in the office since before Alexis was born. When Polk was a child, Anna would bring her to the offices and let her play with her toys while she worked. Now, she works with people she knew as a child.

"They all remind me, 'Oh, I remember when you were a little girl,'" Polk said.

The family atmosphere and the fact so many people still remember Polk from her childhood points to the quality of the workplace in another way — that many Phelps employees stay with the firm for a long time.

"We have a tremendous amount of staff who've been here as long or longer than the lawyers," said George Gilly, regional practice coordinator for admiralty and tort litigation practice at Phelps Dunbar.

The perks are plentiful at Phelps Dunbar, including a discount on General Motors vehicles.

Angie Flaharty, manager of client and business services at Phelps Dunbar, used her discount to buy a Chevy Tahoe several years ago.

"It's top of the line and I was able to get it at a discount price," said Flaharty, who added that she will use the company discount to buy another GM vehicle.

The firm's offices are at Canal Place and employees receive discounts when shopping at Canal Place stores. The discounts at clothing stores such as Ann Taylor and Brooks Brothers are particularly helpful to people working at a law firm.

"You get a lot of bang for your buck," Polk said. "It's really nice to be able to go in there and get nice clothes at a good price."

Aside from the discounts, the firm offers a number of social activities for its employees. One tradition is movie night during the holiday season, where the firm rents out a movie theater and employees and their families are treated to a free movie, with free drinks and popcorn.

For this event, some of the lawyers even dress up in costumes related to the film. Last year's screening was the animated penguin opus "Happy Feet" and some of the attorneys attended the screening dressed as penguins. This year, the screening will be "Enchanted" and Polk looks forward to being able to bring her young cousin.

Phelps Dunbar is also flexible in the way employees are paid. For example, Flaharty elected not to go with the firm's health insurance plan because she is covered under her husband's plan. Because she opted out of the company's health insurance, she gets extra money in her paychecks.

While the perks and social events are fun, the work remains rewarding and challenging for the people at Phelps Dunbar.

"A whole lot of lawyers don't like what they do for a living, but I wake up every morning amazed that I get to work here," Gilly said. •

— Fritz Esker



Network engineer Robert Breland, left, and CEO Joey Auer work in Diamond Data Systems' server room.

4 Diamond Data Systems

Employees: 75

Average starting salary: \$40,000

Median salary: \$71,117

Benefits: health care benefits, day-care options, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, telecommuting, flexible hours, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 15 days

Paid time off: 25 days, including sick days

Web site: www.diamonddata.com

LISTENING WITH CONCERN is one of the key philosophies at Diamond Data Systems, a New Orleans company that provides a variety of information technology solutions for all sorts of businesses.

Founded in 1992, CEO Joey Auer worked one small software development contract into the multimillion-dollar firm the company is today. Diamond Data employs 75 professionals and has an office at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi to complement the home office in New Orleans.

Joe Berry, an 11-year veteran of the company, said one of the main attributes of Diamond Data's success is the openness of higher management.

"There are a lot of large companies where you can't access the CEO," said Berry, a proposal coordinator who is head of media relations. "It just is not the case here. We can call Joey, e-mail him or even walk into his office. He is always there."

Berry said management really encourages communication within the company, as well as with all the clients.

"We really stress good solid relationships," Berry said. "Our company has a lot of projects that are built on long-term relationships with the client. We do what is called 'listening with concern,' finding the best solution for the situation."

Berry said Diamond Data provides a full range of IT solutions for military and civilian federal markets. The company develops software solutions and networking solutions for projects that range from human resources to tactical decision support systems.

Berry said the company's first client was Ochsner Health System, but Diamond Data works with everyone from NASA to the Naval Oceanographic Office.

"We've become a fairly large business, but we try hard to maintain a small boutique culture," Berry said. "That is one of the special elements of our company."

Level II experience consultant Mark Thibodeaux said he appreciates the laid-back atmosphere and genuine

interest management has for its employees.

"They are always around to hear comments and complaints," said Thibodeaux, a three-year veteran of Diamond Data. "They have a rigorous performance review system and always respond to any issue by any employee. We are all treated very fair."

Thibodeaux said Diamond Data management holds company get-togethers every quarter as a way to discuss business on a casual level.

"We get to hear about the health of the company in an informal social environment, not a stuffy staff meeting," Thibodeaux said. "I've never been a part of a company that does that sort of thing."

Berry said one specific way Diamond Data excels over others in the field is the company takes full advantage of Louisiana's Incumbent Worker Training grants, which are designed to train an employer's existing employees. The state grants of \$700,000 to \$800,000 keep employees trained on new industry technology.

"They allow us to do all sorts of necessary training, which can sometimes be very expensive," Berry said. "When people can obtain this kind of experience training without having to pay for it, it is a good investment."•

— Robin Shannon



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Receptionist Claudia Thresher takes calls in the Frilot lobby.

5 Frilot LLC

Employees: 120

Average starting salary: \$95,000 for attorneys, \$40,000 for staff

Median salary: would not disclose

Benefits: health care benefits, paid maternity, stock options, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate for attorneys, 30-60 days for staff
Paid time off: 10 days for one to four years, 15 days for five or more years

Web site: www.frilot.com

IF STACY SUBIK ever doubted Frilot LLC was a good place to work, Hurricane Katrina reminded her otherwise. After the storm, when the firm's Poydras Street headquarters were damaged and closed, Frilot employees were redirected to a temporary headquarters in Lafayette.

Frilot leaders told the attorneys, legal secretaries, paralegals, information technologists and administrative staff their jobs were waiting for them in Lafayette, where it was hoped everyone would be able to relocate in 30 days.

"There was a conference call right after the storm that really gave us an idea of where we all were in terms of what was

going to happen next," said Subik, who has been a paralegal in Frilot's medical malpractice section since 1999.

"They said that they would find housing for anyone who wanted to move to Lafayette for the period of time that we were going to be there, while those who continued to commute would be paid mileage," Subik said. "And everyone was paid during that whole period of time when we were basically transitioning from New Orleans to Lafayette."

Founded in 1995, Frilot is a full-service firm specializing in admiralty and maritime, commercial litigation, construction law, intellectual property and medical malpractice and health care, among other practice areas.

Offering full medical benefits and 10 days of vacation and five days of sick leave that is expanded to 15 days of vacation and 10 sick days after an employee is on staff for five years, Frilot has committed itself to the constant upgrade of its electronic resources, another reason Pete Lampard enjoys working for the firm.

"There has been an ongoing investment in making certain that the firm is very technical and up to date," said Lampard, who is a paralegal in the firm's agriculture and agribusiness practice area.

"And because we have a younger staff, younger attorneys and partners, all of whom are computer literate and know how to do things like electronic filing and research, that ultimately cuts down on a lot of the stress that you might normally run into in a firm this size, handling as many cases as we do," Lampard said.

Frilot employees not only feel good about what Subik describes as a "supportive and almost family-like environment," but take pride in the wide range of Frilot's community service activities, which include collecting more than 3,000 books and donating playground equipment through the New Orleans Charter Schools Foundation.

Frilot attorneys also demonstrate a commitment to give back to New Orleans by serving on the boards of directors of such organizations as the Bridge House, Children's Hospital of New Orleans, Habitat for Humanity, New Orleans Speech & Hearing and Save NOLA.

"I knew from the first day that I had made the right decision in coming to work here," Subik said, "because I could tell that this was a place where people you work with care about each other and the employers care about their staff, which, to me, is the ultimate employee benefit."•

— Garry Boulard



Pump operator Tim Miller, left, and crane operator Jerome Fobb Jr. prepare a pump at Superior Energy Services' Harvey facility.

6 Superior Energy Services

Employees: 841 locally, 4,400 worldwide

Average starting salary: \$29,120

Median salary: \$63,650

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried partner benefits (under certain state laws), paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: 10 days after one year, 15 days after three years

Web site: www.superiorenergy.com

HARVEY-BASED SUPERIOR Energy Services started as a company whose main purpose was to plug spent oil wells. The company has since mushroomed into a worldwide enterprise with 4,400 employees across the globe.

"The company has diversified in the last seven years," said Jason Bergeron, vice president of operations for Superior Energy's Marine Division. "They merged different companies and cultures together to become one successful company. We pick out the talent and let them continue to do what they do well."

"I've spent four years in the Marine Corps and five

years with the State Police," Bergeron said. "And I've never seen such a close-knit group as we have here. We have teamwork. We respect everyone and allow people to do their jobs."

Edward Alfonso, traffic coordinator in the Marine Division, can describe his workday in one word: Busy.

Alfonso, a 15-year employee, oversees a fleet of 27 vessels of various sizes. A father of three, Alfonso said it means a lot to be able to take care of family issues without worrying about his job status.

"Family comes first in this company," Alfonso said. "They understand what I need and allow me to do the things I need to do as far as personal stuff."

Greg Rosenstein, vice president of investor relations at Superior, describes the people who work for the company as "energetic, passionate and hard-working. It's exciting to have an opportunity to be involved in different aspects of growing the company."

"We give our employees an opportunity not only to succeed and grow in the workplace," Rosenstein said, "But they can be well rounded with health benefits and discounts on things like cars and computers. It's a win-win situation."

Cameron Shoulders teaches OSHA Compliance Safety Training at Superior. He was a third-party trainer who was hired full-time by the company after Hurricane Katrina.

"I think they recognized my talent when they hired me back," Shoulders said. "It's a sign that they want the best."

Shoulders follows a class schedule which includes OSHA fire safety, electrical safety and confined space safety, as well as one day of crane safety and one day of medic training, including first aid and CPR.

"Superior tends to reward you with opportunities for advancement, raises and fair bonuses," he said. "Things that you do don't go unnoticed."

Shoulders has made it known to his superiors he wants to continue his education by becoming a certified safety professional.

"To me, getting a promotion is not as important as expanding your influence," Shoulders said. "Eventually, I will be training other trainers."

Shoulders lives in Slidell but doesn't mind the daily commute to Harvey, about an hour.

"I would drive from anywhere to come to work here," he said. •

— Lisa Bacques



From left: Booz Allen Hamilton associates Julie Bessleman, Leslie Doody and Dave Regan display their awards as the top three winners in the firms' holiday cook-off. Doody took home first place for her baked butternut squash.

7 Booz Allen Hamilton

Employees: 24 locally, more than 19,000 companywide

Average starting salary: \$83,783

Median salary: would not disclose

Benefits: health care benefits, day care options, unmarried partner benefits, paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, dental, vision, telecommuting, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition, fitness program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: two weeks

Web site: www.boozallen.com

A LONG COMMUTE is something most workers avoid if they can. It's a testament to how much Susan Nelson loves her job as an associate at the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton that she lives in Baton Rouge, yet commutes to New Orleans to work every day.

"Sometime there's an easy way to do things and a right way to do things, and I'm surrounded by people who do things the right way," Nelson said.

Andrew Ponce, a senior associate at Booz Allen Hamilton, said employee satisfaction is a key to keeping employees like

Nelson. Every two years, the company conducts all-encompassing job satisfaction survey.

"It's where a lot of our current benefits and programs came from," said Ponce, who added that the firm standardized its education benefits and created more family-friendly work policies earlier this year because of these surveys.

As part of the education benefits, associate Julie Bessleman received \$5,000 a year in tuition assistance as she pursued her master's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

Some of the policies include 10 days for a mother or father after the birth of a child on top of the six weeks maternity and any accrued vacation leave an employee already has. The firm also allowed working mothers to work half days at the office after Hurricane Katrina because of the city's day care shortage.

The benefits "make it up to you and your family for the time spent at work," Nelson said.

Booz Allen takes employee recognition seriously. Every year, the company awards one employee for excellent service with an extra two days of vacation and an all-expenses paid trip for the employee and a guest to anywhere in the United States or the Caribbean. Bessleman chose to go to Aruba after winning the award in 2004.

The firm also offers a variety of other bonuses, ranging from \$1,000 prizes to picking something from the company store.

"You go above and beyond and you'll get rewarded," Nelson said.

The people at Booz Allen Hamilton haven't forgotten the struggles they faced after Katrina, either. When the San Diego area was ravaged by the recent wildfires and many residents were displaced, Booz Allen employees in New Orleans donated diapers, blankets and other household items.

The firm knows how to have fun, too. Every year at Mardi Gras, the company has a balcony that overlooks Bourbon Street and holds a party that attracts Booz Allen employees nationwide.

"It's fun watching normally buttoned-down leaders lead a second line," Bessleman said.

Booz Allen provides services and opportunities in a field — information technology and consulting — in which people often leave the area to find a job.

"A lot of people in this field have to leave the state and this gives me an opportunity to stay in Louisiana, which is my home," Nelson said. •

— Fritz Esker

8 Adams & Reese

Employees: 196 in New Orleans, 469 firmwide

Average starting salary: \$93,000 for attorneys, \$42,000 for staff members

Median salary: \$93,000 for attorneys, \$42,000 for staff members

Benefits: health care benefits, day-care options, paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, telecommuting, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: 12 days

Web site: www.adamsandreese.com

AT LEAST SEVERAL TIMES a week, Linda Soileau is reminded of the supportive culture embraced by Adams and Reese when she receives unsolicited e-mails from the firm's attorneys hailing the work of individual staffers.

"This isn't anything that anyone has to do, which is what makes it so positive," said Soileau, director of human resources at Adams and Reese. "But, for example, when a trial is completed, I might receive messages from the attorneys who were involved, pointing out the individual efforts of other people in our firm who helped out, all the way from the paralegal staff to the mail room."

That sense of esprit de corps permeates nearly every aspect of life at Adams and Reese, which was founded in New Orleans and now has offices in Baton Rouge, Birmingham, Nashville, Tenn., and Washington, D.C.

With a vacation program that allows employees to accumulate up to 23 vacation days at a time over a three-year period or get paid for the time at the end of the year, Adams and Reese allows staff members to fix their own schedules.

"We strongly believe in work/life balance," Soileau said. "If a mother is dropping off a child in school and can't get here until 8:30 instead of 8 a.m., she will be allowed to come in at the later time and then work the remaining half hour at the end of the day."

Work/life balance at Adams and Reese was most vividly on display in the days after Hurricane Katrina, when the New Orleans office was closed and employees were relocated to new offices in Baton Rouge. Adams and Reese attorneys raised about \$250,000 to cover the expenses of staff members who were directly affected.

The reason the firm cares so much for its staff, said Kirk Gasperez, partner in charge of the New Orleans office, is "we are as good as the people who work here."

"We try to empower our people, and that's true whether



Adams and Reese accountant Tanae Jones, left, and events manager Teresa Lauga stand in the firm's library.

it's the person making copies or delivering the mail or doing the secretarial work for the lawyers, or even the lawyers themselves," Gasperez said.

"There is a general realization here that every person has a special role to play in seeing that there is a positive outcome for our clients," Gasperez said. "For that reason, among others, we think it's important to make people know that they are an essential part of the process at every level."

With a strong community service profile through its Hope,

Understanding, Giving and Support program (HUGS) and the ongoing pro bono program, Caring Adams and Reese Employees (CARE), Adams and Reese also offers its staff opportunities to give back to the community.

And the fact the firm's staff responds to those giving opportunities, Gasperez said, shows "we really do have a special group of people here, which underlines why everyone here is so valued in the first place."•

— Garry Boulard

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Planet Beach GIS analyst Ryan Brach shows performance consultant Nicole Bourgeois how to use a hydration station in Planet Beach's spa services area.

9 Planet Beach Franchising Corp.

Employees: 77

Average starting salary: \$58,000

Median salary: \$118,500

Benefits: health care benefits, day care options, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals, paid maternity/paternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: two days for first year, three days for second year, four days for third year, five days for four or more years

Web site: www.planetbeach.com

HIGH SALARIES, generous benefits and a casual atmosphere dedicated to a lifestyle of looking good and feeling good means makes for very few, if any, unhappy employees at Planet Beach.

From its beginnings as New Orleans' Electric Beach tanning salon in 1995, Planet Beach has grown to more than 345 locations in the United States, Canada and Australia. Planet Beach's Comtempo Spa experience allows customers to experience spa and tanning treatments in a private room without the need of an attendant.

Vice President of Franchise Recruitment J. Archer was attracted to the company two months ago because she saw a unique concept. With 25 years in the franchising business, Archer said the company is on the cutting edge of health and beauty technology and is poised for strong growth. While she hasn't been with Planet Beach very long, the company's culture has quickly revealed itself.

"People here are very passionate and are excited to come to work every day and they're all a part of the lifestyle," Archer said. "We all focus on making sure that the franchisees get what they need so that it gets to the customers."

Having a great enthusiasm for the lifestyle is exactly what attracted Ryan Stansbury to the company. He started as a customer at a Chalmette location seven years ago before starting his own franchise, then coming aboard as a corporate employee as well. Stansbury owns two locations and serves as the director of design and construction. While he is motivated by the company's strong compensation and benefits package, he said the love for the lifestyle makes it a joy to go to work every day.

That lifestyle lives strong in the workplace, and the staff is encouraged to take breaks during the day by hitting the gym or taking advantage of the spa, tanning or facial services.

"Just as Harley Davidson (bikes and gear) is a lifestyle,

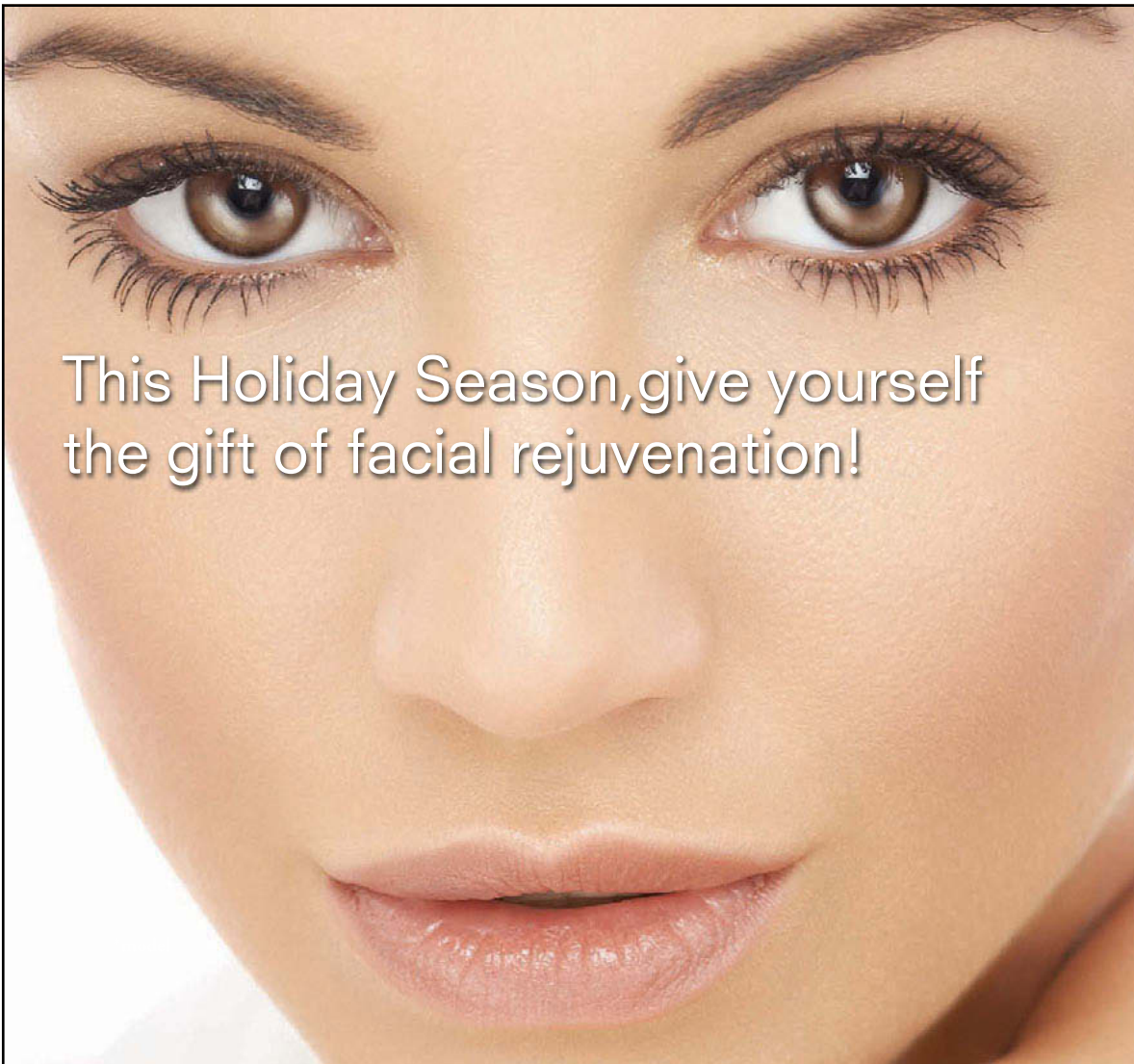
Planet Beach is our lifestyle," Stansbury said. "It's about looking good and feeling good. It's a lifestyle that starts from the top down and filters from our CEO down to the consumer level."

That fun atmosphere plays out in just about every part of the company's operations. The corporate staff enjoys tickets to sporting events and Jazz Fest, and there is a crawfish boil, flag football tournament and a Halloween party. Corporate employees are sometimes allowed to bring their children and pets to work and can decorate their offices according to their own style. Every year, the top franchise performers and 10 corporate employees are taken on an all-inclusive trip to a tropical location.

Franchise relations consultant Christina Blanco was attracted to that fun and casual culture but was also interested in growing with the company. When she makes two years with Planet Beach in July, she plans on tapping the company's tuition reimbursement to pursue a master's program in integrated marketing communications.

"They're a big proponent of developing their employees," Blanco said. "They really allow you to grow both professionally and personally. That was really important when I was looking for a place to work."•

— Craig Guillot



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10

St. Tammany Parish Hospital

Employees: 1,719

Average starting salary: \$27.56 per hour

Median salary: \$50,544

Benefits: health care benefits, day-care options, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals, paid maternity/paternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate to 30 days

Paid time off: 30 days

Web site: www.stph.org

ST. TAMMANY PARISH HOSPITAL prides itself as having a family atmosphere where patients and employees are treated like one of their own and to many employees, the people they work with feel like a second family.

“We have such a close-knit connection with one another,” said Loretta Farbe, guest services representative. “St. Tammany Parish Hospital is a home away from home.”

CEO Patti Elish echoes that thought.

“The feeling of family we have here is comforting,” Elish said. “People like coming to work. It’s the respect we give each other and our interactions with one another.”

Elish said employees’ motivation and interaction with patients contributes to the success of the hospital.

“Our staff are some of the most generous and caring people,” she said.

Employee recognition is also a big part at the hospital. Things such as a thank you note or an e-mail remind employees their work is appreciated.

“Every day I am reminded of our great staff. We recognize how important our staff is,” Elish said.

Management chooses ambassadors each quarter, a title given to employees who go above and beyond their job duties.

Amy Loar, a human resources specialist at the hospital who was awarded an ambassador title, said management shows they care about employees on a regular basis.

They also have annual performance indicators where if the hospital reaches their customer service, financial and growth goals, employees receive a bonus.

The benefits are another added plus for employees. They offer 83 percent to 90 percent paid health benefits, short- and long-term disability, relocation assistance, stock options, subsidized meals and free membership to their fitness center.

The hospital also offers tuition assistance to employees who wish to further their education.

“They are always encouraging us to see what is being offered,” Farbe said.

Employees also are treated throughout the year to staff events, including a holiday celebration, employee picnic



Registered nurse Michelle Seibert checks on newborn Anna LeBlanc at St. Tammany Parish Hospital's New Family Center.

and an awards banquet.

As much as management recognizes employees, the employees admire the hospital, management and their co-workers.

“We have a drive and an inner force to make the hospital the best it can possibly be,” Loar said.

Farbe said there are two definitive things that sets St. Tammany Parish Hospital apart from the rest. “It is the quality of care that we provide and the fact that we have a major commitment to the community.”

Providing care to everyone as the community continues to grow is a staple of St. Tammany Parish Hospital. With the community growing, the hospital is expanding to meet the needs of the community and that means new hires.

Farbe has some encouraging words for potential St. Tammany employees.

“We are competitive with salaries, we have good benefits and you will enjoy being part of the establishment. It’s the relationships that really make the difference.”•

— Jennifer Nall



From left: DonahueFavret Contractors Board of Directors Vice President Maura Donahue, Treasurer Debbie Bogante, President John Donahue, Chairman and CEO Jack Donahue, Vice President Aaron Bradley and Executive President Bob Favret review plans for an upcoming project.

11 DonahueFavret Contractors Inc.

Employees: 57

Average starting salary: \$47,800

Median salary: \$67,600

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Paid time off: up to 15 days per year

Web site: www.donahuefavret.com

TANYA FREEMAN DIDN'T have to choose between her job as a project manager assistant at DonahueFavret Contractors and spending time with her newborn son Kyle, now 9.

"They gave me the time off I needed with no problem," Freeman said. "They didn't fill the position, held it for me and took care of me," she said, adding that the 57-employee company even threw her a co-ed baby shower.

It's that dedication to family, employees say, that makes DonahueFavret a great place to work. The company celebrates as much as any south Louisiana family should, with events that include an annual crawfish boil, a company-

wide fishing trip, a Christmas brunch and party, a Thanksgiving potluck lunch and weekly Bible study lunches with food from CEO Jack Donahue.

Bogantes added employees are "encouraged" to take time for family, such as when a child is performing in a school play.

Patty Shore, a superintendent in construction who has been with the company for 20 years, cited the frequent festivities as one of her favorite parts of work.

"We have a crawfish boil and a fishing trip and you feel like you're not just working for an entity someplace," Shore said. "It's real people and they're involved with our company and involved in our lives."

Shore said the company's dedication to its employees and the community is what makes it stand out.

"When I had surgery, they came to the hospital and checked on me; when I got home, they called me," she said, adding that the helpfulness extends to others when the company participates in Habitat for Humanity projects, Adopt-a-Soldier programs and more.

The company offers a generous benefits package that includes health, dental and vision insurance, 401(k) plan

plus matching, life insurance, short- and long-term disability, continuing education assistance and up to 120 paid hours off per year.

The company's attitude toward its employees, Freeman said, is summed up in something Donahue told her once.

"He said, 'When your family hurts, we all hurt,'" she said. "Those words meant the world to me."

Debbie Bogantes, the company's account manager, said DonahueFavret does all it can to support her work as a CPA, including sending to her conferences, keeping her up to date on her professional certifications, licenses and coursework. She estimates the company spent \$1,000 on her last year. In 2008, the company will spend \$56,000 on employee training.

Plus, she said, the company's small scope helps it keep tabs on each employee and offer support where needed.

"They're really tuned into the needs of the employees and they have enough hands-on contact with the employees that they're really aware of what's going on," she said. "They've never let me down. ... I'm proud to work here."•

— Kelly W. Brown



Account executive Eugenie Guillot rings the bell to signify a new sale as members of the Coventry Health Care of Louisiana staff cheer behind her. Staff members pictured are, from left: communications analyst Belinda Lazaro, strategic account manager Robin Frick, provider relations team member Candice Ladner, account executive Renee Thomas, CEO George Bucher, director of sales Peter Lambous, account executive Jeffrey Darnell and human resources generalist Tivis Nuzzolillo.

12 Coventry Health Care of Louisiana

Employees: 54

Average starting salary: \$45,000

Median salary: \$70,000

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, paid maternity/paternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: three weeks

Web site: www.cvty.com

AS A PUBLICLY TRADED company, Coventry Health Care operates health plans in 17 states and has products ranging from Medicaid management services to private managed care programs.

CEO George Bucher said as a service-based company, Coventry's product is its people and the company focuses its investments and energies on its work force.

Coventry offers generous benefits including company pay of 80 percent of health care costs, a 3-percent match for 401(k) contributions, continuing education, stock options and a fitness program. Full-time salaried employees start with three

weeks paid vacation and 10 paid holidays per year.

While competitive compensation and benefits are extremely important, Bucher said Coventry also tries to reward employees on a regular basis with things like public recognition or lunch for an entire department.

"We don't want to get someone in the door and just treat them in a mediocre fashion," Bucher said. "This is a company that really values its employees and we're always looking for things that we can do locally and nationally to retain the best talent we can attract."

Bucher came up through the ranks of the company and believes it is his job to inspire others and create an appreciative and supportive atmosphere. He said the company celebrates sales because if other departments don't do their jobs, they can't sell products and services. Bucher also tries to involve staff when it comes to changes in processes or procedures.

"We engage the staff in the process when we can. Whenever it is a workflow issue, we go to the people in the trenches and make sure we get their input. In most aspects of our business, they have a voice in how the plan runs," Bucher said.

On a local level Bucher describes Coventry as having a relaxed, family atmosphere filled with teambuilding activities.

Senior health care consultant Holly Hand, who has been with the company for five years, agrees but said she was especially interested in the company's flexible hours. As a mother of two young children, that policy allowed her to excel in her career while having the ability to spend more time with her children. While she's happy with compensation, flex time is something she can't put a price on.

"They've been very open in realizing that my job can be done from anywhere and they've been very accommodating in me working from home. It's about being able to have that balance (between work and home life)," Hand said.

Strategic account manager Robin Frick has only been with the company for a couple of weeks but was attracted to Coventry for its product line and ability to handle just about everything in-house.

Frick was an insurance broker and consultant for eight years before joining the firm and now services and manages groups of 150 subscribers.

"It's really relaxed and everyone just does their job," Frick said. "Although we have different purposes in health services, sales and marketing, we're all cohesive and together with each other all the time." •

— Craig Guillot

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photo by Frank Aymami

Karen Fitzgerald Boudreaux, organization development specialist, and incoming President and CEO Dr. Thomas Grimstad walk the halls of the Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.

13 Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.

Employees: 125

Average starting salary: \$40,000

Median salary: \$69,262

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, paid maternity and paternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 45 days

Paid time off: two weeks after the first year

Web site: www.lammico.com

THE LOUISIANA MEDICAL Mutual Insurance Company provides professional liability insurance and health insurance for people in the medical industry, including physicians, nurses and other employees of hospitals and those in the medical field.

Susan Merrell, a senior field representative in LAMMICO's claims department, is a licensed adjuster who meets with physicians when they have a medical malpractice claim to defend.

As a mother with three teenagers, Merrell appreciates that the company closes at 1 p.m. on Friday.

"I have flexible working hours, so I can work whenever I

need to, as long as I get the job done," Merrell said. "The greatest thing here is that people are like family. We work hard and play hard. The company makes allowances for your needs."

LAMMICO has family-oriented events throughout the year for their employees, including picnics at Audubon Park, visits to Rock 'N' Bowl, Halloween costume contests, employee appreciation dinners and the company Christmas party, where Merrell recalls one of the doctors "doing the gator" on the dance floor.

LAMMICO also provides 100 percent health coverage for their employees and 76 percent coverage for dependents.

David Lassalle, a senior accountant in the finance department, said the benefits are the best he's seen after 32 years in the work force.

"In addition to my base salary, I can add \$20,000 on top of that for benefits," Lassalle said. "They will pay the fees to continue my certification as a CPA. They also match donations that you make to your church and will match up to 3 percent in the 401(k) plan."

Lassalle said there is a profit sharing plan and a generous pension plan.

LAMMICO is not a public company, and the 5,000 physicians insured by LAMMICO own a share of the com-

pany as well as being policy owners.

Jill Shane, vice president of administrative services, said that's good for the community and the patients.

"We provide a stable presence in the state," Shane said. "Other companies will leave the state if they are not making money. We are a mutual company owned by the physicians."

"Everyone here feels good about what we do. The employees serve the physicians. We hire the most qualified people, retain them and train them. We want them to be knowledgeable about the professional liability field."

LAMMICO covers physicians statewide, Shane said.

"After Katrina, if a doctor was in the affected area, we suspended the policy, and the doctor was not charged if they could not see patients. Then, as they were able to start seeing patients, we would charge them according to the amount of patients they could see."

"The culture of our company is one of dignity and respect," Shane said. "Many employees who lost their homes (during Katrina) received counseling. We wanted to make sure that they could work on their homes and get their lives back together. These people have knowledge about the industry, and it is good to keep them."•

— Lisa Bacques

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Broadpoint

Employees: 180

Average starting salary: \$45,000

Median salary: \$60,000

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, paid maternity leave, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: first of month following start date

Paid time off: six days

Web site: www.broadpointinc.com

AT BROADPOINT, EVERYONE is part of a team where management and employees work as a whole to create an effective working environment.

"The work environment is very positive and team oriented. We work well together to achieve the bigger goals of the company's long-term vision for success," said Jessica Pierce, accounting manager.

Lori Prevost, customer care manager, said there are many good things about the company and it's hard to pinpoint just one.

Prevost said the people who make up Broadpoint, the benefits, the products and services they offer, and the relaxed atmosphere are all reasons why it is the best place to work.

"The company strives to do what's best for employees," Prevost said.

Employees appreciate management's open-door policy and there is a lot of communication between the staff and management.

"Management allows employees to voice their ideas and their concerns," Prevost said.

"Management is very involved and always available to talk to," adds Pierce.

Another thing employees find appealing is the fact that they are not micromanaged.

"Employees are empowered to run their areas," said President and CEO Kenneth Wright.

Broadpoint also offers in-house and off-site training programs to all employees throughout the year to keep everyone up to date on new computer programs. Management expresses their gratitude toward employees on a regular basis and employee recognition is witnessed throughout the year.

"Management acknowledges employees at anytime," Prevost said, by sending "thank you" e-mails and rewarding employees with \$50 gift certificates for going above and beyond for their work.

They also promote from within and consider employees' personal goals.

The company pays 100 percent of all health care benefits for all full-time employees, in addition to paid holidays, vaca-



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Stabilize Systems Engineer Mario Cantu works on one of the antennas at Broadpoint Communications in Harahan.

tion time and sick days. They also offer short- and long-term disability and life insurance. Some employees are given company cell phones, which the company also pays for.

"The generous benefit package not only saves employees money on premiums in a premium rising environment, it says a lot about the way management feels in regards to their employees as well as what Broadpoint values as a whole," Pierce said.

Employees are treated to office and family events such as picnics, crawfish boils, bowling, barbecues, department

lunches and a Christmas party.

Even in the dark days after Katrina, Broadpoint provided a light for employees. Unlike some businesses, Broadpoint had an emergency response plan in place.

"The company was prepared and they did not miss a beat," Prevost said.

Employees were still paid on time and the company found hotel rooms for employees who needed it and provided housing when staff members returned. •

— Jennifer Nall



From left: Audit director Christina Chifici, director Frank Carbon and supervisor Karen Monteverde work at a table while staff members Tani Vo (background from left), Tommy LeBoeuf and Mickey Simon look over paperwork at LaPorte Sehrt Romig Hand.

15 LaPorte Sehrt Romig Hand

Employees: 120

Average starting salary: \$42,000, base with overtime pay about \$44,500

Median salary: \$65,000

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: 40-80 hours

Web site: www.laporte.com

WHILE MANY EMPLOYERS accommodate employees in the case of illness or injury, the bosses at Laporte Sehrt Romig Hand are just as accommodating and attentive if an employee's family member needs help.

One year ago, the mother of Kim Clement, a tax supervisor at LaPorte, was seriously injured in a car accident. Not only was Clement encouraged to take off as much time as needed, but the firm also organized blood drives to help Clement's mother.

Just more than a month ago, Amy Blakesley, a staff auditor,

asked for time away from the office to spend time with her sister, who had just given birth. Blakesley's supervisors allowed her to take the time off and work from home when she was able.

Every employee at LaPorte could give such an example.

"We're treated like professionals," said Debbie Brockley, a vice president at Laporte. "The bosses understand that work is not the only thing we have going on in our lives. Soccer games go on and kids get sick, even in the busy seasons."

As long as employees get their work done, it doesn't matter which stretch of time they spend at the office.

While accounting requires a lot of work during certain times of the year, the people at LaPorte try to make the long hours easier.

Employees get paid overtime during the busy seasons. "It's a huge bonus to get paid overtime in this industry," said Wendy Barnes, an audit supervisor.

In addition to the bonuses, employees are treated to ice cream sundaes on "Sundae Mondays," pizza on Wednesdays and frozen coffee on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"They try to make it as painless as possible during the busy season," Brockley said.

LaPorte keeps things fun throughout the year, too. Once

a year, the firm gets together for a flag football game. There is also a Zephyrs night where the company rents out a pavilion at Zephyr Field for employees and their families. After tax season, there's a seafood party with boiled crawfish and shrimp and at Christmas, there's a party at the Foundry.

Aside from flexible hours and benefits given to employees inside and outside the office, employees say the firm's partners and supervisors appreciate the efforts of everyone on staff and listen to ideas.

"You feel like you can talk to anybody. Nobody's off limits because of title," Barnes said. And when the firm meets business goals for the year, everyone on staff gets a bonus.

"Everyone can call someone a team member, but it means something more to treat someone like a team member," Brockley said.

And even when employees leave the firm, they are treated with respect.

In 2006, Barnes left LaPorte for another job. After a short time, she realized she didn't like her new workplace. When she went back to LaPorte and inquired about getting her job back, she was welcomed with open arms. •

— Fritz Esker



Amy Bevins, left, and Darlene Phipps, administrative assistants at Postlethwaite & Netterville, decorate the company Christmas tree.

16 Postlethwaite & Netterville

Employees: 56

Average starting salary: \$43,500 for staff

Median salary: \$53,500 for staff

Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, telecommuting, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: 28 days plus

Web site: www.pncpa.com

WITH A NEARLY 60-person staff in its Metairie office, Postlethwaite & Netterville offers employees the opportunity to work at the largest accounting and business advisory firm in Louisiana while still providing a close-knit and nurturing environment.

"We really do have more of a family environment here, which I think is one of the firm's greatest assets," said Brandy Smith, a senior auditor with Postlethwaite & Netterville. "Everyone is friendly and supportive, which is really important in a business where there is a lot of stress."

Smith has been with the firm for four years and specializes in government and hospital audits.

"They have managed to grow steadily while not losing the kind of closeness you more typically see in a smaller firm," she said.

An example of the firm's employee-friendly practices is the incentive program for staff members that provides in-house training in certified public accounting. The firm also reimburses staff members for fees required for a licensing exam and gives salary increases to employees who successfully complete those exams.

"There is a real sense here that the company is interested in your welfare, not just as an employee but as a person," said Heather McLellan, a senior tax accountant with Postlethwaite & Netterville. "They have sponsored retreats for us that emphasize how to manage stress and balance our work life with our personal life. Things like that, I think, show they care about us as individuals."

Offering a wide array of services that include information systems and management consulting, personal financial planning, compliance and regulatory services, and data security, Postlethwaite & Netterville's clientele includes individuals, nonprofits, private businesses and government entities.

The company's main office is in Baton Rouge, where the

entire Metairie staff relocated for a brief period after Hurricane Katrina.

The upheaval the storm caused had side effects for clients' taxes as well.

"People who were doing their own taxes up to that point really just got overwhelmed," McLellan said.

The end result for Postlethwaite & Netterville tax accountants has been a busy season that is no longer confined to just the typically frantic months leading up to April 15 but has instead become a year-around thing.

"The busy season now is every season," McLellan said.

With salaries starting at \$43,000 and averaging at \$53,000, Postlethwaite & Netterville offers a variety of health benefits that include dental and prescription coverage and a 401(k). The firm also contributes monthly to a health savings plan and has increased benefits in recent months.

"When you add everything up, you end up with a real sense that this company does everything it can to help its employees," said McLellan, who started with the firm in 2004. "And to me, that is the thing I like the most about working here."•

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami

Registered nurses Tere Crouchet, left, and Kerry Anderson prepare an IV for a patient in the Transplant Stepdown Center at Ochsner Health System's main campus in Jefferson.

17 Ochsner Health System

Employees: 9,320

Average starting salary: \$24,000, excluding physicians

Median salary: \$46,000, excluding physicians

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried partner benefits, paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: 18 to 28 days

Web site: www.ochsner.org

AS A TRANSPLANT coordinator who deals with the hectic and unpredictable world of obtaining organs from all over the country for patients — and physicians — who need them at a given moment, Dan Smith knows all about pressure.

And for that reason, his job at Ochsner Health System is stressful and challenging.

"It could be a heart, liver, lung, kidney or pancreas, whatever the case," Smith said. "We take all of the information in, report to the doctors and if it's an organ we are interested in, we coordinate the recovery of it, have it

shipped to us or sometimes go after it ourselves."

In a precise but little-known niche of the health care world, Smith said fatigue and exhaustion are common. But since he went to work for Ochsner in 2001, Smith has been aided by a flexible schedule that allows him to work one week on, one week off, and a management policy that emphasizes accessibility.

"There really is an open-door policy here, in terms of any of us being able to go to anyone in the management team if we have a problem," he said. "And knowing that management is there for you and supportive, really makes a difference in this kind of field."

With more than 9,300 employees, Ochsner is one of the largest employers in the metropolitan area, offering 70 percent health care coverage for employees who have been on the job for a month that includes prescription, vision and dental coverage and with benefits for same-sex partners. Salaries start at \$24,000, with the average median salary pegged at \$46,000.

The system also offers its employees up to 28 days of vacation and sick time.

For Registered Nurse Kathy Singleton, those benefits became particularly important in the months after Hurricane Katrina.

"My family was dislocated by the storm, our house destroyed, and there were people in our family who were sick," said Singleton, who has been with Ochsner since 1995. "But I was able to use my health plan for members of my family, which considering what was going on right around then, was no small thing."

Management at Ochsner also was willing to work out a flexible work schedule for Singleton, who works in the hematology and medical oncology sections and in 2006 won a Spirit of Caring All Star award for her work.

"I felt that they were there for me when I needed them, which is one of the reasons why I feel so loyal to them in return," Singleton said.

Smith pointed to Ochsner's openness as a key factor to employee satisfaction.

"Whenever you start a new job, you naturally have reservations," he said. "But when I came here I joined with a group of physicians who care about what they are doing, are very professional in how they perform, and love to teach. It's an incredibly stimulating environment that inspires you to do your own job better, on an ongoing basis."•

— Garry Boulard



Physical therapist Karan Mangono works on Kira Kuebler in East Jefferson General Hospital's Patient Rehabilitation Therapy Center.

18 East Jefferson General Hospital

Employees: 3,500

Average starting salary: \$7.59 to \$57.18 per hour depending on position

Median salary: would not disclose

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition, fitness program, subsidized meals, paid maternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: 17-26 days

Web site: www.ejgh.org

THE WORD "EMPLOYEE" is getting eased out of the lexicon at East Jefferson General Hospital in Metairie.

"We are called 'team members' because each one of us has a contribution to make, and we listen to each other," said Debbie Schmitz, a nurse in the Breast Care Center who has worked at EJGH for seven years.

Senior financial analyst Scot Treitler also touted the cooperative spirit of the workplace.

"There's a sense of teamwork and camaraderie here at the facility that comes in very handy when I need to go outside of my realm for information or for assistance," said Treitler, whose

job involves preparing the hospital budget, analyzing business deals and helping other departments understand the hospital's financial operations. "People are always willing to take time out to kind of walk you through their perspective on things."

Treitler hears plenty of points of view as co-chairman of East Jefferson's Create Our Culture Committee, which works on projects such as retention programs, conducting and responding to employee surveys, and organizing the hospital's annual career fair. The committee is one of four groups that form the hospital's Shared Governance program, designed to involve rank-and-file staff members in making policy decisions.

Besides Treitler's committee dealing with workplace culture, there are groups focusing on quality management, policy review and patient education.

Although Executive Vice President Ben Frank has only been at East Jefferson since July, he said team members' dedication and enthusiasm has already made an impression on him.

"Our employees have that extra spring in their step," said Frank, who oversees hospital operations, finance, business development and the chief medical officer. He reports directly to EJGH CEO Dr. Mark Peters.

One feature that seems to pump people up, Frank said, is the hospital's employee recognition program, which spotlights everyone from physicians to volunteers. Treitler agreed,

adding that his management studies at the University of New Orleans have taught him rewards and recognition are often bigger motivators than money in the workplace.

With his master's in business administration degree being paid for through the hospital's tuition reimbursement program, Treitler also points to support for continuing education as a welcome perk at East Jefferson.

"I've been encouraged and supported by the immediate managers within my division to expand my knowledge base and grow," said Treitler, who expects to graduate this month.

The hospital offers a tuition reimbursement program for nurses called the LPN to RN Bridge, for those looking to advance from licensed practical nurse to registered nurse, Schmitz said.

Internal education and training programs are also a priority at East Jefferson. For example, each nurse in the Breast Care Center completed up to two weeks of in-service training before the center opened in 2002, Schmitz said.

For Schmitz, the most telling thing about the working environment at East Jefferson is that once people join the "team," they tend to stay.

"The turnover at EJ is very low, which says a lot about what the facility has to offer and how we are treated," she said. •

— Sonya Stinson



Licensed radiologic technologist Julie Bourgeois reviews results from the 64-slice scanner.

19 West Jefferson Medical Center

Employees: 1,913

Average starting salary: \$41,600

Median salary: \$51,100

Benefits: health care benefits, day-care options, paid maternity/paternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition, fitness program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 30 days for core benefits

Paid time off: 23-31 days

Web site: www.wjmc.org

THE THING THAT immediately strikes people new to West Jefferson Medical Center is the family atmosphere.

"I have worked in many organizations and I've never worked in one with so many friendly, caring employees," said Maureen Morris, senior director of human resources at West Jeff and two-year employee.

"We're like sorority sisters," said Pam Helmstetter, a perinatal educator and outreach liaison at West Jeff, who said the average level of experience is 20 years in the hospital's labor and delivery unit. Aside from social activities such as bridal

and baby showers, employees pitch in whenever a co-worker is in need.

While there were numerous cases of assistance provided after Hurricane Katrina, the hospital helps employees whenever disaster befalls any of them.

The atmosphere influences the way West Jeff employees go about their jobs.

"You don't have to worry about assigning people tasks, they just get in and do it," said Jo Ann Toval, clinical informatics manager at West Jeff. The positive atmosphere also influences employees' interactions with the patients.

"When people (employees) see somebody looking lost, they ask 'May I help you?'"

West Jeff encourages its employees to give back to the community. Helmstetter goes to high schools to give prenatal education to pregnant teenagers and to teach the Heimlich Maneuver to teachers. She goes to grammar schools to teach children how to dial 911 and communicate with the dispatcher.

"Some places frown on you doing that," Helmstetter said. "But our hospital is committed to us being out there in the community."

In addition to this, West Jeff executives are eager to hear

feedback and ideas from their employees. Once a week, executives sit down with each department in an informal setting to discuss problems, as well as suggestions or goals for the future.

One of the biggest perks West Jeff offers its employees is its on-site child-care center, which is a relief for the many working parents on staff. The ability to have free day care for her then 3-month-old son was what attracted Helmstetter to West Jeff when she graduated from Charity Nursing School.

This isn't a new perk for West Jeff employees, either. Chief Community Relations Officer Jennifer Steel's two children, now ages 28 and 30, went to West Jeff's child-care center.

West Jeff also offers a tuition assistance program for college-level courses for staff members, and for new nurses, the hospital has an RN loan reimbursement program that assists registered nurses in paying off student loans.

While West Jeff promotes health in the community, they also promote a healthy lifestyle for their employees as well. The hospital has its own fitness center, which employees must pay to work out in for the first six months. After the first months, however, if the employee works out there at least nine times a month, access to the fitness center is free.

Toval goes five days a week. "It's a great incentive."•

— Fritz Esker



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On the Westbank

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– Bertha Irons, member since 2001



John Wenger

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– John Wenger, member since 2005



Joan Ferrara

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– Joan Ferrara, member since 2006

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photo by Frank Aymami

From left: Peoples Health sales and marketing team members Rick Redmann, LaToya Jones, Toni Hawkins and Tiffany Tandecki review ad ideas.

20 Peoples Health

Employees: 500

Average starting salary: \$43,000

Median salary: \$54,000

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried partner benefits, paid maternity/paternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days for medical benefits, 90 days for 401(k)

Paid time off: two to four weeks

Web site: www.peopleshealth.com

THE FEELINGS ARE mutual between employees and management at Peoples Health. Employees recognize management as the cornerstone of the organization and management returns the favor, saying employees are the heart of the company.

"The tone of the company starts at the top," said Janet Baker, executive assistant. CEO Carol Solomon and upper management are one of the factors that make Peoples Health one of the best places to work, Baker said.

Beth Riera, executive assistant, shares that feeling.

"Management cares about the employees' welfare and I value that; it is a good thing to have in a company," said five-year veteran Riera, who said she noticed the management's interest in their employees from the very beginning.

Solomon said Peoples Health has created a working environment where employees are valued.

"We remember that it takes a great staff to make a successful company," she said.

An e-mail saying "thank you for your hard work," movie tickets, pizza parties and service awards are given to employees as reminders of all the good they do.

"We recognize people on a daily basis," Solomon said.

With 500 employees, interaction between management and staff creates a family atmosphere. Solomon, who has served as CEO for nine years, still interviews every job applicant.

"I want to know every employee on a first-name basis," she said.

As Peoples Health grows, new positions within the company arise.

"Peoples Health is a place where you can be promoted and they believe in promoting from within first," Riera said.

Employees remember the way the company stood up and

took initiative to help after Hurricane Katrina by securing Federal Emergency Management Agency trailers and continuing to compensate employees, Solomon said.

"We worked hard to bring people back after Katrina," she said.

Employees say they consider the benefits package above average. The company covers 85 percent of health care benefits and offers tuition and relocation assistance and paid parking. They offer paid sick leave, two to four weeks of paid vacation time, company-paid life insurance and long-term disability insurance.

Other perks include fitness club memberships, Weight Watchers "At Work" meetings and subsidized meals, in addition to tickets to New Orleans Saints, New Orleans Hornets and Louisiana State University games. Employees also receive annual bonuses as well as a Christmas bonus.

The company sponsors out-of-office and in-office events throughout the year, including crawfish boils, an annual company picnic, a Halloween costume contest, a Thanksgiving feast and a Christmas party.

"The little things like that make it a fun place," Baker said. •

— Jennifer Nall



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Physical therapist Leslie Parry, left, and occupational therapist Alecia Oden help Skip Lloyd, who had hip replacement surgery the day before, walk the halls of the Ambulatory Surgery Center.

21 Touro Infirmiry

Employees: 1,925

Average starting salary: \$51,584

Median salary: \$47,840

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, fitness program, subsidized meals, paid maternity leave, 403(b)

Wait time for benefits: between 30 and 90 days

Paid time off: 165 hours per year

Web site: www.touro.com

WHEN DR. SHERLY SMITH, an anesthesiologist and medical director of Touro Infirmiry's Ambulatory Surgery Center, lost her mother, she chose to return to work instead of staying home for a few days.

"My family wanted to know why," Smith said. "I said, 'I'm embraced there.' My friends and colleagues at Touro are a source of comfort. They showed up at the funeral, they cooked for me, they rally around during the tough times."

Smith pointed to Touro's leadership for creating that type of environment.

"They are very involved and sincere about patient care," Smith said. "They want to know what we can do to make the (hospital) experience better. Once that is truly your focus, everything else will fall into place."

Frank Folino has a lot of responsibility as vice president of diagnostic and ancillary services. His division, consisting of 20 departments and 300 employees, includes the radiology department, the pharmacy, the outpatient ambulatory surgery center, disaster preparation, the dietary department and materials management.

"What makes this a great place is that we have a mission," Folino said. "We are here to serve our patients and employees."

"We try to make it as much fun for our employees as possible," Folino said. "We face life and death every day, and we try to create a culture where the employees feel that what they do matters. They have a stake in our success."

Nurse recruiters Shellie Shockey and Deborah Alexander share their job, but they never work at the same time, figuring out schedules together so when one needs time off, the other can fill in.

"We were fortunate that we have a boss who is open and

receptive to it and understands what we do. We bring more to the table than two separate people. The sum of the parts is greater than the whole," Shockey said.

"We have a good benefits package," she said. "Whether we are part-time or full-time, we get the same health insurance."

Alexander cited the in-house pharmacy as another perk, adding the cost is usually below what she's paid elsewhere.

"There is also a health and fitness center here with a discounted fee for employees," Alexander said. "I call it my daytime marriage. We brainstorm together, and we are compatible. There's no competition. All that matters is that the final product works."

Like Siamese twins, Alexander and Shockey have their job evaluations done as a unit.

"We have business cards with both of our names," Shockey said. "There is a seamless process when people are applying. We are the first person they meet, and we instill in them Touro's core values: a welcoming spirit, respect, integrity, professionalism, teamwork, and good stewardship, meaning using your resources wisely."•

— Lisa Bacques

22

Walton Construction Company

Employees: 300

Average starting salary: \$52,171

Median salary: \$53,599

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: six weeks

Paid time off: three weeks, including sick time

Web site: www.waltonbuilt.com

STAFF MEMBERS AT Walton-New Orleans point to a single book as one of the reasons why they are happy working for the general contractor — “Good To Great,” which explores the ways a company can excel at what it does by being supportive of its own employees and encouraging their best work.

“The idea really is to create the sort of supportive environment where people actually end up enjoying coming into work on a Monday morning,” said William “Bill” Petty, the president of Walton Construction, which has a staff of about 300 people.

“Construction can be a litigious and difficult business,” he said. “And we do our best to avoid problems by communicating frequently and asking everyone here to just enjoy what they are doing.”

That enjoyment level is also enhanced by the company’s benefits, which include two weeks of vacation time per year, a 401(k) plan, a progressive health plan that includes life, dental, vision and disability coverage, and tuition reimbursement for a wide variety of training programs.

The supportive environment Petty encourages daily, said Rebecca Schermerhorn, could not be better suited for a company that has quickly emerged as one of the major builders in the region.

“This is obviously a very stressful industry to be in,” said Schermerhorn, an executive administrative assistant at Walton. “You are very often getting pulled in a variety of directions with people asking you all kinds of different things all at the same time.”

Such stress is greatly reduced at Walton, Schermerhorn said, “because there is a very real feeling that we are all pulling together here, and that whenever any kind of problem comes up, it is discussed openly before a molehill becomes a mountain.”

Walton employees also laud the company’s policy of



Walton Construction employees Jeff Mobley, left, and Jack Snyder review roof details at a Jackson Barracks project.

encouraging advancement not only through a series of internal training programs but from the company’s ongoing participation in the Superintendent’s Academy at Clemson University.

“We put a lot of time and money into training,” Petty said. “Continuing education is very important to us. It’s not just something that we picked up from out of a handbook but instead is a real concept that we work with every day.”

Employees were particularly aware of Walton’s policies

during Hurricane Katrina, when the company was back at work just days after the storm and no one missed a paycheck. Even employees who did not immediately return to the New Orleans area — Schermerhorn briefly relocated to Seattle — were welcomed back at their convenience.

“As soon as I knew I could return, they told me my job was waiting for me,” Schermerhorn said. “And to me, that was just one more sign of what a positive place this is to work at.”

— Garry Boulard



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23 Tulane Medical Center

Employees: 1,850

Average starting wage: \$19.80 per hour

Median wage: \$27.50 per hour

Benefits: health care benefits, day care options, continuing education, relocation assistance, paid maternity leave, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 60 days

Paid time off: 23 days, including holidays

Web site: www.tuhc.com

TO AN OUTSIDER, Tulane Medical Center may seem like a large corporation, with its 1,850 employees and two large hospital campuses on opposite sides of the city. But employees will tell you a completely different story.

"The department that I work in really feels like a family," said 20-year veteran Cheryl Thibodeaux, who works in information systems. "We have all worked together longer than five years. We all know each other, and it makes for a good atmosphere to work in."

Registered nurse Marya Hebert agrees.

"They will take care of you when you are not working and stand behind you 100 percent," said Hebert, who's been with Tulane 13 years, adding that the attitude of management and staff hasn't changed since she started.

Clinical supervisor Christie Bozelle said management often makes changes based on employee feedback. Bozelle, who has been with Tulane since 1995, is part of an advisory committee that oversees suggestions and makes changes accordingly.

Clinical manager Ron Childress agrees with Hebert and Bozelle, adding that administrative care is key to keeping employees happy. He said management is always willing to try new ideas to make things better for all workers.

"They want us to give the best possible care to our patients, so they give the best possible care to us," said Childress, who has been with Tulane for more than four years.

Childress said the hospital excels at putting people where they need to be in the organization. He said that because of the hospital's size, Tulane nurses are offered a wide range of areas to work. Administration does a good job of "career mapping" for employees so that they go where they want to go.

"If a nurse wants to go into the emergency room or do case management, the hospital will put people in those areas," Childress said. "If it is not right, they will let them go back to a different position. It really keeps people from leaving, which is important now more than ever."



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Registered Nurse Torrie Maliskas hands Chirstine McKay her newborn baby girl, Lily Marie, at Tulane-Lakeside Hospital.

Tulane's continuing education program is also a perk, Bozelle said.

"Tulane Medical is an academic institution," she said. "We get the hardest cases, and you really learn something new everyday."

Bozelle said the hospital provides free continuing education.

Thibodeaux also said Tulane provides educational grants of up to \$1,200 if employees want to seek outside education while working.

Along with continuing education reimbursement, Tulane also pays for 70 percent of health care benefits with six

months paid leave of absence. There is a prescription drug plan, along with dental and vision plans. Tulane provides day-care options, offers flexible hours, subsidized meals and an employee recognition program.

Hebert said the benefits are nice, but she sees them as lagniappe.

"I really think I would work for Tulane for free if they needed me to," Hebert said. "If they needed volunteers, I would be the first one. They supported me when I needed them, so I would support them."•

— Robin Shannon

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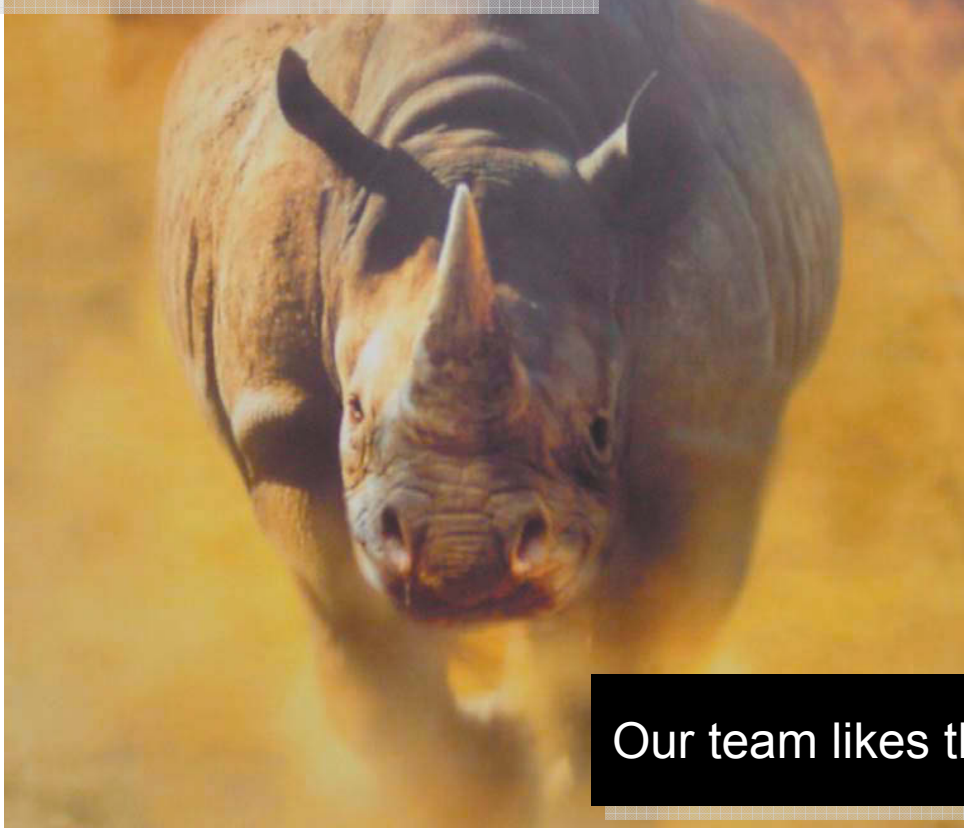
The clinical excellence spans all specialties. The technologies and methodologies reflect the most advanced resources that medicine has to offer. The environment is one that attracts top professionals from across the country and around the world. Simply put, there is more opportunity to learn, to excel, and to make a difference here.

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24 Hilton New Orleans Riverside

Employees: 850

Average starting salary: \$36,000

Median salary: \$50,000

Benefits: health-care benefits, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, telecommuting, flexible hours, employee recognition program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Paid time off: 18 days, including holidays

Web site: www.neworleans.hilton.com

WITH ALMOST 1,000 employees, the Hilton New Orleans Riverside is one of the city's largest employers, and while the company offers spectacular benefits and offers room for advancement throughout its 2,800 properties worldwide, local employees say it's the local management and work culture that makes a difference.

Human resources director Laurie Watt said the company performs an annual employee satisfaction survey — the company got a 92 percent approval rating this year.

Along with medical benefits, paid time off, tuition reimbursement and a 401(k), the Hilton offers a number of other small perks that make working there enjoyable, including a discount hotel program for traveling team members, free parking around the clock and a cafeteria that provides free meals for workers on the clock.

One of the Hilton's biggest draws is its commitment to promoting from within. In one example, Watt points to a cocktail waitress who worked her way up to bartender, then used the tuition reimbursement program to earn a degree in communications from Loyola University. She now works in the Hilton New Orleans Airport's human resources department after rising through the company while raising six children.

"There is a lot of flexibility in work scheduling and we really work with team members to reach their goals," Watt said. "There is a lot of opportunity for advancement here."

Eddie Witchen, director of housekeeping, joined the Hilton 23 years ago as a security officer and worked his way through various positions and departments before moving into the administrative level. Witchen runs orientation programs for new hires and regularly refers to a philosophy he calls MAGIC — Make A Greater Individual Commitment.

He said employees with a commitment to hard work and



photo by Frank Aymami

Server Carolyn Mayo delivers lunch at Kabby's Sports Bar in the Hilton New Orleans Riverside.

the right attitude can quickly move up the ladder at the Hilton.

"I tell new hires all the time that if they come and work hard here, there is just so much room for advancement," Witchen said. "I look back at how far I've come and know that you can really move up in places."

Executive-level bartender James Smith, who joined the Hilton in February in search of a professional atmosphere, benefits and room for advancement, has seen new employees with the right attitudes quickly move into new positions. He was also attracted to the congenial, family-style atmosphere at the hotel.

While the Hilton is a large employer, Watt said the relaxed, friendly atmosphere trickles down from top management that is easy to approach and sets a tone for the property. From the executive level management to new hires in hourly positions, the staff points to general manager Fred Sawyers as a hands-on, visible leader that takes the time to know and hear the concerns of any one of the hotel's 850 workers.

"It's really the people and team members that are here," Witchen said. "We've got a lot of long-term employees and it has become a close family. You grow up with people here."•

— Craig Guillot



From left: Durr Heavy Construction general superintendent Johnny Yoder, cement finisher Henry Franklin and President Freddy Yoder review plans at the Rivergarden development.

25 Durr Heavy Construction

Employees: 107

Average starting salary: \$37,828

Median salary: \$46,110

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, flexible hours, prescription, dental, vision, telecommuting, fitness program, subsidized meals, profit sharing, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: one week after one year of employment for executives and administrative; one week after two years for field employees

Web site: www.durrhc.com

AS NEW ORLEANIANS found out last football season, sports can bring a lot of people together. At Durr Heavy Construction, Louisiana State University football is a big event.

"A lot of us are from LSU's construction management program," said Nathan Landry, a project manager for Durr Heavy Construction.

Owner Steve Stumpf is a huge LSU football fan who holds a tailgating party for LSU games his RV, which Landry describes as "more of a luxury coach." The RV features a plasma-screen TV, catered food, T-shirts and

hats Stumpf makes for specific games.

"It's something we really appreciate," Landry said.

Saints games also get their due with Saints Fridays, where employees get to wear jerseys and paraphernalia to work during football season. The office also has tailgate parties on Fridays with burgers and hot dogs.

Thanksgiving and Christmas lunches are held a week before the respective holidays to allow Durr employees to enjoy the leftovers. At Thanksgiving, "every employee eats Thanksgiving type food for two weeks," said Jason Manson, vice president.

For Halloween, the office has a costume party contest with prizes for the winners.

Other benefits are top notch as well. A Fuel Man card pays for all work-related gas expenses.

"That gas allowance is pretty big at the end of the year," said Landry, who spends a lot of time traveling to different construction sites. Employees also receive a vehicle allowance that assists them in paying their car notes.

Patricia Champagne points to the friendly and family-oriented atmosphere.

"We say 'Good morning,' 'How are you?' 'How are the kids?' and mean it," said Champagne, a controller, adding that

she views owners Steve and Donna Stumpf as mother and father figures to the whole office.

Champagne also recalled when people from Canada came to the offices to train Durr employees on a new computer system.

"They said (upon leaving), 'Thank you for letting us be a part of your family,'" Champagne said. "That's always the way I had perceived the company, but I'd never said it out loud."

Champagne also said the kinship at work extends to employees' families as well, recalling when the office attended her mother-in-law's funeral.

Durr employees are given the freedom and autonomy to work and grow professionally on their own.

"There's not a thumb on you at all times," Manson said.

When Landry began work as a fresh college graduate, he received a brief training period and was given a lot of responsibility.

"It was pretty impressive to have that responsibility straight out of college," Landry said.

The best testament to Durr's work environment and family atmosphere is given by Champagne, who had difficulty condensing her praise for her workplace and her co-workers.

"I could go on forever," Champagne said. •

— Fritz Esker



Certified National Center for Construction Education and Research instructors James Bridges (middle left) and Dale Giroir (middle right) guide sophomores Ricky Tolover, 16, left, and Jacob Matherne, 16, during the industrial technology class at John Ehret High School.

26 John Ehret High School

Employees: 160

Average starting salary: \$41,000

Median salary: \$51,000

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, fitness program, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: 10 sick days

Web site: <http://ehret.jpss.k12.la.us>

AT JOHN EHRET HIGH SCHOOL, employees say it's not only the faculty and staff, but the students who make it one of the best places to work.

The administration, faculty and staff have the students' needs at heart and live by their motto "providing opportunities for everyone."

Nathan Winesberry, an economics and world history teacher, has been at John Ehret for 23 years. He points to the energetic school environment as one of the reasons that his job is exciting. "The work environment is constantly changing and challenging. There is always something new."

Theresa Maquar, a science teacher who has been at John Ehret for 34 years, seconds the notion.

"There are so many things going on and there is never a dull moment," she said.

The faculty remembers the hard times following Hurricane Katrina. John Ehret accommodated students from other areas, and the faculty continued to inspire students in such a dire time.

"The faculty was strong enough to endure all of that," Winesberry said.

Winesberry believes the 2007-08 school year is looking like one of their best. "The caring and loving spirit is back. People are caring more about each other than years past."

Maquar says even though administrators and other things have changed over the years, one thing remains consistent. "The sense of camaraderie and the sense of family among teachers, staff and administrators have remained the same."

Teachers attribute the rising success of the school to first-year principal Randi Hindman. But Hindman is no stranger to Ehret, having given 11 years of service at the school.

"She's on her 'A' game," Winesberry said. "She gives teachers a lot of feedback and positive reinforcement."

Hindman said the family atmosphere and support system

at John Ehret is witnessed on a daily basis.

"We have such positive energy here and it stems from the teachers," Hindman said.

Teachers at John Ehret volunteer for extra workshops, donate their time to extracurricular activities and sponsor clubs.

"The teachers are our silent heroes and are always doing extra things for the kids," Hindman said.

All of their hard work does not go unnoticed. The administration presents awards to teachers at the end of the school year and does little things during the year to validate their efforts. A simple "thank you" or "kudos" is said to teachers for their exceptional job with students.

Teachers appreciate the open-door policy and Hindman's willingness to go above and beyond for the school.

"Principal Hindman makes sure teachers are aware of seminars and workshops that are available," Winesberry said.

Employees participate in school-related activities as well as social gatherings. The faculty and staff are treated to after school socials, a Christmas party and an end-of-the-school-year party and breakfast. Sporting events are considered a bonding experience among faculty and students. "The events bring people together," Hindman said. •

— Jennifer Nall



From left: Principal Delores Winfield watches over students Shanora Hill, Andrew Chang and Bonku Han in Ben Franklin High School's music class.

27 Benjamin Franklin High School

Employees: 66

Average starting salary: \$37,748

Median salary: \$53,025

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: 10 sick days

Web site: www.benfranklinhighschool.org

IN THE HIGH-PRESSURED world of working in a major urban high school, a large staff turnover rate is usually a given.

Not so at Benjamin Franklin High School, which opened its doors in 1957. A significant slice of the school's staff has been on board for at least the past two decades and more than half have been with the institution for more than 10 years.

"Once people start working here, they don't want to leave," said Christy Reed, the school's director of development. "I take that as a real indication of what a positive place this is to work at."

With nearly 70 employees, including administrative personnel, teachers, counselors, librarians and social workers, Ben Franklin is a public magnet institution that became a charter school under the auspices of the University of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Staff members say restructuring the school has created a less cumbersome and bureaucratic operation where, "problems can be resolved in a fairly quick way," Reed said.

Principal Delores Winfield believes the school's historic emphasis on academic excellence — an admissions test is required for student applications — is equally important.

"That sort of emphasis affects just about everything we do here," Winfield said. "We have conversations all the time on what we are doing and how we can make things better, and the emphasis in every discussion is whether or not what we are talking about is going to benefit the children. As an educator, I cannot tell you how exciting and satisfying that is."

With an average starting salary of nearly \$38,000 and a median salary of just more than \$53,000, Ben Franklin offers

a comprehensive 80-percent health care coverage plan that includes prescription, dental and vision.

The school also has a 401(k) plan and operates on a school year schedule that works out, on average, to one full week off for every six weeks of work for most employees.

Employee satisfaction at the school only increased after Katrina when benefits were enhanced. In return, employee dedication was seen in the large number of teachers and staff members, as well as parents and alumni, who pitched in to clean the school after the storm.

"There is a real clear effort here that you see in practically everything that goes on in this school," Winfield said. "We depend on each other for all kinds of things, which really makes for a very supportive environment."

For Reed, that environment has taken on a special meaning. As a 1989 graduate, Reed always believed the school was a special place for students.

"But now I also realize it is a very special place to work at as well," Reed said. •

— Garry Boulard



From left: Benefit analyst Dawn Gary, voluntary benefit coordinator Maria Taravella, President Kevin Gardner, key account coordinator Barbara Lambert, business development director Lynne Black, benefit consultant Eddie Cabos and finance assistant Kelly Dufrene review benefits at Strategic Employee Benefits Services of Louisiana's conference room.

28 Strategic Employee Benefit Services of Louisiana

Employees: 54

Average starting salary: \$32,000

Median salary: \$50,000

Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: up to 260 hours per year

Web site: neworleans.strategiccebs.com

WHEN A BUSINESS is helping provide employee benefits for other firms, it's a must that things start at home. Strategic Employee Benefits Services President Kevin Gardner founded the company in 1991 and has 54 employees throughout the company's four offices in Metairie, Lafayette, Houma and Baton Rouge. The employee benefits and consulting brokerage offers its own employees a comprehensive benefits package along with a bonus structure program.

Gardner credits the high employee morale to an office culture they call the "collaborative way." As a list of 25 points, it is the company's way of doing business and includes things such as speaking straight with people and not beating around the

bush, treating clients with congeniality and "checking your ego at the door." Employees are constantly reminded about the method with postings around the office, two refresher courses per year where they discuss the culture and an e-mail discussion about culture items every Monday morning.

"It may sound odd at first but it really becomes contagious and works," Gardner said. "It allows an open dialogue in how we treat each other and how we treat our clients."

Business development director Lynne Black has been with the company for a year and a half and said there's a very open office environment with little hierarchy. Consultants work in teams of four, which are named after Carnival krewes such as Zulu and Krewe D'Etat. An open-door environment and easy access to top management means everyone's opinion is valued at Strategic Employee Benefit Services.

"If I have an idea, I can go directly to the president with it," Black said. "I originally came from a very corporate type of setting and while we are corporate, it's not so stuffy where you have to go through a complicated chain of command to do anything."

Benefit consultant Rachel Massel has been with the company five years, working her way up from benefit administra-

tor to her current position where she responsible for a block of clients. She enjoys the fair compensation, liberal time-off policies and opportunities to earn a year-end bonus. Massel is familiar with several other agencies with a tough competitive internal culture, but said the company has more of a family-type, friendly atmosphere.

"One of our key points is just to keep things fun and enjoy what you're doing. It's a real upbeat office and certainly a fun place to work," Massel said.

Gardner said the company offers employees the opportunity to be a part of an organization that has consistent and strong growth and reinvests in its people through education and opportunity. The company also has a strong record of promoting from within, but Gardner said the day-to-day culture is always focused on doing what is right for the client.

"I think we're fun and a good environment to work for when you're always practicing what you preach," she said. "Ultimately, at the end of the day, the ones that are successful are the ones that do what is right for the client and live by that motto."•

— Craig Guillot

29 Dickie Brennan and Co.

Employees: 327

Average starting salary: \$34,000

Median salary: \$41,000

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, fitness program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: three to six months

Paid time off: one to four weeks

Web site: www.dickiebrennansteakhouse.com,
www.bourbonhouse.com, www.palacecafe.com

LOTS OF RESTAURANTS boast of being just like home, but Dickie Brennan & Co., which owns three local eateries, prides itself in creating a family atmosphere for its employees as well as its customers.

"We want to be professional, but at the same time it's a very caring group of people that care just as much or more about what's going on in your family as your professional life," said managing partner Richard J. "Dickie" Brennan Jr. "We've worked for a long time to try to create this environment where people can trust and count on one another."

Along with partners Steve Pettus and Lauren Brennan Brower, Brennan owns and operates Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse, Palace Café and Bourbon House Seafood and Oyster Bar.

All three partners spend lots of time in the restaurants daily and make themselves available to listen to employee concerns, Brennan said. "When you set yourself up to where you're not approachable, problems don't go away, they fester," he said.

In the seven months he's been with the company, Alejandro Ventura has been impressed with the relationship between the corporate office and the restaurant workers.

"Everyone I've met in upper management in the corporate office ... is very professional, very knowledgeable and willing to teach you and help you out in any way they can," said Ventura, who is lead cook at Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse.

Michael Oden, captain and manager-in-training at Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse, has been with the company for just more than four years. Though he has worked in other restaurants where the "front of the house" and "back of the house" staffs keep their distance, Oden said things are different at Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse.



Palace Café kitchen manager Eric Offray, left, pulls an order from sous chef Dustin Wells.

"Here they try to have more of a team effort where everybody's got the same mission — to take care of the people," Oden said. "The management staff works very well with us. ... They don't mind getting a little dirty to help us do our job."

Oden also appreciates having health and dental insurance and a 401(k) plan, benefits often unavailable to workers in the restaurant industry.

Recently Dickie Brennan & Co. started two new employee assistance programs: providing financial aid in purchasing a home and another sponsoring continuing education. Brennan said the education program has given one particular employee a chance at a new start in life.

"This guy was in Angola (state prison) for six years, and he's hopefully being accepted at UNO's hospitality school," said Brennan, who added that the staff member has an interest in management. "He's certainly capable. This guy has proven himself to us and we all respect him."

For Ventura, it all boils down to one thing that makes this restaurant company stand out.

"Everyone cares about their job. I've worked in a lot of kitchens where the end product doesn't matter. Here everyone gives everything they've got. They really care about this company."•

— Sonya Stinson



photo by Frank Aymami

Ralph's on the Park line cooks Ryan Pearson, left, and Nicole Williams serve up staff dinners.

30 Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

Employees: 540

Average starting salary: \$48,474

Median salary: \$39,500

Benefits: health care benefits, day care options, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: three months

Paid time off: one day per month after seven months for first five years for full-time employees; up to four weeks after five years

Web site: www.neworleans-food.com

WITH THREE RESTAURANTS in New Orleans — Bacco, Redfish Grill and Ralph's on the Park — Ralph Brennan's Restaurant Group has spiced up its perks in an industry that typically has few benefits, low pay and long hours.

The company offers higher-than-average pay, health insurance after one year, a 401(k) with company match and paid vacation that can add up to as much as four weeks after 10 years of service. Employees also get a free gym membership to the Downtown Fitness Center at Canal Place and bonus compensation programs.

But it's a strong policy of promoting from within is what attracts and keeps many employees with the company.

Executive Vice President Charlee Williamson said all of the general managers have come from floor positions. The general managers of Bacco and Redfish Grill started as bartenders and the general manager of Ralph's on the Park started as a food runner.

"It's a major benefit," Williamson said. "If you come in and work hard and have a great attitude, you can absolutely move up to the top of our business. And because we're a larger company, there is more room to grow."

In an industry where turnover is rampant and employee longevity is a rarity, corporate chef Haley Gabel has been with the Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group for 15 years. She originally started as an intern, then went to culinary school, came back as a line cook, worked up to sous chef, then to head chef and eventually general manager at Bacco before moving into her corporate position. While she enjoys the opportunities and the benefits, she said it's the family atmosphere that keeps her with the organization.

"I adore working for Ralph. He's got a lot of passion for

the business and a lot of loyalty to the people that stay with him," Gabel said.

Line cook Chris Loudy joined Bacco six months ago searching for what he said is a more professional environment than found in other restaurants. He moved to New Orleans from Philadelphia last year to learn more about the city and its food and said flexibility in the kitchen allows him to learn about all aspects of cooking.

"It's really laid back but when it comes down to crunch time, we all get the work done," Loudy said. "It's a good place to learn some of the smaller things about the city and its cuisine."

Williamson said the company sees personal and professional growth of its employees as a core value. That includes flexibility to meet the needs of those in school and a 60-day leave of absence for those who want to go off and do something else for a period of time.

"We offer a company that is a benchmark for the rest of the industry," Williamson said. "We treat our team as we'd like to be treated ourselves. We follow the golden rule, have a lot of fun and work hard."•

— Craig Guillot



Blackjack dealer Phuong Huynh high-fives Sylvia Holmes after dealing a good hand at Harrah's Casino.

31 Harrah's New Orleans Casino and Hotel

Employees: 2,416

Average starting salary: \$24,390

Median salary: \$40,715

Benefits: health care benefits, day-care options, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals, paid maternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Paid time off: 18 days

Web site: www.harrah.com

BETWEEN ITS HOTEL and casino, Harrah's employs about 2,400 people, making it one of the biggest employers in the city. The publicly traded company offers a full array of benefits including health care, a generous 401(k), vacation time, paid maternity leave and stock options.

Vice President of Human Resources Carla Major said the company also offers some unique benefits such as a homebuyers program that offers up to \$2,500 at closing, subsidized child care and half price on Regional Transit Authority passes.

"They just have so many resources and benefits for employees it's just unbelievable," said staff trainer Lisa Hemmingway. "There's a wellness center, tuition reimbursement and classes. We can even get our dry cleaning done at work, there's an employee cafeteria and free parking."

Hemmingway has been with the company since August 2005 and describes Harrah's as an "unbelievable" place to work. While she is very happy with the benefits, she said it's the everyday concern the company has for its employees that really makes the difference.

Management has an open-door policy and people on all levels are addressed by their first names. Major said Harrah's places just as much emphasis on their employees as they do their customers.

"We have a code of commitment and that is to be engaged and take care of our customers, our community and our employees," Major said. "All three of those are at the same level."

Blackjack dealer Wendy Kane has been with the company for about a year and a half and was enticed by the high pay, good benefits and incentives. She finds working with and serving the customers the most rewarding part of her job and said it's not just a job but a joy to go to work every day.

"When I have a lot of people at my table, I just have a fun time," Kane said. "The excitement really makes your job fun, it makes the time go by quickly and you're never just sitting around waiting to get off the clock. You actually want to come to work."

Having fun while working at Harrah's isn't just allowed — it's required. Major said they promote that fun environment by embracing the local culture with things such as costume contests during Mardi Gras as well as second lines and jazz funerals. There are employee rallies, an employee talent show to benefit the United Way, garage sales, crawfish boils and a family fun day. There are even department competitions such as "Iron Chef Harrah's" for the cooks and the Fast Cash Master competition for cashiers.

Hemmingway said having fun is truly part of everyone's job description at Harrah's.

"We're entertainers and that is really part of our job — to have a good time just like our guests. It's always like a party here," Hemmingway said. "The company really takes care of their employees just as they do their guests, and that's where it really makes a difference. I just can't say enough about Harrah's."•

— Craig Guillot



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Paralegals John Baur, seated, and Sue Rao discuss a case in McGlinchey Stafford's library.

32 McGlinchey Stafford

Employees: 192 in New Orleans

Average starting salary: \$44,000 for staff

Median salary: \$48,000 for staff

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, flexible hours, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: six months

Paid time off: 16 to 26 days for staff; 15 days for associates

Web site: www.mcglinchey.com

THE WORDS "LAW FIRM" often trigger thoughts of stuffy offices and even stuffier people. That's not the case at McGlinchey Stafford.

No one knows that better than Thad Hymel, director of information technology.

"I started working with the firm two weeks before Katrina hit," Hymel said. "People are always nice when you first start a job, but it was after the storm that you really saw what the firm was made of."

Hymel received calls personally from managing partner Rodolfo "Rudy" Aguilar, as did many other employees.

"Rudy really took charge and made employees feel that they are number one to the firm," Hymel said. "He called me to make sure that I was OK — the fact that the CEO equivalent was call-

ing employees and making sure that there were OK is unique."

It's this camaraderie and accessibility to upper management that seems to make McGlinchey one of a kind.

"Unlike other companies, the doors of upper management are truly always open," said Angela Nugent, human resources specialist. "I have been able to utilize this throughout my career at the firm."

Erin Watson, legal recruiting director, said there is a mentor-protégé relationship built into the firm.

"You are not on your own," Watson said. "They help give you tools to advance your career. I have never had an instance where time was not made for my questions."

The firm also encourages job mobility within the company, giving employees the option to advance at the firm as opposed to seeking a job opportunity elsewhere.

"I started as a file clerk in October 2004," Watson said. "There have been numerous opportunities for me and other employees that are hard workers. They (the firm) promote from within and are willing to give employees that stand out an opportunity to move up."

Job mobility and expansion not only offers employees an increase in pay but also makes employees feel appreciated for their hard work.

"I started as an assistant and in a matter of two years my duties have grown, putting me in a specialist position where I

recruit and hire," Nugent said. "Now that I am trusted to do more, this makes me feel valued. In previous jobs I always went above and beyond but was never compensated or recognized."

The firm also gives employees a great deal of creative freedom within their job capacity, Hymel said.

"My job feels very entrepreneurial," he said. "It is like I am running a part of the business myself and as long as I can illustrate that it is beneficial to the firm, they are supportive 100 percent. They give you the canvas and expect a lot out of you, but grant the flexibility to be creative."

One reward of working at the firm is the benefits package, which includes 90 percent medical coverage and continuing legal education for attorneys. Watson was pleasantly surprised by the company's 401(k) plan that gives staff employees 7 percent firm contribution with 4 percent savings.

"It is great that it allows for employer matching," Watson said. "This is an important benefit to me, even though I am at the beginning of my career. It gives me the opportunity to plan for the future."

Hymel believes the benefits package is one similar to other firms, but what puts McGlinchey over the top is the firm's personalized feel.

"It is the firm's approach to interacting and taking care of their employees that makes it stand out above other firms," he said. •

— Maria Barrios



From left: New Orleans Cancer and Tobacco Control Coalition team members Tamanna Patel, Lynn Dufrechou, Christy Norsworthy, Lucretia Young and Dana Feist provide information to Warren Easton High School students warning them of the dangers of smoking.

33 Louisiana Public Health Institute

Employees: 73

Average starting salary: \$46,594

Median salary: \$44,100

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, dental, vision, telecommuting, flexible hours, fitness program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: first of month after 30 days

Paid time off: 10 days for first two years, 15 days for three or more years

Web site: lphi.org

WHEN ASKED WHAT makes the Louisiana Public Health Institute a great place to work, employees do not mention paid time off, 401(k) matching or Christmas parties. Instead, they mention a deep belief in the work of their organization and a climate that fosters innovation and intellectual growth.

The 73-employee nonprofit focuses on improving health care in Louisiana, including preventative care, information on common afflictions and working through private-public partnerships to keep the state healthy.

The company's dedication to career development is fostered through programs that cover all costs for training, seminars, conferences and professional affiliations for employees.

"They want you to think outside of the box, and they encourage you to not get pigeonholed in what you do every day," said Christy Norsworthy, associate director for the Steps to a Healthier New Orleans program.

When she first applied for the job, she was impressed by the wide scope of the group's projects — they work on everything from population surveys to chronic disease prevention and wellness — and after two years, she has not been disappointed.

"Before I came into the company, I was attracted to this small intimate organization that was very nurturing to employees," Norsworthy said. "As a candidate I saw that, and as an employee I continue to see that."

Clayton Williams, director of the health systems division who has been with LPHI since 2001, chose his position over a stint with the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. He selected LPHI, he said, because he believes in the mission.

"I didn't know how interested I would be (in the job) until I sat down and started talking about LPHI ... and the need for this sort of organization in the state," he said. "The thing that really drew me to it was that I had a chance to be a part of a growing organization that had a mission that was undeniable and needed."

Tung Ly, a health systems information technology analyst, said part of the great atmosphere at work comes from the fact everyone is motivated toward the group's goal of a healthy Louisiana.

"It's really relaxed, but you get a sense that you own what you're doing here and you take it on yourself to do it the best that you can," Ly said. "Everyone's in that mode, so things get done."

And, he said, the company is moving rapidly with health care policy, so each day brings new challenges.

"It's exciting to see how things change," he said. "Most of the time in the morning when I'm thinking about work, I think about what's going to be different because it's always changing. That's what's exciting." •

— Kelly W. Brown

34 Toyota of New Orleans

Employees: 65

Average starting salary: \$3,500 per month

Median salary: \$5,000 per month

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: one to two weeks

Web site: www.toyotaneworleans.com

IN AN INDUSTRY where turnover among salespeople is rampant, Toyota of New Orleans has the uncommon distinction of having high employee satisfaction and longevity.

Opened in 1995, the dealership was named Gulf States Toyota's Metro Dealer of the Year in 1998 for market share and has consistently ranked high in customer satisfaction surveys. Toyota of New Orleans supports various charitable activities and organizations throughout the community.

Office manager Sylvia Smith, who has been with the company for 10 years, said owner Troy Duhon's open-door policy and congeniality have fostered a family atmosphere not found at many dealerships. That translates into a relaxed environment where hard work is valued and honored yet employees can still have a fun and friendly relationship with the dealership.

"We have salespeople that have been here longer than me and many employees that have been here for more than 10 years," Smith said. "That's actually quite unique among salespeople in this industry."

Toyota of New Orleans' 65 employees have a median salary of \$60,000 a year and are offered a comprehensive benefits package along with paid leave and a 401(k) that Smith said is superior to what she has seen in other dealerships. Along with an annual company picnic, there is a yearly Christmas party where cash prizes and bonuses are awarded.

Certified sales master consultant Danny Jones joined the dealership in 2002 after leaving a career in the print marketing business. At the time, Jones was only about a decade away from retirement and was seeking a second career that could take advantage of his sales skills and fill the gap until he left the work force. Jones had a personal connection to



Toyota of New Orleans sales associate Lee Bridges, left, and customer Danny Jones check out what's under the hood of an FJ Cruiser.

Duhon and discovered a family atmosphere at the dealership, which also provided extensive and ongoing training, something many dealerships lack, he said.

"I just felt comfortable with the sales group that was running the dealership," Jones said. "There's good training and good people to work with. It's not a pressurized dealership where management is on you for every second of your time. They just want to see that you're selling cars."

New hire Dennis Sanders applied at Toyota of New Orleans after his sister met Duhon in church. So far, he said working in sales for the company has been exciting and offers the opportunity to meet new people, drive new cars and have

the chance for ongoing and continuous training.

Having been with the dealership since opening in 1995, assistant service manager Charley McLeod said it's not just the friendly management and co-workers but the loyal customers that keep him there. McLeod said that after Hurricane Katrina, there were actually customers calling into the dealership to see how he was doing.

"It's run differently than your average dealership," McLeod said. "You're not a robot here. There's much more of a personal relationship. That all carries over to the customers and I think they really appreciate that."•

— Craig Guillot

35 Stewart Enterprises

Employees: 500 in New Orleans, 5,500 companywide

Average starting salary: \$22,000 (average for 25 states and Puerto Rico)

Median salary: \$33,800

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Paid time off: minimum 10 days

Web site: www.stei.com

IT IS STEWART ENTERPRISES' values and moral standards that won the loyalty of Celena Neal, vice president of compliance and safety.

When faced with an issue early in her career, Neal asked an executive what the company was planning to do.

"He told me simply — 'we are going to do the right thing,'" Neal said. "This has permeated throughout the company, which has made my job in compliance easier, but it also has made me feel like it's the right place to work. You want to work for a company that is doing the right thing."

Stewart Enterprises originated in New Orleans and has grown from a small company to a national corporation. Neal said being a part of the business' expansion has been exciting.

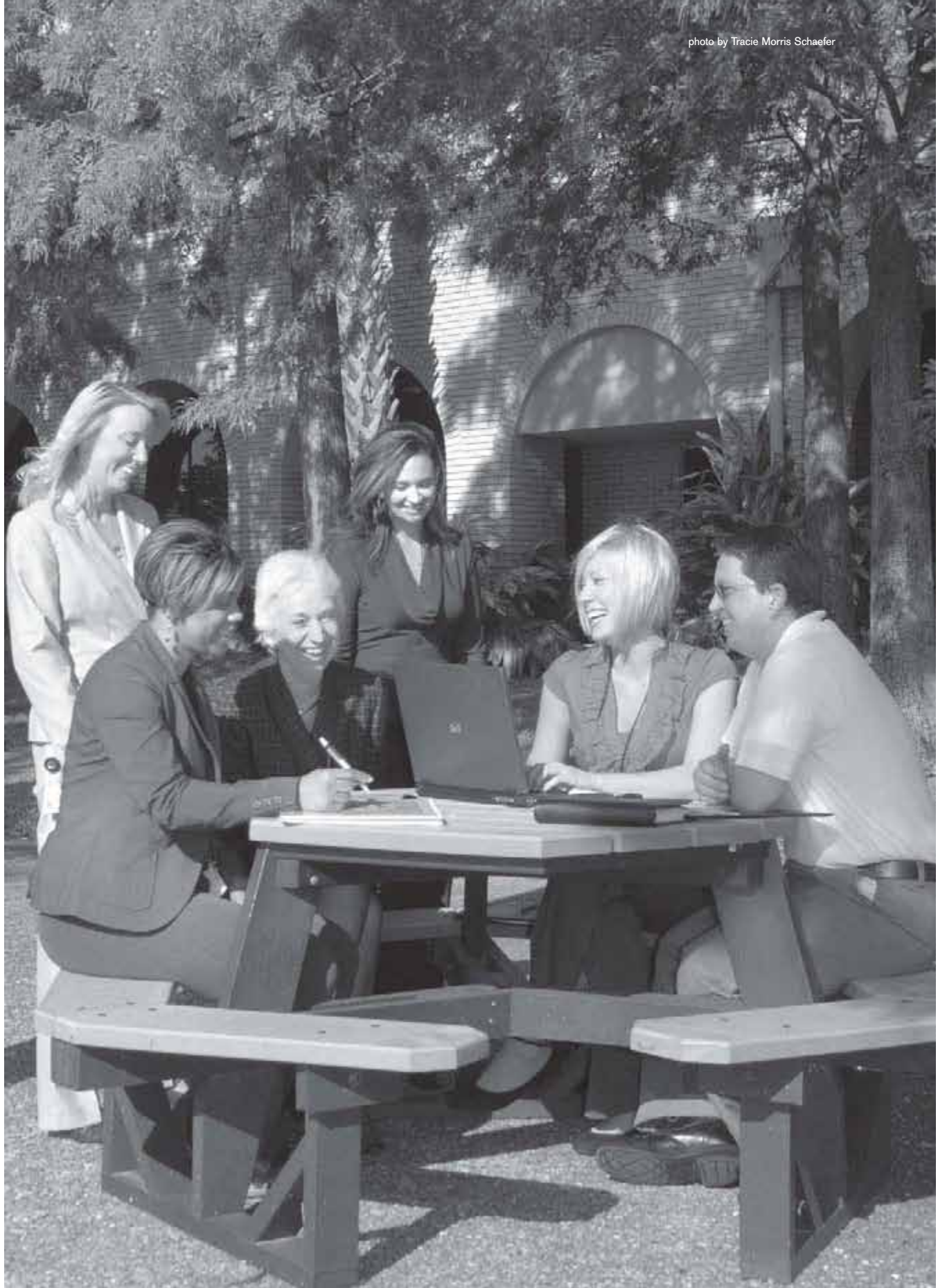
"I have been here for 30 years, which says a great deal in itself in terms of how I like working here," she said. "Over these years I have seen this company develop and grow into what it is today."

Like Neal, Karen Locantro, external communications manager, is also a longtime employee. Locantro has benefited from what she calls a mentoring program at Stewart.

"I have worked here for 24 years," Locantro said. "I started in direct mail for marketing and have had continuous promotions throughout my career. In each job position, the immediate superior mentors the employee to take her position when she moves up to her boss' position. This creates constant lateral movement within the company."

Tom Kitchen, chief financial officer and senior executive vice president, believes the benefits package is competitive with other companies of its size, but the alternative work schedule opportunities are what make Stewart stand out above the rest.

"Alternative work schedules allow people to have off every other Monday or Friday," Kitchen said. "It has had a positive impact and is a real benefit for our employees."



From left: Stewart Enterprises employees Sherry Walker-Bell, senior trust staff member; Tracey Satterlee, claims coordinator; Celena Neal, vice president of compliance and safety; Sonia Mejia, employee relations manager; Jessica Clement, graphics specialist; and John Joubert, internal communications specialist, take advantage of the weather to work outside.

Locantro said the benefits package, particularly the 401(k), is excellent. "Under the 401(k), the employer matches 50 cents for every dollar an employee contributes," he said.

On the other hand, Neal said Stewart's benefits package is average to above average.

"Most companies of our size probably do have strong benefits," she said. "Benefits are just a part of the package. What makes this company stand out is how they care for their employees and how the company helps people at the worst times of their lives."

Neal has experienced the helpful and caring nature of Stewart firsthand.

Her husband had a stroke a month before Katrina.

"After the storm, my husband and I went to my daughter's home in Jacksonville, Fla., where we had access to the medical facilities that he needed," Neal said. "Instead of demanding that I go to Dallas (or Orlando, Fla.), the company allowed me to work out of the funeral home in Jacksonville."•

— Maria Barrios



photo by Frank Aymami

Ellsworth President Alex Ellsworth and office manager and head of accounting Kathy Moore discuss benefits.

1 Ellsworth Corp.

Employees: 44

Average starting salary: \$55,000 for support staff; agents work on commission

Median salary: \$115,600

Benefits: health care benefits, dental, fitness program, employee recognition program, paid maternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days for health care, immediately for all other benefits

Paid time off: up to four weeks vacation, two hours personal time each quarter, 11 holidays a year and birthday holiday

Web site: www.ellsworthcorporation.com

WITH THE PERSONAL trainers, massage therapy and workout room equipped with flat-screen TVs, it has all the makings of a luxury health spa.

But this is just another day at the office for the employees of Ellsworth Corp., a Metairie-based insurance provider for the construction, marine and energy industries.

Employees say having a 24-hour fitness center 15 feet from their desks is one of their favorite job perks.

"Yesterday we had an open house for underwriters," said Ron Grieshaber, who manages Ellsworth's marine department. "At quarter to four I'd had a busy day and hadn't been able to work out. But because the gym was here, I was able to lift weights for 30 minutes and take a shower, and I was able

to make the party for 4:30."

Account manager Melissa Hart-Headrick has lost 53 pounds since she started working out in April at the fitness center, where a personal trainer customized an exercise and nutrition plan for her.

"We have a beautiful gym here," Hart-Headrick said. "They have locker rooms, flat-screen TVs — it's all beautiful equipment. I don't think I could afford what it would cost me to do this by myself."

Knowing healthy employees equal a healthy bottom line, Ellsworth recently implemented a new wellness program that includes an all-encompassing annual health screening, free 30-minute table massages by a licensed

masseuse and monthly nutrition lunches. The program also features smoking cessation training — at least two employees have quit smoking so far.

Hart-Headrick said her health has improved significantly since she joined Ellsworth a year ago.

“The health screening was a reality check for me as far as needing to lose weight,” she said, adding that she no longer battles the chronic bouts of bronchitis and pneumonia she used to have.

The wellness benefits are only part of the story, employees say. The median salary at Ellsworth is \$115,600 and the company provides a 100-percent match to employees who contribute 6 percent of their salaries to their 401(k) and matches 50 percent on the next 4 percent.

“I’ve made good money here,” said Grieshaber, who has worked at Ellsworth since 1999.

Ellsworth insurance agents are practically self-employed, he said. Unlike most firms, agents own their client portfolio and can take it with them if they ever leave the company.

“That’s one of the beauties for the shop — you come here with your own business,” Grieshaber said. “You don’t have all the administrative costs taken from you. You just go out and sell and do your business. It’s a great feeling.”

Lauren Nuss, an account executive in the bond department, said company President Alex Ellsworth’s open-door policy gives employees the freedom to express what’s on their minds.

“Alex is a wonderful owner and president, and he’s always available for us to go in and speak with him on any issues we’re having,” she said.

Ellsworth has also relaxed the company’s dress code and gives employees flexibility in their daily schedules, she said.

“He’s trying to get away from the high school restrictions where you have to wear certain things and report at certain times,” Nuss said. “It’s really nice because you don’t feel like you have to meet these requirements. As long as you’re getting your work done, you have a little more flexibility.”

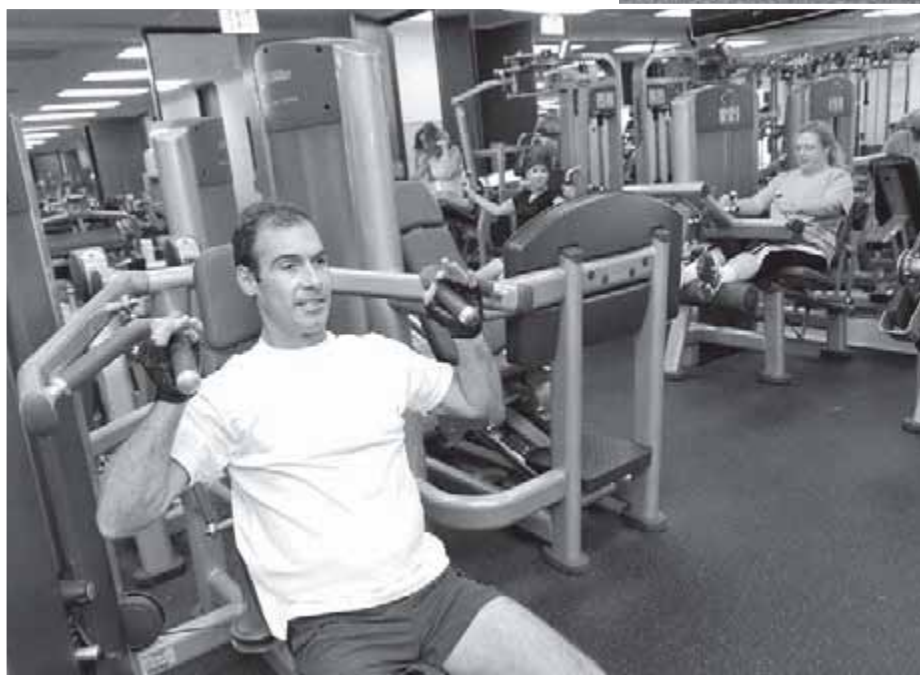
Charity work has also become a cornerstone at Ellsworth. The company donates \$5,000 a year to five different charities — the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Angel’s Place, New Heights, ICan Help Inc. and Children’s Hospital — and attends their annual fundraisers.

“It helps with camaraderie and also benefits the area,” Nuss said. “We like to show our faces and actually be active in participating in the fundraisers.”

With all the extras and the company’s positive attitude, going to work every day is much less of a chore, employees say.

“We’re spoiled over here,” Hart-Headrick said. “That’s why you rarely hear anyone complain over here, because we have it good.”•

— Autumn C. Giusti



Above: Marine account executives Linda Kempf, left, and Gail Bordelon help keep Ellsworth on track with the firm’s antique ship wheel. At left: Producer Brian Bordlee works out in the firm’s gym.



From left: I-Assure team members senior security engineers Justin Broussard, Dennis Hackney, president Barrett McGuire, and senior security engineers Mike Mendow and Roger Rowley perform security assessments for the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Corona, Calif.

2 I-Assure

Employees: eight

Average starting salary: \$95,000

Median salary: \$180,000

Benefits: none. I-Assure provides a cash benefits package of \$30,000 annually, deriving the total by adding the cost of health, dental, 401(k), tuition assistance, among other benefits, and adding 25 percent.

Wait time for benefits: not applicable

Paid time off: 30 days, which includes vacation and sick

Web site: www.i-assure.com

EMPLOYEES AT Mandeville-based I-Assure often define workplace satisfaction in non-monetary terms — and for good reason.

“I have worked at other places where I was told that I was valued and that my input was important,” said Matt Fotter, an information assure engineer. “But I usually could see right away that when there was no real room for that input within the organization, the nice words didn’t really matter.”

At I-Assure, Fotter said the situation is exactly the opposite.

“This is more of a horizontal type of organization where if you have a good idea you can bring it to the table, and if that idea has any merit at all, it will be tried out,” Fotter said. “In the world of ideas, this is about as good as it gets.”

Providing information assurance solutions to the government, primarily the Department of Defense, as well as the private sector, I-Assure has a staff of nearly a dozen people made up of retired military and civil service personnel as well as current members of the National Guard.

Launched more than four years ago, I-Assure has become known for its price-competitive threat-averse solutions.

“We have done well by offering our services at a much lower cost than the other contractor companies have been offering to the Department of Defense,” said I-Assure President Barrett McGuire.

“But what has really made this, I think, an exciting place to be is that everyone here is being challenged all of the time to do things better,” McGuire said.

“I really believe that these things, for the type of person who works here, is more important than even the benefits package that we offer.”

I-Assure’s benefits are more than competitive. Salaries start at \$85,000 with a cash benefits package exceeding \$30,000 annually. That package represents a 25 percent increase over the average total costs of a combined typical tuition waiver, employee health and 401(k) plans, and is structured to accommodate each employee’s needs.

“The idea with both our benefits package and the actual company itself is to place an emphasis on the individual both in terms of how that person can help make our company better as well as what the company can do for that person,” McGuire said.

“We do this because, in the long run, our success depends on the imagination and thinking of each person who works here.”

Fotter agrees, adding that individuals can really stand out because the company is so small.

“Each person, in essence, can decide what he or she wants to do here,” he said. “Each has their own tasks and responsibilities, and can pretty much create their own projects. It’s the kind of work environment that really can’t be explained in simple dollar terms, which is what makes it so unique.”

— Garry Boulard



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

From left: PMOLink Vice President of Sales and Marketing Blake Powell, project manager and training consultant Angela Nelson and business solutions manager Georgine Berthelot gather in the lobby of PMOLink.

3 PMOLink

Employees: 33

Average starting salary: \$121,530

Median salary: \$122,880

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, stock options, flexible hours, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: 228 to 348 hours per year (28.5 to 43.5 days)

Web site: www.pmolink.com

THE EXECUTIVE STAFF of PMOLink continues to spread the wealth.

“We started this company with the principle of all employees sharing in our growth and being vested in our success, and we still do that today,” said Chief Financial Officer Mark Johnson. “We were tired of seeing companies that we previously worked for where the guys kicking back in the chairs were making the huge salaries while the people working their tails off were making money for the man, so to speak. This way, everybody is invested.”

PMOLink, founded in 2000, is a project and process management office solutions and software company headquartered in Mandeville with an office in San Antonio. PMOLink

serves clients in the United States and Mexico, including six Fortune 500 energy, pharmaceutical, hospitality, media and insurance companies.

The company’s success has trickled down to its employees.

PMOLink, with 34 employees, has an average six-figure salary of \$122,880 and an average starting salary of \$121,530.

“We call it the ‘wow factor’ when people hear about our salaries, but they are so high because every employee is certified or working toward top-notch certification in every area of project and process management software and solutions services that we provide to our clients,” said Geoffrey Hingle, executive vice president for research and development for PMOLink.

At PMOLink, upon hire, each full-time employee receives free comprehensive medical, dental, life, short- and long-term disability insurance benefits, a 401(k) retirement plan at 100 percent match of the first 4 percent and employee stock options with a 15 percent discount on company stock.

There is also a health care flexible spending plan, credit union affiliation, employee assistance program, adoption assistance program and an employee service center Web site with integrated self-help for payroll, benefits, 401(k) and all employee programs.

If an employee refers an applicant to PMOLink who is hired, that employee receives \$1,000 upon the completion of six months by the new applicant.

Employees work for continuous Project Management Professional certifications, which are paid for by PMOLink, and they receive bonuses upon receiving certification.

“What it means to me is we’re continually investing in our employees and we’re able to sell that to our clients that they are getting the best certified people,” said Georgine Berthelot, training director and engagement and account manager. “Everything is related to training and developing our employees to provide the best project and process management for our clients.”

Employees receive a quarterly newsletter, “Link Letter,” which provides company updates and stories on employees.

There are company nights every two months in the Mandeville office with food and refreshments, and there are periodic conference calls with the staff to discuss workplace concerns and continuous company goals.

“I value those meetings because we are all out in the field with our clients and we rarely get to spend valuable time together to see how each other is doing,” Berthelot said. •

— Tommy Santora



From left: Louisiana Restaurant Association office manager Rich McCurdy, receptionist Denise Schmidt, director of communications Wendy Waren and education programmer Laurie Clement put together gift bags for the International Society of Restaurant Association Executives.

4 Louisiana Restaurant Association

Employees: 24

Average starting salary: \$38,343

Median salary: \$104,134

Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, vision, fitness program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Paid time off: 10 days

Web site: www.lra.org

LOUISIANA RESTAURANT Association President and CEO Jim Funk found a healthy solution for his employees who always have food on their minds because of their line of work: Build an in-house health club.

Funk built an indoor exercise and weight room equipment area with bath and showers three years ago in the state association's Metairie headquarters that received an 8,300-square-foot addition to its 14,000 square feet of space.

"They like it a lot," Funk said. "They like the convenience and accessibility, and it's a way for us to keep our employees happy by providing a stress outlet and an easy way for them to exercise."

Established in 1946, the Louisiana Restaurant Association

develops and administers programs and services to its 7,500 statewide restaurant and food industry operations members to help them prosper in the food service and hospitality industry. The restaurant industry in Louisiana is the state's largest private employer with 140,000 employed directly and another 55,000 indirectly employed.

The mission of the association has become more important post-Hurricane Katrina as New Orleans restaurants look to rebound despite off tourism levels after the storm.

"It's very gratifying to help our members in every way we can because we are dealing every day with such a viable part of our economy and restaurants play a big role in the culture of this city," said Senior Vice President Tom Weatherly.

The Louisiana Restaurant Association has 24 employees, an average starting salary of \$38,343 and a median salary of \$104,134. Weatherly said the median is so high because of the number of long-term employees at the company. Fourteen of the 24 employees have been with the association for more than 10 years, including Funk at 27 years and Weatherly at 19.

When Funk was CEO 27 years ago, the company had five employees, three part-time and did not offer any benefits.

"Now, we have a very competitive benefits package," he said. The Louisiana Restaurant Association pays for 92.8 percent

of health care costs and provides a 401(k) program with a 5 percent match. There is a 90-day wait to be eligible for benefits. Employees receive 10 vacation days and 10 sick days per year.

There are two crawfish boils per year at the office and an office Christmas party. As a trade association, employees also are able to attend member events such as the annual Louisiana Foodservice Expo, which attracts more than 13,000 restaurant industry owners from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

"That's a great event where we get to meet all our members under one roof," said Wendy Waren, director of communications.

The Louisiana Restaurant Association gives back to the community through an Education Foundation, established in 1996. The School-to-Career program has 46 schools and more than 900 students participating in various career restaurant training programs.

"This is really a fun industry to work in and we get to work with restaurateurs every day whose bread and butter is their hospitality," Waren said. "Our bread and butter is also showing them top-notch hospitality and giving them as much support as we can."•

— Tommy Santora

5 Trumpet

Employees: 32

Average starting salary: \$57,250

Median salary: \$52,500

Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, vision, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: unlimited — on the honor system

Web site: www.trumpetgroup.com

YOU GET AN INKLING there's something different about Trumpet when you go to the ad firm's Web site and discover an employee manual that's called a "songbook," with an intro that starts: "A-one and a-two and a-three."

So who's joined the band of this creative, fun-loving company?

"It's mostly smart people that are nice," said Chief Operating Officer Jude Chauvin.

To meet the challenge of recruiting employees to a post-Katrina New Orleans, Trumpet positioned its job offers as chances to be part of a bold adventure.

"We were able to attract some people who not only weren't scared to come to New Orleans but were really excited and wanted to be here while we were in recovery," said Chauvin, who began his own job as an evacuee in Atlanta, having been hired to start Sept. 1, 2005.

Art director Zohrab Gevorkian, known simply as "Z" around the office, arrived in August from Los Angeles. He came aboard because he liked the sound of Trumpet's business model.

"They believe that content is superior over execution," Gevorkian said. "Execution is definitely important, but they believe that what they provide in terms of advertising has strong content that delivers a strong message to people so that they can react."

Gevorkian, who has worked on campaigns for 24Nola, Louisiana Economic Development, Tobacco-Free Living and the New Orleans BioInnovation Center, said he most enjoys the process of ideation, or coming up with creative ways to solve a client's business problem.

Trumpet plans to move from its current office suite at 839 St. Charles Ave. to a restored ice house in Faubourg St. John by the end of February. In the meantime, the company already has experimented with a new office layout to encourage more



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Content developer Zohrab Gevorkian, left, discusses a project with Scott Souvillon, Trumpet's director of brand strategy.

collaboration and creativity, Chauvin said.

"We've pulled the partners out of their offices, put them into the general population and used those office spaces as team workspaces," Chauvin said. "So we've got people sitting around with their desks pointed in a circle and working at long tables. You put a room like that together and you get an amazing amount of productivity out of everybody. ... It also just helps people to bat ideas around."

The Trumpet staff not only works as a team, they also like to play together. Each year the firm celebrates Trumpet Day by closing the office and taking the whole staff on a special outing. This year it was a fishing trip off Reggio in

St. Bernard Parish. There's also the annual Christmas party in a suite at the Fair Grounds and group trips to Carnival and Jazz Fest.

Rachel Wilson, a creative content developer who came to the firm in August from Atlanta, also praises the collaborative environment at Trumpet.

"One of the pluses is that you're surrounded by really talented people, and they push you just as much as you push them," Wilson said. "There's that sense of learning and growing and challenging yourself — and challenging others around you."•

— Sonya Stinson



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

From left: Morgan+Company director of communications and planning Jennifer Huber, media planner and account executive Joy Grace, senior media planner and account executive Emily Vaughn, director of media buyer Renee Stuart, controller Mary Giovingo and junior media buyer Katie DeVries discuss an upcoming project.

6 Morgan + Company

Employees: eight

Average starting salary: \$40,000

Median salary: \$61,231

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, subsidized meals, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: unlimited — on the honor system

Web site: www.morganplus.com

MORGAN + COMPANY is a small media-buying company with eight people including the founder, Eric Morgan. Such a small group necessitates a tight bond between employees.

As a result, Morgan regularly consults with his employees about everything, even new hires. After Morgan conducts the initial interview, other people in the office get to interview the potential hire without Morgan present. Often, the group interview is informal and the other workers take the interviewee out for a drink, but Morgan views it as essential.

"It's important that everyone's on the same wavelength," Morgan said.

On top of this, employees have unlimited time off.

"There is no micromanaging. As long as you get your work done, there is no cap on vacation," said Katie DeVries, a junior media buyer for Morgan + Company.

Allowing his employees to manage their own time is also practical for Morgan.

"I've got more important things to do than stare over someone's back," he said. He views the flexible schedule as essential in a post-Katrina environment, because many employees have to deal with things such as contractors and Road Home appointments.

"As long as they (the employees) go to bat for our clients and do so in a timely manner, they can have fun when they want to have fun," he said.

In her first year at the company, media buyer Renee Stuart not only had to deal with contractors for post-Katrina work but also plan her wedding. Getting time off for contractor appointments, her wedding or her honeymoon was never an issue, she said.

There are a number of other benefits Morgan employees receive.

Everyone gets his or her birthday off, the company pays 100 percent of health insurance and parking, and employees

receive bonuses for good work.

"The incidentals make for a better work place," Morgan said.

While employees at Morgan + Company work hard, they play hard as well. Every Friday, the office goes out for daiquiris after work. Every year, the company has a Jazz Fest day where everyone goes to the festival together. In September 2006, on the night of the Saints' first home game after Katrina, Morgan gave his employees a half day, took them to the French Quarter and secured tickets for the game. Recently, the staff took a day off to do work for Habitat for Humanity.

Morgan also takes his staff to dinner in the French Quarter with the occasional karaoke night thrown in. (Not all staff members sing, though).

The atmosphere at the office is relaxed, too.

"There's always cold beer in the refrigerator," Stuart said.

Despite all of the fun, the staff at Morgan + Company gets a lot of work done. Stuart pointed to Morgan as setting a good example for the employees.

"He's the first one in the office and the last one to leave. You see him working hard and it makes you want to work hard for him," Stuart said. •

— Fritz Esker



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Southern United States Trade Association Executive Director Jerry Hingle, center, discusses the company's holiday agenda at a recent staff meeting.

7 Southern United States Trade Association

Employees: 10

Average starting salary: \$30,000

Median salary: \$50,000

Benefits: health care, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, paid maternity leave, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Paid time off: two days per month

Web site: www.susta.org

THE STAFF AT Southern United States Trade Association has a large number of frequent flyer miles between them.

Executive Director Jerry Hingle traveled 87,000 miles last year and visited his 35th country in just one and a half years.

Deputy Director Bernadette Wiltz takes three to four international trips a year, including to her favorite country, China, while financial director Troy Rosamond has ventured to Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Costa Rica for business.

"I call it both our job responsibility and also a perk," Rosamond said. "There are opportunities for us where we don't just sit in the office every day. We're out in the markets that we are helping our businesses get involved in."

The New Orleans-based Southern United States Trade

Association on Canal Street is a nonprofit agricultural export trade development association that helps exporters of high-value food and agricultural products do business overseas and in foreign markets.

SUSTA, which consists of agriculture departments from 15 southern states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, its member states and private companies.

"Businesses apply to us every year for federal funding and we work with a couple of hundred a year on international marketing, complying with federal regulations when exporting overseas and how to spend money to increase their foreign business opportunities," Hingle said. "We are helping businesses be successful in markets they could have never imagined being in and that makes our jobs meaningful."

Hingle said his staff will have visited more than 55 countries and the organization's 16 member states this year.

Rosamond, in his seven years with SUSTA, has traveled to Costa Rica for a marketing event and to Sri Lanka and Taiwan for chef promotions.

Wiltz said China is a growing market in which many of SUSTA's businesses are venturing into to export their products.

"A lot of the companies we work with have China on

their radar screen," she said.

SUSTA has 10 employees with an average median salary of \$50,000. There is a 30-day wait for benefits, which include 95 percent of health care insurance costs paid by the company, a 401(k) 100-percent match program, continuing education in the form of seminars and events, 12 paid holidays a year and paid parking.

Every month, employees receive one perk day where they can come in two hours late on a Monday morning or leave two hours early on a Friday afternoon. Every Friday is casual day, and once every month there is either an in-office lunch or employees are treated to lunch out of the office.

There are 10 to 12 interoffice events every year such as movie days, where an employee can bring in a movie and watch it on the conference room television, and office decorating contests for Mardi Gras and Christmas.

The company's holiday party will be at Jacques-Imo's this year, as SUSTA is helping Chef Jacques Leonardi promote his food overseas.

"The best part about the job is the success stories and getting a call from a company or person who is excited about a sale or a project that went International, and it feels great to know you played an important role in that," Wiltz said. •

— Tommy Santora



From left: Deveney Communication communications strategist Joel Mandina, Vice President Jeffrey Ory and strategists Lyndsay Glatz and Marc Kimball brainstorm on a project.

8 Deveney Communication

Employees: 12

Average starting salary: \$46,000

Median salary: \$75,000

Benefits: health care benefits, tuition assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, employee recognition program, subsidized meals

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: unlimited — on the honor system

Web site: www.deveney.com

JOHN DEVENEY, PRESIDENT and CEO of Deveney Communication, says his public relations firm is in the business of “making other people more successful” and every one of the firm’s 13 employees are valued for what they add to the team.

Employees are never hired at Deveney to fill positions but are slowly added to the team based on their talents and how they can help build the firm, he said.

“People here really have a hand in their own destiny and a heavy hand in the destiny of the entire firm,” Deveney said. “We’re in a position where we can really cherry pick what clients and projects we want based on

interest, passion and enthusiasm.”

Founded in 1996, Deveney Communication offers strategic planning, media relations, Internet marketing and a variety of services for local and national clients.

Flexibility and the ability to follow particular interests means Deveney employees are rarely pegged to projects or clients for which they do not have a passion. There are no titles used within the company, and Deveney said the firm is often willing to even move into the direction and interests of individual employees.

Whether that is a desire to work on an airline public relations campaign or a presidential campaign, he said allowing employees to follow their dreams helps keep an extremely high job satisfaction level.

“We create an environment that allows them to stretch and test their own abilities. We try to help with those dreams, even if that is outside of our own walls,” Deveney said.

Anna Whitlow has been with the firm for a year and a half and enjoys the opportunity to identify and work with projects that interest her. There is always something new, she said, and the company’s relaxed atmosphere allows them to have fun while working.

Recent hire Joel Mandina said he was attracted to the

company because he could work with local and national accounts. He formerly worked for another ad agency in town and at Mullen in Boston. He has always wanted the clientele of a New York firm but wanted to remain in New Orleans. Deveney offers its employees the opportunity to work on big accounts without the politics, policies and procedures of a typical big-time firm, he said.

“I’ve never been at an agency like this. Everyone is always willing to pitch in for a team effort. There’s no client stealing, no backstabbing and office politics,” Mandina said.

While Deveney offers competitive salaries and benefits, it is one of the few companies in town with no official limit on vacation and sick days. Deveney said it is an honor system, which has never been abused, and giving employees the freedom to make their own decisions creates an atmosphere where people can truly be counted on.

“It’s a very empowering environment,” Deveney said. “When you give people a chance to do their very best and an environment that celebrates opportunity and is not fearful of making mistakes, suddenly you’re setting records.”

— Craig Guillot



From left: Mike Rainey, chief creative officer, Shawn Bailly, senior application developer, and Rob Hudak, interactive creative director, build a display at Zehnder Communications.

9 Zehnder Communications

Employees: 31

Average starting salary: \$39,500

Median salary: \$51,500

Benefits: health care, paid maternity leave, continuing education, relocation assistance, stock options, prescription, dental, flexible hours, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 60 days

Paid time off: three weeks

Web site: www.z-comm.com

JEFFREY ZEHNDER SAID the mission for his employees is simple: Do great work. Make a difference. Earn a profit. Have fun.

"We are in a deadline-driven industry where everything is urgent and tomorrow, and the only way to counter that kind of stress is to provide outlet valves and breaks every now and then," said Zehnder, CEO of Zehnder Communications, a New Orleans-based, full-media service and creative advertising agency with a second office in Baton Rouge.

"Ninety-nine percent of the time everybody is busting their tails working, and if you hire good people, you don't

have to micromanage them," Zehnder said. "You really leave it to your employees to work hard and play hard and balance that philosophy, and we're fortunate to have talented people in our family who can succeed in living out that balance."

Zehnder's 31 employees have learned to expect the unexpected for the stress relief outlets the company puts on once every quarter, said media coordinator Georgia Whiddon, who is a member of Media Supremacy, an interoffice Fantasy Football team.

There are margarita-mixing contests, citywide scavenger hunts in limousines, bowling competitions and team cooking contests, where employees learn about their teammates by meeting face-to-face and asking questions about each other.

"The whole ploy is to get us to know each other better and to get us talking more with each other," Whiddon said. "That makes work projects a lot easier if you're familiar with your co-workers and you have a feel for their personalities."

Employees have one "Think About Day" per year where they take a day off and think about the company and ways they can move it forward, then give a report to their managers.

There are Free Beer Fridays where employees unwind from

the work week by having access to a refrigerator stocked with beer. There is also a Ms. Pac-Man/Galaga video game machine in the middle of the office and a gumball machine, which serves as a water cooler. The machine inspired the name of the company's monthly internal newsletter, Gumballz.

Dave Maher, director of digital communications, enjoys the monthly staff meetings where management often gives kudos to various employees for jobs well done in the previous month.

"People like to be appreciated; it's a motivating factor to work harder and care about what you do," Maher said.

Zehnder's average starting salary is \$39,500, while the median salary is \$51,500. There is a 60-day wait upon hire for benefits, which include 80-percent paid health care insurance and 50 percent for spouses, life insurance, prescription, dental coverage, three weeks of paid sick/leave time, paid maternity and paternity leave and a 401(k) program in which 100 percent of up to 3 percent of an employee's salary is matched.

"The cost of living has increased a lot in these last two years, so compensation and benefits are big parts of bringing people in here and keeping them here," Zehnder said. •

— Tommy Santora



photo by Shannon Diecidue

Riverwalk marketing team members Linda Benton, left, and Barbara Hebert prepare goody bags for the Rythms of the South convention.

10 Riverwalk Marketplace

Employees: 15

Average starting salary: \$28,000

Median salary: \$45,000

Benefits: health care benefits, unmarried benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, job sharing, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Paid time off: 10 days

Web site: www.riverwalkmarketplace.com/html

NOLDEN ALONGI, a 20-year Riverwalk Marketplace employee, said at times it feels like he is working at Disney World.

"It's more of a festive type of atmosphere than maybe your routine mall because it's decorated with Mardi Gras, New Orleans and Christmas, something all the time and everybody is smiling," said Alongi, an operations manager. "You never see the same customers because visitors are for the most part new and fresh faces who are here as tourists. They are generally experiencing our culture for the first time."

Riverwalk Marketplace, on Convention Center Boulevard, is home to 120 retail outlets, including carts and kiosks. The company is owned by Chicago-based and publicly traded

company General Growth Properties, which manages more than 200 regional shopping malls and 200 million square feet of retail space in 44 states.

In addition to Riverwalk, General Growth Properties operates Oakwood Center in Gretna and Riverlands Shopping Center in LaPlace.

Riverwalk, with 15 employees, has an average starting salary of \$28,000 and a median salary of \$45,000.

The benefits package pays 80 percent of health care costs, 10 days of vacation per year, a 401(k) program, unmarried partner benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, prescription, telecommuting, dental, vision, job sharing and employee recognition programs. There is long-term disability coverage and 95 percent coverage life insurance for self and spouse.

"Since we are under a big company like General Growth Properties, they are able to offer all of their employees great benefits. And that's a big plus of working here," said Lynn Walters, senior general manager of the Riverwalk.

Walters has been with General Growth Properties for 15 years and Riverwalk for one year.

"Since they have so many employees, they are always looking for ways to lower benefits costs for employees out of pocket," she said.

There are potluck lunches once a quarter and employee birthdays are celebrated once a month. Christmas parties have taken place at various restaurants in the French Quarter.

Riverwalk also has holiday gatherings for merchants and contractors.

"The holiday season is our busiest time of the year and we're all crazy busy and working hard. But it's also a really nice atmosphere to be around," said Christy Chauvin, senior mall accountant.

Walters said there are team meetings for employees every other week to maintain communication on the mall's activities.

"Communication is the key," Walters said. "If everything is not in sync, then it is likely something will fall through the cracks. Every employee is fully engaged to help that team effort, and engaged employees are happy and productive employees."

Walters said several Riverwalk employees played a role in helping rebuild Oakwood Center in Gretna, which was damaged during Hurricane Katrina. Oakwood reopened Oct. 19.

"I just find that since the storm and rebuilding these malls back to where they were, our employees have had a can-do attitude and high work ethic that is shared throughout, and we couldn't have done anything without that spirit," she said. •

— Tommy Santora



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

From left: Signature Destination Management production manager Samantha Lister, director of accounts and partner Jill DiMarco, account coordinator Terry Merlenback, production manager Margaret Riley, creative director and partner Shelly Rofe, director of production and partner Kara Pigeon, controller Melissa Ruckert, director of marketing and partner Maria Irwin and production manager Julie Ott review textiles and paperwork in the firm's conference room.

11 Signature Destination Management

Employees: 13

Average starting salary: \$25,000

Median salary: \$45,000

Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, flexible hours, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: one week first year, two weeks two to five years, three weeks after five years

Web site: www.signature-dmc.com

SIGNATURE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT, a New Orleans-based destination management meeting and event planning company, strives to keep its employees happy.

"We understand everyone's needs and we treat everyone as an individual," said Shelley Rote, managing partner.

Realizing employees have families and other obligations outside of work, Signature Destination Management offers flexible work hours.

"We have the ability to work from home. As long as you can make it up, it's OK," said Samantha Lister, production manager.

Teamwork is key at Signature Destination Management.

"We really have a great team and everyone respects each other," said Jill DiMarco, director of accounts and partner.

Lister said Signature's level of service, high standards and its size sets it apart.

"We are a very tight knit group," Lister said. "You are never alone and someone is always there to help you."

Management supports individual growth and one way they do that is by allowing employees to seek additional training while covering the expenses.

"We encourage further education so employees can stay up with trends in the industry," Rote said.

Rote said additional experience helps the company and individual, too. By earning titles such as certified meeting planner and destination management certified professional, employees can add that to their resumes and credentials.

Another added bonus is overtime pay. Employees are compensated for working weekends and any time other than their 9-to-5 schedule.

"Monetary incentives keep everyone happy," Rote said.

Management as well as employees call the benefits package "very generous."

Signature offers 100 percent paid health insurance, short-

and long-term disability insurance, 12 paid holidays and six sick days. Employees also have paid parking and one week to three weeks of vacation time. It also offers profit sharing where the company matches 3 percent of the amount an employee contributes.

Signature Destination Management treats its employees to holiday events during the year.

"Even though we plan events, we like to have fun, too," Lister said. The company has Christmas and a Mardi Gras parties and takes employees out for birthdays.

Like many New Orleans businesses, Hurricane Katrina created problems for Signature Destination Management. It was flooded out of its Mid-City location and did not return until eight months after the storm. Now at 715 Camp St., business started picking up in June 2006.

With challenging times behind them, this small company and their employees recognize there is no place they would rather be.

"Signature Destination Management is one of those places where everyone knows everybody and is willing to working with everyone and in the end we are all working for New Orleans," Lister said. •

— Jennifer Nall



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

From left: Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency Producer Donald Kerr, CEO Hartwig Moss III, Vice President Karen Hill, office manager Pat Reed and President Robby Moss receive their traditional turkey "bonuses" before the Thanksgiving holiday.

12 Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency

Employees: 44

Average starting salary: \$25,000

Median salary: \$42,500

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, stock options, prescription, dental, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: none

Paid time off: 16 days

Web site: www.hmia.com

ROBBY MOSS REALIZES the insurance industry, especially after Hurricane Katrina, is a stressful one. And stress relief for his employees, he said, is a priority.

"Our people work hard and these last two years, our industry was hit pretty good with a surge in business, so they have had to work even harder," said Moss, the fifth-generation president of Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency Ltd. on Canal Street in New Orleans. "We have a lot of events, some spontaneous, some planned, and we just do a lot of little things here to thank people for their work."

Hartwig Moss, founded in 1871, is the longest-standing independent insurance agency in Louisiana. The company has 49 employees.

Moss, who was elected president in 2001, said it was at the

time of his presidency that he focused more on providing a better atmosphere and environment for his employees.

"We look at ourselves and what we do, and we have four critical objectives as a business: focus on and take care of our clients, staff, community and insurance company partners, and if we do all those things, we succeed as a business," Moss said.

Employees are immediately eligible for benefits upon hire, and health care insurance is 100 percent paid for by the company. After one year of employment, employees are eligible to participate in a 401(k) program where Hartwig Moss contributes 3 percent of employees' salaries regardless of their decisions to participate. There are also stock options in the company available to employees.

Employees receive 16 days of vacation per year and an extra week after working five years. Employees also receive a day off for their birthday.

Twenty-five pound turkeys are given to employees for Thanksgiving, and there is an annual Christmas party at K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen where Hartwig Moss rents the entire upstairs of the restaurant. After Katrina, the company began a new August tradition of an employee party at Rock 'N' Bowl. Other events include an office party for the Endymion parade that passes by Hartwig Moss' office on Canal Street and in-office lunches once a quarter to celebrate various events.

"Robby is always looking for new and innovative ways to keep the morale up," said Doris Cozzens, a receptionist with Hartwig Moss for eight years. "One year we had a Ferris Bueller's Day Off where we chose a day to get off from work and did whatever we wanted and then reported back what we did to the staff via e-mail.

"It's just little things they do that show you they have an interest in you as a person, not just as an employee. It's about quality of life."

After Katrina, Hartwig Moss has given back to the community by working with nonprofits on insurance recovery issues with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The company also sponsors programs at Junior Achievement, the Louisiana Children's Museum, Touro Infirmary and KID smART, an arts education program in New Orleans.

"We develop relationships, whether it's in the community or with our clients and insurance partners, and our employees are involved in every step of the way, making them feel important," said Vice President Karen Hill, who began her career with Hartwig Moss 32 years ago as a policy typist. "The Mosses have always placed an emphasis on being there for employees and their families and centering their business around quality customer service."•

— Tommy Santora



From left: Administrator Carlotta Rednour, secretary Dani Burleigh, secretary Danielle Culotta and file clerk Anna Miller slice cake and scoop ice cream during November's birthday celebration.

13 Johnson, Johnson, Barrios & Yacoubian

Employees: 47

Average starting salary: \$22,600

Median salary: \$42,000

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: one month

Paid time off: four weeks

Web site: www.jjbylaw.com

IN THE MONTHS after Hurricane Katrina, Danielle Culotta noticed large and small companies laying employees off, and in some cases, closing.

That wasn't the case with her employer: Johnson, Johnson, Barrios & Yacoubian, a 16-year-old law firm specializing in civil litigation.

"All of us, and by that I mean the attorneys, support staff, paralegals, file clerks, office managers and assistants, had a lot to worry about right after the storm," said Culotta, a legal secretary who has worked for the firm nine

years. "But one thing we did not have to worry about was losing our jobs, or for that matter, even missing a check."

Immediately after the storm, Johnson, Johnson, Barrios & Yacoubian opened offices in Lafayette and Baton Rouge and helped staff members relocate.

Melissa Broussard, a paralegal, said her employers "let employees do what they needed to do to get their lives back in order," adding that the firm's management has shown flexibility and adopted an open-door policy for its staff.

The firm has also expanded its benefits and perks to make life easier for its employees, said Elia Lopez, a legal assistant at Johnson, Johnson, Barrios & Yacoubian.

"I think the benefits here, particularly after Katrina, are very competitive," Lopez said, "which is just one more way that they show their appreciation for us."

Those perks include a health care package that provides 91 percent coverage, with dental and vision, as well as a 5 percent match in a 401(k) plan and four weeks of annual sick time.

With an average starting salary of just more than \$22,000

and an average median salary of \$42,000, Johnson, Johnson, Barrios & Yacoubian employees "are treated like people, not machines," Culotta said.

"I was pregnant and had problems and never once did I have to worry about my job still being there for me when I got back," she said. "I actually had to leave for four months and during that whole time, I would get calls from one of the partners and others asking how I was and telling me not to worry about anything concerning my job."

Lopez, meanwhile, has been inspired by the firm's wide practice area, which includes medical malpractice, trucking and transportation litigation, federal and state workers' compensation, and energy and offshore litigation.

"I am working on the admiralty and maritime side and am fascinated by it all," Lopez said. "I have only been here for about two years. But because of the wide range of work this firm does, I have gotten more hands-on experience than I probably would have in any other firm during the same period of time."•

— Garry Boulard



From left: Design the Planet senior graphic designer Perryn Olson, designer and writer Julia Crenshaw-Smith and graphic designer Erin Allen review color samples for an upcoming project.

14 Design the Planet

Employees: nine

Average starting salary: \$28,000

Median salary: \$40,000

Benefits: health care benefits, continuing education, relocation assistance, telecommuting, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, subsidized meals, paid maternity leave

Wait time for benefits: one year

Paid time off: two weeks

Web site: www.designtheplanet.com

DESIGN THE PLANET employees have put a wrench in the cliché: You're not supposed to work while you're on vacation.

Last year's end-of-the-year company strategic meeting to discuss annual goals and strategies took place during a four-day, three-night Caribbean cruise for employees and spouses.

"We spent the mornings planning the coming year and strategizing on growth and new technology and industries we would like to expand to, and then we spent our nights relaxing and getting to know each other better," said chief brand marketing officer Robert Folse, who along with his wife, Adrienne, started the New Orleans-based brand marketing

and graphic design company in 1998. "It gives everybody a chance to focus on the big picture and our goals, while we are away from the hustle and bustle."

Design the Planet, which has nine employees, provides marketing and design services such as print media, digital animation, strategic planning and logo development to small and medium-sized businesses.

Erin Allen, a graphic designer for a year and a half with Design the Planet, said when a new project comes in, everybody has a brainstorming session to discuss client goals and strategies.

"It's a brainstorming process that is very effective," Allen said. "Nobody is afraid to come up with any ideas, no matter how bizarre."

Design the Planet's average starting salary is \$28,000, while the median salary is \$40,000. There is a one-year wait for benefits, which include 50 percent of health care insurance costs paid by the company and two weeks paid vacation. Continuing education is offered and encouraged, said Folse, in the form of trade shows, seminars and other events.

Employees are able to work on a flexible-hour schedule as long as they meet a required number of billable hours each week.

"The flexible schedule is a big plus," said Ryan Colgin, a graphic designer with the company for two years. "It gives you an opportunity to run a few errands if you need to or if you have friends coming in town, you work harder earlier in the week and then ask for time off when you need it as long as you stay on top of project deadlines."

There is free financial consulting for employees through Folse, a certified financial adviser.

There is a free in-house espresso, coffee and healthy snacks bar, and the company has a Fun Friday every month where they go to lunch on the boss' nickel and take field trips to places such as the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Louisiana SPCA or the glow-in-the-dark golf course at Clearview Mall.

They had a holiday party last year at the New Orleans Glassworks and Printmaking Factory on Magazine Street. Colgin said he took several follow-up classes to learn more about the craft.

"It gave me a chance to try something new that I never thought of," Colgin said. "I like that we get out and do a lot of activities in New Orleans because of the culture that we can experience."•

— Tommy Santora



Advanced Imaging Solutions owner Kathryn Smith reviews a document with employee Shane Kuhn.

15 Advanced Imaging Solutions

Employees: 13

Average starting salary: \$25,000

Median salary: \$45,000

Benefits: health care benefits, prescription, dental, vision, flexible hours, employee recognition program, 401(k)

Wait time for benefits: immediate

Paid time off: one week

Web site: www.signature-dmc.com

OVER THE PAST several years, the Advanced Imaging Solutions Inc. staff dealt with a lot of personal hardships. But the one constant they have been able to rely on is their bosses, Lynne and Katherine Smith, the company founders and co-owners, will give unwavering support.

Rose Rosenberger, an administrative assistant at Advanced Imaging, started working with the company in 1998 but left in 2000 to care for sick parents. When she was able to return in 2003, the company welcomed her back with open arms.

"They work around people's schedules if they're in school

or have doctor's appointments," Rosenberger said.

Pat Anderson, a service manager, was diagnosed with kidney cancer. Even though treatments required him to miss a few months of work, he still received paychecks and is allowed to continue to miss work for his twice weekly dialysis treatments.

The Smiths came through for their employees in several ways after Hurricane Katrina.

"We had 40 employees working all over the place," Lynne Smith said.

To assist his employees, he had equipment delivered to the homes where employees were living. He also opened an office in Baton Rouge so employees who had evacuated there could work together and lean on each other for support.

However, the Smiths did not just assist their employees in being able to work.

Ethel Abram lived in Chalmette after her home was inundated. Abram was devastated her collection of porcelain dolls was caught in the floodwaters.

"They were like my babies," Abram said.

Katherine Smith took it upon herself to save Abram's doll collection, meticulously hand washing the dolls' hair, clothes

and bodies. She even dried out the dolls on her front lawn. One day at the office, Katherine Smith approached Abram with a container in her arms. When Smith opened it, Abram saw she had managed to save most of her dolls.

"They didn't look like anything had ever been wrong with them," Abram said.

In addition to aiding their employees, the Smiths sent care packages to clients.

"We'd worked with them for years and many of them lived in New Orleans East and Chalmette," Lynne Smith said.

"When you become a customer, you become a part of their family," Rosenberger said.

Even when things are less hectic than after Katrina, the environment at Advanced Imaging is encouraging and supportive. Anderson, who's been at Advanced Imaging for 10 years, said his employer gives him a lot of freedom.

"I've done the same job for other people and I used to have a lot more people looking over my shoulder. ... Here, I have a lot of autonomy in the way I do things," Anderson said. •

— Fritz Esker

New Orleans Best Places to Work: Large companies

(Ranked by CityBusiness panel based on salary, benefits, employee atmosphere and culture)

Rank	Name Address Nature of business	Phone Fax	Average starting salary (annually) Median salary (annually)	Employment length for benefit eligibility	Number of employees	Benefits																
						Daycare options	Health care benefits	Paid maternity	Continuing education	Relocation assistance	401(k) / % match	Prescription	Telecommuting	Dental	Vision	Flexible hours	Job sharing	Employee recognition program	Fitness program	Subsidized meals		
25	Durr Heavy Construction 817 Hickory Ave. Harahan 70123 <i>Construction</i>	737-3205 737-3905	\$37,828 \$46,110	30 for health care benefits 90 days for sick/personal leave	107		•		•		•			•	•	•		•				
26	John Ehret High School 4300 Patriot St. Marrero 70072 <i>Education</i>	340-7651 3407295	\$41,000 \$51,000	immediately	160		•		•		•	•		•	•			•	•			
27	Benjamin Franklin High School 2001 Leon C. Simon Drive New Orleans 70122 <i>Education</i>	286-2600 286-2642	\$37,748 \$53,025	immediately	66		•		•		•	•		•	•			•				
28	Strategic Employee Benefit Services of Louisiana 111 Veterans Blvd., Suite 940 Metairie 70005 <i>Insurance</i>	831-8146 828-3649	\$32,000 \$50,000	one month	50		•				•	•		•		•	•	•				
29	Dickie Brennan and Co. 605 Canal St. New Orleans 70130 <i>Restaurant</i>	521-8313 523-1633	\$34,000 \$41,000	three to six months	327		•	•			•				•	•		•				
30	Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group 550 Bienville St. New Orleans 70130 <i>Restaurant</i>	539-5525 581-9795	\$38,474 \$39,500	three months	540	•	•	•			•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•		
31	Harrah's New Orleans Casino and Hotel 365 Canal St., Suite 950 New Orleans 70130 <i>Tourism</i>	533-6085 533-6714	\$24,390 \$40,715	90 days	2,416	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
32	McGlinchey Stafford PLLC 643 Magazine St. New Orleans 70130 <i>Law firm</i>	586-1200 586-2800	\$44,000 non-attorney personnel \$48,000 non-attorney personnel	six months	192 locally		•		•		•	•		•	•	•			•	•		
33	Louisiana Public Health Institute 1515 Poydras St., Suite 1200 New Orleans 70112 <i>Health care</i>	301-9800 301-9801	\$46,594 \$44,100	first of the month following 30 days	73		•	•	•		•	•		•	•	•						•
34	Toyota of New Orleans 13150 I-10 Service Road New Orleans 70128 <i>Auto dealer</i>	940-0000 910-3060	\$350/month \$500/month	30 days	65		•		•		•	•		•	•			•				•
35	Stewart Enterprises Inc. 1333 S. Clearview Parkway Harahan 70123 <i>Death care</i>	729-1959 729-1984	\$22,000 \$33,800	90 days	500 locally		•		•		•	•		•	•	•		•				

NA-Not applicable/Not Available WND- Would Not Disclose

To be considered for this list in the future, contact us at 834-9292, or by mail at 111 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Suite 1440, Metairie, LA 70005.

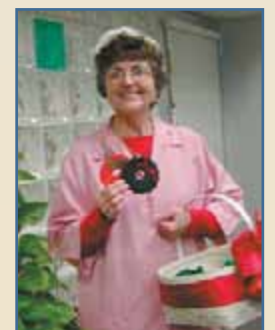


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