

BEST NONPROFITS TO WORK FOR 2013

Flexibility and ties to mission keep employees loving their jobs

By GARY MORTON

The Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) hasn't rested on its laurels since being selected as the *Best Nonprofit to Work For* in an annual survey by *The NonProfit Times* the past two years. Its leadership team noted that some of the comments from last year's surveys coincided with their own observations so they developed a "compassion fatigue workshop" for the staff.

Both staff and the leadership realized that

when working with "wounded warriors" -- injured veterans -- after they return home, they often deal with mental health issues such as grief, loss and coping. "The staff working with these people can feel that, too," said Steven Nardizzi, WWP's executive director. But staff members sometimes are hesitant to talk about their feelings since "you often feel like you're the only feeling it," he said.

The workshop brings together employees who face the same stress factors because "we

want to let them know others have the same feelings," Nardizzi said. Participants learn physical and mental techniques to recognize and relieve stress that could lead to compassion fatigue and receive software so they can review what they learned.

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Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) teammates, both staff and warriors, assist one another as they climb an obstacle wall in Tough Mudder. Image provided by Wounded Warrior Project.

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"There's a growing need (for the organization's work) and our staff is working long hours," Nardizzi said. "We need to take care of our staff so they are able to give 110 percent to the organization's mission."

WWP developed the program. "We have a staff with the expertise so we got them to help develop it," he said. "Why not rely on your own staff expertise to help you to help them?"

Development of the compassion fatigue workshop underscores why WWP in Jacksonville, Fla., again is at the top of *The NonProfit Times' Best Nonprofits to Work For*, both for large organizations with 249 or more employees and for all nonprofits surveyed.

Best Companies Group (BCG) of Harrisburg, Pa., conducted the survey and prepared the rankings in conjunction with *The NonProfit Times*. Each nonprofit provided information on such areas as benefits and employment practices. Employees were given a confidential survey of statements with which they could agree or disagree covering eight general categories: Leadership and Planning, Corporate Culture and Communications, Role Satisfaction, Work Environment, Relationship with Supervisor, Training and Development, Pay and Benefits, and Overall Employee Engagement.

The average for all nonprofits that participated was 85 percent favorable rating; for those making the Best Workplaces list the average was 89 percent.

The best averages came in Work Environment, 92 percent for all nonprofits surveyed and 94 for those making the list; Relationship with Supervisor, 89 percent of all and 92 percent for those making the list; and, Role Satisfaction and Overall Employee Engagement, each with 88 percent approval for all and 90 percent for those making the list.

Training and Development ranked lowest, at 72 and 77 percent, respectively. The section included opportunity

NPT's BEST NONPROFITS TO WORK FOR 2013 Top 50		
Rank	Organization Listing	U.S. Employees
1	Wounded Warrior Project, Jacksonville FL	290
2	SightLife, Seattle WA	92
3	AHC Inc, Arlington VA	63
4	New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants, Roseland NJ	39
5	Partnership for Public Service, Washington DC	62
6	The Center for Effective Philanthropy, Cambridge MA	36
7	Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Daytona Beach FL	91
8	Brighton Center, San Antonio TX	91
9	Alzheimer's Association, Chicago IL	337
10	The National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Washington DC	26
11	DoSomething.org, New York NY	40
12	Arts Midwest, Minneapolis MN	22
13	Better Business Bureau serving Central, Coastal, Southwest Texas and the Permian Basin, Austin TX	70
14	The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, Washington DC	46
15	National Industries for the Blind, Alexandria VA	158
16	Children's Law Center, Washington DC	77
17	Natural Resources Defense Council, Chicago IL	385
18	Earth Force, Denver CO	16
19	The LIVESTRONG Foundation, Austin TX	96
20	Jumpstart for Young Children, Boston MA	120
21	Harlem RBI, New York NY	71
22	NOLS, Lander WY	195
23	Career Path Services, Spokane WA	91
24	Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands, Omaha NE	22
25	PENCIL Inc., New York NY	27
26	Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse, Tucson AZ	72
27	Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, Tucson AZ	110
28	Pathway Homes, Inc., Fairfax VA	91
29	NeedyMeds, Inc, Gloucester MA	15
30	Make-A-Wish Illinois, Chicago IL	39
31	American Heart Association, Dallas TX	2,712
32	Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Alexandria VA	91
33	Caring Voice Coalition, Inc., Mechanicsville VA	58
34	Human Rights Campaign, Washington DC	144
35	The New York Stem Cell Foundation, New York NY	50
36	Aspell Recovery Center, Jackson TN	28
37	Year Up, San Francisco CA	289
38	Summer Search, San Francisco CA	105
39	Cross-Cultural Solutions, New Rochelle NY	42
40	Dogs for the Deaf, Inc., Central Point OR	30
41	PRS, Inc., McLean VA	67
42	PENCIL Foundation, Nashville TN	24
43	Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Mountain View CA	110
44	Kessler Foundation, West Orange NJ	94
45	Kaboom!, Washington DC	85
46	American Councils for International Education, Washington DC	155
47	iMentor, New York NY	84
48	The Mission Continues, New York NY	38
49	National Communication Association, Washington DC	15
50	Masonic Homes of Kentucky, Inc., Masonic Home KY	510

for advancement, which especially in smaller organizations is limited.

Other category results were: Corporate Culture and Communications, 86

percent and 90 percent, respectively; Leadership and Planning, 85 and 90, respectively; and, Pay and Benefits, 83 and 87, respectively.

"Organizations that make the list have been successful in creating unique cultures where employees love to come to work," said Peter Burke, BCG president. "The leaders of the winning organizations understand their cultural values and they live their cultural values."

Nonprofits differ from many for-profit or public sector businesses and organizations, Burke said. "For the most part, they are led by and organized by people who have a very strong passion for the mission of the organization. That can't be said for the public sector or for-profit organizations."

Most large nonprofits on this year's list show flexibility in benefits that allow them to, in essence, practice what they preach. WWP's compassion fatigue workshop is one example. Other examples include five days annual leave for elder care offered by the Alzheimer's Association; wellness programs by the American Heart Association; and, a discount on Patagonia apparel, described as "an eco-conscience brand that makes great clothes," offered employees of the Natural Resources Defense Council. Such benefits "absolutely set a tone for working there," Burke said.

The Alzheimer's Association in Chicago, Ill., launched the elder care benefit several years ago as it developed a "Best Practices" list for business and organizations, said Angela Geiger, chief strategy officer. "We decided to look inward. For a long time we have had a school visitation day" but there was no benefit to help care for elderly relatives. Yet, Alzheimer's disease is a disease usually associated with the elderly.

"Elder care is becoming a huge issue in the workplace," Geiger said. "One in seven adults report having to take time off to care for elderly parents. We see this as a way of adding parity."

She believes the elder care benefit paid off in the Best NonProfits to Work for survey, judging from the comments she read. "One of the things they cite is 'our commitment to our vision, living it every day.'"

Aylesa Swanson, senior associate director of direct marketing for the organi-



zation, knows firsthand the value of the elder care benefit. She has used it to assist in the care of her mother, who has Parkinson's disease. "It helps you feel secure about your job" while still tending to the needs of her mother, Swanson said. "It helps to keep you healthier by not having to worry about your job."

The benefit is very flexible. Employees may use anywhere from half an hour to the complete 7.5-hour workday at a time. Some days you might only need an hour or two, Swanson said, while other times, such as when her mother has a neurology appointment, can eat up the whole day.

The Alzheimer's Association also has a flexible scheduling that allows employees to work from home on occasion. Swanson has used that and half a day of elder care to help her mother.

Elder care is one of several factors that contribute to Alzheimer's Association's corporate culture, Geiger said. First, "we have a very clear mission, strategic plan. All of our employees know their role and how they contribute to that mission, from top to bottom." Second, the association believes in being flexible in working with their employees' personal needs, a "recognition of the hard work and long hours employees often work."

The association solicits employee feedback and suggestions. One such ve-

hicle is an "innovation box" that encourages the staff to suggest ways how things can be done better or to improve understanding of the mission and then impact of the organization's work.

Geiger said one employee noted that the organization sponsors an annual Alzheimer's Association conference of leading researchers on the disease. "Can someone go to experience it and come back and report on what it feels like to be in the middle of our mission, to be in

Large Organizations (250 or more Employees)		
Rank	Employer Listing	U.S. Employees
1	Wounded Warrior Project	290
2	Alzheimer's Association	337
3	Natural Resources Defense Council	385
4	American Heart Association	2,712
5	Year Up	289
6	Masonic Homes of Kentucky, Inc.	510

the midst of all these researchers?" the employee asked.

That "innovation" was quickly implemented, Geiger said. "I think it's made them more part of the work we do that they don't get to see every day."

One sign of the corporate culture's success is the "more than 100 percent participation of employees" in fundraising and awareness efforts. They not only

participate in at least one of the annual programs, "but they recruit their families and friends, too. That demonstrates that Alzheimer's Association isn't just a job; it's something they are passionate about," Geiger said.

The American Heart Association in Dallas, Texas, offers employees a wellness program called "It's All About Me," which includes 12 healthy living programs, personal health coaching, physical activity and nutrition tracking tools,

and quarterly challenges. Those who participate in the voluntary program receive wellness credits that can be used for incentives such as prizes or paid time off.

AHA also sponsors American Heart University, aimed at improving staff member's performance through online classes and in-person workshops.

"When we provide employees the resources to improve their own health and

drive our mission, we find they are more productive, more engaged, and more satisfied at the office," said Katherine Neverdousky, vice president of human resources.

At the Natural Resources Defense Council, leaders figure they need to practice what they preach – care for the environment and ecology. The organization's offices in New York City are in a "green" building that has a composting station on the grounds, said Mercedes Falber, human resources director. NRDC diligently recycles as a natural way of doing business, gets milk from a dairy, and has copiers that automatically print on each side of the paper. The organization also works with Patagonia, considered an eco-friendly clothing line, to provide discounts for employees.

Not surprisingly, a person who typically applies for a job at the NRDC tends to "have a vested interest in our mission," Falber said. The work environment and culture reinforce that sense of unified mission, something Falber thinks is visible to those who deal with NRDC.

"It's important to be seen that way," she said, "even when we rent cars, we rent hybrids." *NPT*

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Employee Referrals Gets Jobs Filled, Challenges Keep Them Going

By GARY MORTON

One of PRS Inc.'s best recruiting tools happens to be its own employees. Some 30 percent of all hires are from employee referrals to the McLean, Va., nonprofit that works with individuals with mental illness, emotional and behavioral disorders.

"In my experience, the higher the referrals by employees the better," said Virginia Tischner, director of human resources. "Employees who value their work, who work for a good organization, are willing to tell their friends or professional acquaintances about the opportunities we have."

PRS nurtured such an atmosphere through its efforts to not only hire the right people, but to ensure those hired fully understand their jobs and how they relate to the PRS's overall goals. A new hire undergoes an entrance interview between three and six months after they start work. The organization wants to gauge how accurately the work was explained during the hiring process, orientation and training; determine initial job satisfaction; and, discover areas that may need improvement.

"Our on-boarding piece has dramatically changed" because of feedback from the entrance interviews as well as from exit interviews and employee surveys, Tischner said. Now "we know that every employee is getting the same information in the same way," in a manner that relates to each specific job, she said.

Wendy Gradison, president and CEO, said all the agency's top managers participate in the orientation so each new hire understands the role of the organization and how it fits into the community, PRS's operations and services, the

Medium Organizations (50 - 249 Employees)		
Rank	Employer Listing	U.S. Employees
1	SightLife	92
2	AHC Inc	63
3	Partnership for Public Service	62
4	Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida	91
5	Brighton Center	91
6	Better Business Bureau serving Central, Coastal, Southwest Texas and the Permian Basin	70
7	National Industries for the Blind	158
8	Children's Law Center	77
9	The LIVESTRONG Foundation	96
10	Jumpstart for Young Children	120
11	Harlem RBI	71
12	NOLS	195
13	Career Path Services	91
14	Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse	72
15	Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona	110
16	Pathway Homes, Inc.	91
17	Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)	91
18	Caring Voice Coalition, Inc	58
19	Human Rights Campaign	144
20	The New York Stem Cell Foundation	50
21	Summer Search	105
22	PRS, Inc.	67
23	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	110
24	Kessler Foundation	94
25	Kaboom!	85
26	American Councils for International Education	155
27	iMentor	84

agency's financial picture and how each individual role affects that picture.

"We think it's very important that every employee understand that everything they do helps not only the client, but also helps PRS meet its goals."

PRS ranked 22nd on this year's *The NonProfit Times' 2013 Best Nonprofits to Work For* list of medium-sized organizations (50 to 249 employees). The employee referrals, entrance interviews and orientation for new employees, indicate a strong focus toward "Training and Development" and "Corporate Culture and Communications," two of eight areas included in a survey of employees of par-

ticipating nonprofits.

Training and Development proved the weakest category, across the board, for nonprofits. Results showed the percentage of favorable responses (Agree Somewhat or Agree Strongly) across the board as 72 percent among all medium-sized nonprofit employees surveyed and 75 percent for those chosen for the list. Statements to which employees were asked to confidentially agree or disagree include: "This organization provided as much initial training as I needed" and "This organization provides enough information, equipment and resources I need to do my job well."

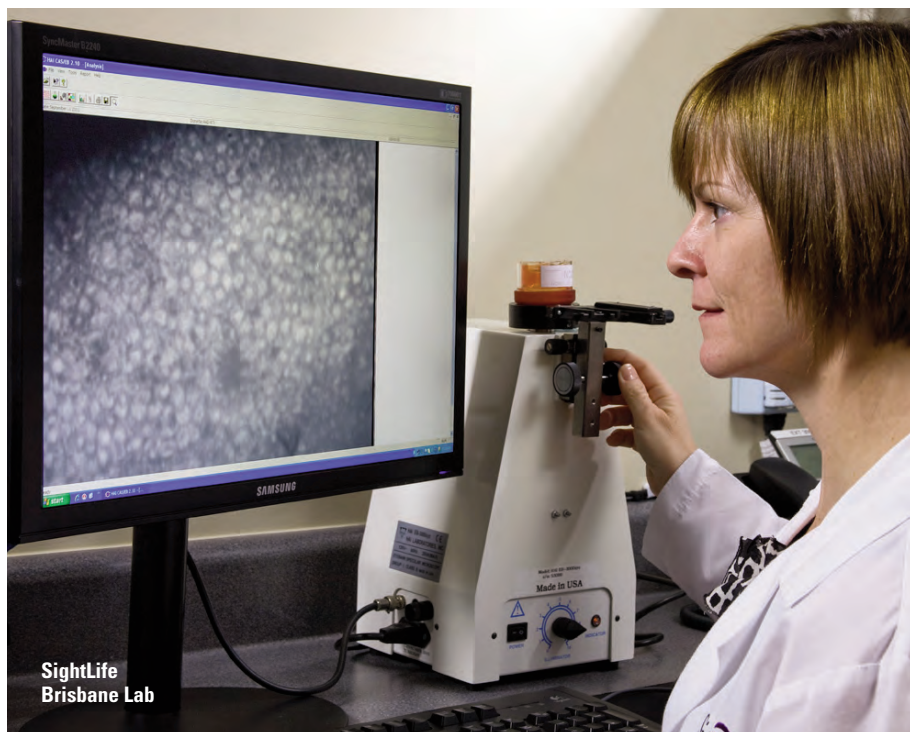
Corporate Culture and Communications received an 86 percent favorable rating among all medium-sized nonprofits surveyed and 90 percent among those that made the list. Its statements include: "I can trust what this organization tells me" and "I have a good understanding of how this organization is doing financially."

The emphasis is on corporate culture at SightLife, a Seattle, Wash.-based nonprofit that focuses on eliminating corneal blindness in the United States and worldwide. Part of that emphasis comes at every board or staff meeting, when a letter from a recipient of a donated cornea and another from the family of a donor are read. The pool for such letters is large. SightLife and its partners provided more than 10,800 corneas for transplant during 2011.

The letters "keep our people engaged in mission" and show the outcome of the organization's efforts, said Russell Kelly, chief marketing officer.

Since SightLife is "very mission-oriented," Kelly said the organization puts an emphasis on recruiting and keeping "top talent" people who fit into the corporate culture. Some of the steps to find the right person may at first seem almost ghoulish. For example, since SightLife harvests corneas for donation, someone considered for that position must go out to a morgue to salvage one. "Generally we do it late at night because that is usually the pattern the people will work in," Kelly said. "We want to make sure they fully understand the role they go into so they will be happy and successful."

Troy Win'E remembers the night in 2006 when SightLife officials called him at 2:30 a.m. to go to a Seattle-area hospi-



tal to recover a cornea. "It's a real situation the first time you go in and perform a cornea recovery or observe one," Win'E said. "I was pre-med before and I had worked in cadaver labs so I was pretty used to it."

Not all recovery staff are as prepared as he was on his first recovery mission, said Win'E, now recovery services manager who oversees the hiring and training of most recovery staff members. He recalls one applicant, an emergency medical technician he accompanied on a recovery mission who fainted.

"It makes very clear what certain aspects of the job are and gives them sometimes the worst aspects of the position so they can determine if they want this job," he said.

Since people die around the clock, the recovery technician's work might just as easily come in the middle of the night, as during the application process. "The ultimate goal is to make sure the cornea is transplanted successfully. The earlier we can get that cornea the more of a chance for success," he said.

SightLife ranked as the best place to work among medium-sized nonprofits and second overall, behind Wounded Warrior Project.

One of the challenges for SightLife is its reliance on part-time or per diem staff. "They're not as connected to the mission," Kelly said, "so we have to find ways of engaging them to the mission and keeping them abreast of what is going on in the organization."

SightLife has developed ways to provide some benefits for those employees, such as involvement in the retirement program. "That was a big change for them; they felt they were not just a part-time worker but a part of the organization," Kelly said. SightLife also is developing an e-zine about what the organization does globally and is studying other communication tools.

Not all the communication efforts have to be major undertakings. SightLife also sends minutes of staff meetings to its employees. "It was one of those 'Aha' moments," Kelly said of that decision. "Why do they feel disconnected? Oh, they're not coming to staff meetings."

Partnership for Public Service in Washington, D.C., ranked third on the medium-sized nonprofits list. It places a strong emphasis on staff development and leadership. According to Max Stier, president and chief executive officer, "mission alone is not enough. Mission without good management does not get you very far."

The Partnership, a nonpartisan organization that encourages young people into public service and works to revitalize the federal government, provides staff reviews three times a year. Before the individual reviews, the senior management team reviews the entire staff as a group to decide on specific focus areas and what the personal reviews should cover. The reviews go beyond the individual, though, to include the team to which the

individual is assigned. The emphasis is to identify the strengths and weaknesses not only of the individual but the team as well, and to identify the talents of individual team members that could be used by other teams as well.

Part of the staff development includes a SPARC (for Strategy, Participation, Alignment, Results and Culture) team where junior staff members have worked on such projects as developing an organization-wide training curriculum, identifying the "organizational effi-

ciencies," and planning the annual staff retreat. "All of this ties in to our staff survey, which identified these issues as being important issues of focus for the Partnership and for SPARC," Stier said.

The emphasis on staff development and communication touches on at least three of the eight categories discussed in *The NonProfit Times* survey: the mentioned Training and Development, and Relationship with Supervisor and Overall Employee Engagement. Among all medium-sized organizations surveyed,

89 percent of respondents expressed general satisfaction in their Relationship Engagement the scores were 88 percent for all medium-sized nonprofits surveyed and 90 percent for those making the Best Places list.

"The bottom line," he said, "is a laser focus on the fact that our success depends upon our people." *NPT*



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Small Can Come Up Big When It's Employee Relations

By GARY MORTON

Blair Edwards took the staff of The National Society of Collegiate Scholars to view an exhibit titled "1001 Inventions" at the National Geographic Museum one day earlier this year.

When they returned to their Washington, D.C., offices, Edwards, the society's associate vice president for strategic engagement, led an "innovation workshop." As part of the exercise, teams stacked plastic cups as high as they could. Some used pyramid-type stacks atop a table. Other groups took less conventional approaches to the assignment. One person held a base stacked with cups over her head as she stood; another hopped onto a table and built a tower of cups over a base of upside-down postal service baskets.

The day provided an example in how innovation happens. "It's usually a small little tweak," Edwards said. Afterward the staff discussed innovations they might like to see in the society's operations.

The National Geographic exhibit reinforced the culture that society officers encourage. They want an interactive workplace where anyone's suggestions will be considered. The coordinator of member engagement alerted Edwards this past fall that many campus chapters scheduled service projects in November. She suggested that the national office recognize the month. "I said 'Let's do it.' November became our 'Let's Do Service' month," said Edwards.

"If someone has a great idea, regardless of what their level is, we're going to try it," she said. "If it goes wrong, we're able to learn from it and go on to another idea."

The openness to new ideas and encouragement of staff members to make suggestions helps make for a satisfied

Small Organizations (15 - 49 Employees)		
Rank	Employer Listing	U.S. Employees
1	New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants	39
2	The Center for Effective Philanthropy	36
3	The National Society of Collegiate Scholars	26
4	DoSomething.org	40
5	Arts Midwest	22
6	The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia	46
7	Earth Force	16
8	Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands	22
9	PENCIL Inc.	27
10	NeedyMeds, Inc	15
11	Make-A-Wish Illinois	39
12	Aspell Recovery Center	28
13	Cross-Cultural Solutions	42
14	Dogs for the Deaf, Inc.	30
15	PENCIL Foundation	24
16	The Mission Continues	38
17	National Communication Association	15

work force. The National Society of Collegiate Scholars placed third among small organizations (15 to 49 employees) on *The NonProfit Times'* list of *Best NonProfits to Work For*.

If the society and the two other top-ranking small nonprofits are any example, a focus on employee relations and on their needs is vital to creating a favorable work environment. The New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants in Roseland, N.J., which ranked first, placed an emphasis on training and development this year, after citing that area as a major concern following last year's NPT survey. The Center for Effective Philanthropy, which placed second, developed new communications systems several years ago after an employee survey showed that members of a newly opened San Francisco office were less satisfied than those in the central office in Cambridge, Mass.

The National Society of Collegiate Scholars' innovations day suggests that the organization values its Corporate Culture and Communications, one of eight

general categories in which employees were asked to agree or disagree with a variety of statements. The innovation day seemed to fit particularly well into two statements in that category, "The organization treats me like a person, not a number" and "I believe there is a spirit of cooperation at this organization."

Overall small nonprofits scored highly in this category, with 88 percent favorable responses (agree somewhat or agree strongly) from employees of all small organizations participating in the survey; those named on the Best Places list averaged 92 percent approval.

The innovation project also tied in with at least one statement in Role Satisfaction, "I feel I am valued in this organization."

The New Jersey Society of CPAs is small, with only 40 employees, "so there's not much room for advancement" which is one of the components covered in the Training and Development section of the survey, said Ellen McSherry, chief operating officer. That led the executive team to focus on "how we can help each individ-

ual advance his or her own skills, whether inside or outside the office."

This year's survey showed a marked improvement, she said, with employee satisfaction rising from 74 percent of respondents last year to 85 percent. The average for all small organizations this year was 74 percent satisfaction and 78 percent for those that made the best places listing.

The emphasis on training makes sense for practical reasons, as well as for improving employee morale, McSherry said. "The world is changing. What was a good skills set 10 years ago isn't necessarily a good skills set now."

One of the society's strengths, a long-tenured staff with an average employment of about 12 years, might have resulted in a weakness in staying up with technology. Four retirements during the past three years brought in new blood, which McSherry called "exciting because with social media coming into play -- video marketing, professional education -- we needed different skill sets. These newer people coming in are bringing them."

The society does not want to solely rely upon the newcomers in technological areas, so long-time employees are being retrained. Every Thursday in February, for example, employees attended a 90-minute session on various elements of social media -- Facebook, Twitter, etc. Each employee had a photograph taken by a new staff person who does all of the society's video work. The pictures will grace the employees' Facebook and Twitter accounts, through which they are encouraged to stay in touch with member CPAs throughout the state.

The organization lacks the glamour appeal of many nonprofits, such as Wounded Warrior Project, which naturally attracts certain types of workers who



National Society of Collegiate Scholars



New Jersey Society of CPAs

have a passion for the mission, McSherry acknowledged. Her organization compensates by helping employees understand why their work is important and by showing the society's concern for them, which involves several tactics. Once a year the society has a pot-luck luncheon. Recipes are compiled in a public folder for all employees to view and use. Birthdays are celebrated with gourmet offerings. And, each summer the organization takes a field day. Staff members have toured Ellis Island and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, attended a wine tasting, played miniature golf and cruised around Manhattan. A team of five or six employees plans the day's activities.

"Those of us who don't do the work (organizing the outing) truly benefit because we're treated like royalty that day," McSherry said.

NJSCPA Outreach Coordinator Lauren Matullo said tips she picked up during the February social media training are already paying off, especially in her responsibilities as Next Generation Outreach Coordinator. She previously relied on mail, email and face-to-face contact. "I've been able to make more contacts with Twitter and LinkedIn," Matullo said. "When students get an email, if it doesn't catch their attention right away they delete it."

Before the social media training, "I was up-to-date with Facebook but more on a personal level," Matullo said. She learned such media as Twitter and Pinterest and discovered that "while I was on LinkedIn, I wasn't using it to the best ability." She's noticed an increase in students registering for those events after she announces it on LinkedIn.

The training impressed on Matullo a sense that the NJSCPA managers see the benefit in letting staff "connect with society, use our social media to their advantage."

The Center for Effective Philanthropy issued a report this past December "Employee Empowerment: The Key to Foundation Staff Satisfaction." A news release quoted center President Phil Buchanan as saying: "If you're a foundation leader, the bottom line is that you have the power to increase your staff's satisfaction. It doesn't have to cost you money or involve a reduction in staff workload. Our data shows that you can empower your employees by providing clear direction, showing devotion to your employees, and giving useful performance reviews. In other words, it's all about leadership."

He said, "There's no reason to believe that that would be particularly different for nonprofits."

One of the advantages of a small organization such as Buchanan's is the interaction it allows between the leadership and the staff. "We're small enough, with 38 people, that I try to make opportunities to work on projects with most of our people," Buchanan said, something other members of the leadership team also try to do. "We try to make sure that the organizational structure doesn't get in the way of interaction."

He's learned to pay close attention to

employee surveys. "There's always something, and usually two or three things where we say, 'You know, we can do better on this. Let's figure out how.'"

A survey several years ago, after the center opened a San Francisco office, uncovered signs of growing pains, he said. At the existing office in Cambridge, Mass., everyone knew and interacted personally with each other on a daily basis. Those in the San Francisco office were aware of that culture in Massachusetts, which apparently made them feel

at least partially left out of the loop. Leadership viewed it as primarily a communications issue, Buchanan said, so the center began a Yammer account (a Twitter-like media for intra-organization communications) for sharing both company and personal information.

People in each office were designated to gather and compile from fellow employees water cooler-style information about what was happening in their lives; that information was shared with the other office.

The strategy apparently worked. "The next time we did a survey, we saw there was no difference in ratings between the two offices."

All it took was a leadership that showed devotion to its staff and provided a clear direction to overcome the challenge. Or, as Buchanan put it in the December news release: "It's all about leadership." *NPT*



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