

#16 Medium Company on the 2007 Best Small & Medium Companies to Work for in America List



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HR Magazine: Compassion, Commitment Fuel Society on a Mission

A caring culture and a commitment to excellence are the prescription for a healthy, productive work environment at the Massachusetts Medical Society, ranked No. 16 among the Best Medium Companies to Work for in America.

Founded in 1781, the society is the nation's oldest medical association and publisher of the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*. The 200,000-circulation weekly is the flagship of the society's extensive print and online publishing operations that employ more than half of its 410 staff members.

Vice President for Human Resources Theresa Sciarappa prides herself on the employee relations efforts of her seven-person department. Making that one-on-one difference with employees is really rewarding for them....People feel they can go to HR and talk about anything.

While senior management sets high expectations for employees, I think they have a real commitment to the person behind that job position....They have an understanding that there is a personal life as well, says Susan Webb, director of public health and education.

Employees like the culture of respect for both people and the work they're doing, agrees newsletter editor Catherine Ryan. The leadership appreciates us as individual people.

A crown jewel of the society's family-friendly atmosphere is its well-equipped backup day care center.

With a capacity of 12 children up to age 12, the center is available for a \$15 co-pay when illnesses, school closings or other problems interrupt normal day care arrangements. A maternity transition program allows mothers returning from maternity leave to bring their infants to the center for up to another eight weeks. The benefit is so popular that people reserve a space as soon as their pregnancy test turns blue, says Melissa Hennessey, manager of training and employee communications.

Other benefits include 90 percent reimbursement of health insurance premiums, tuition reimbursement, an onsite exercise facility, dental insurance, 401(k) and defined benefit pension plans, and generous vacation time. The benefits package helps make up for nonprofit compensation levels that are somewhat less than market amid the Boston areas high-paying high-tech industry.

But employees often cite their appreciation for the organizations sense of mission and high standards. There is a culture of excellence put on every product, says Daniel Muller, a medical illustrator.

There's a huge attention to detail. I'm amazed by my colleagues on a daily basis not only the knowledge that they bring to the job but their love of it, their willingness to share, says Ryan.

All that good karma contributes to long tenure -- 240 employees have worked there at least six years. The average tenure is 10 years, and annual turnover is a low 6 percent. A quarter of openings were filled internally in the 200506 fiscal year, and many employees are rehires, like Joe Curro Jr., a senior IT developer who returned to the society twice after leaving for ill-fated dot-com jobs.

The staffs long tenure and professional growth especially contributes to providing the associations conference, advocacy and educational services to its 18,000 members, most of whom are physicians and have a 92 percent renewal rate, says Executive Vice President Corinne Broderick. This is a very complex organization; it's not an easy place to understand.

But it is an easy place to find motivation from its mission to advance medical knowledge and promote good health care. Sciarappa quotes a former president who told the staff: At some point in your life, you or someone you love will be sick and you'll realize the value of what you do.