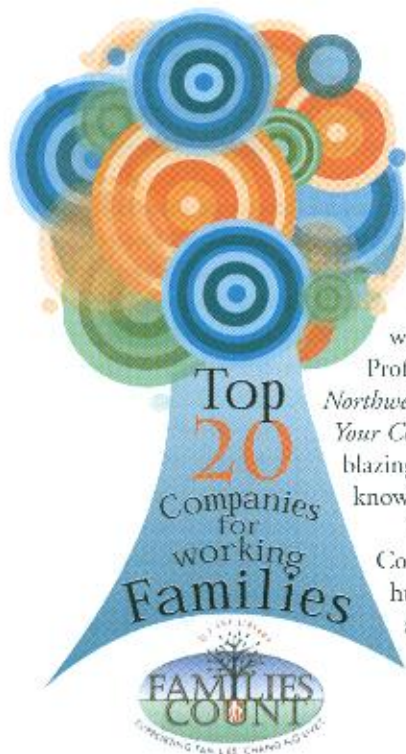


Northwest Florida's Top 20 Companies for Working Families

by Cate Jordan, Families Count Executive Director



Families Count hosted its first annual *Top 20 Companies for Working Families* Competition and Award Ceremony this year in March at the Emerald Coast Conference Center to honor those companies in our community that put families first. As a not-for-profit whose mission is to prevent child abuse by growing healthy families, Families Count wanted to recognize business leaders with a conscience—particularly ones that invest in family-friendly employee benefits. Julian MacQueen, President and CEO of Innisfree Hotels, led the group as the keynote speaker with the profound message of embracing the concept of abundance to promote success. Landrum Professional partnered with Families Count, with media sponsorship by Ballinger Publishing and *Northwest Florida Business Climate*, to host a popular pre-award ceremony conference called *How to Make Your Company a Great Place Work*. The winners of this year's *Top 20 Companies for Working Families* are blazing the trail and going way beyond the traditional Employee Assistance Program (EAP) because they know that the very nature of a company's success ultimately depends on it.

The *Top 20 Companies for Working Families* applicants completed a questionnaire on the Families Count website. Each company then received a computer-generated score related to the number of human resource benefits offered to employees. Twenty winners were electronically ranked, including a number-one for both a large and small companies and a selection team picked the top winner for *Employees Choice Award*, *Community Service Award*, *Cutting Edge Award* and the *Family Champion of the Year*. The winning companies are models for us all.

Top 12-20

#20: The Early Learning Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties: Established a paid stipend in lieu of medical, dental and vision insurance plans due to the fact that a majority of its employees had current coverage under private plans. This stipend gives employees the option of using the monies for other purposes when medical, dental and vision are not desirable for the individual employee.

#19: The Gulf Atlantic Constructors, Inc.: Employees own 30 percent of the company stock with company self-funding at no cost to the employee.

#18: The ARC of Santa Rosa, Inc.: Offers short and long-term disability insurance and financial reimbursement for child care costs when employee is away for business.

#17: Rhubar's Magic Shows: Offers one-on-one financial planning consultation, maternity and paternity leave up to three weeks, 11-15 family activities for employees per year, magic shows for fundraisers with 100 percent proceeds contributed.

#16: COPE Center, Inc.: 60-79 percent of medical insurance coverage is paid by the company, bloodmobile on site, and offers free or subsidized home computers for employees.

#15: Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office: Company pays 100 percent for medical insurance premium and offers a pre-tax flexible spending account for medical expenses, company offers a college savings plan for employee children and \$1,500 in tuition reimbursement for employees.

#14: Big Brothers, Big Sisters of NWFL: 100 percent of medical insurance coverage for all employees and family members, and the company pays for Baptist Healthcare's Get Healthy program.

#13: FastSigns: Company offers both short and long-term disability insurance coverage, financial adoption assistance, and company pays for personal development training.

#12: The Boeing Company: 100 percent medical insurance coverage for employee, employee's family and employee's domestic partner, 75 percent of the first eight percent retirement plan, profit sharing for retirement aside from 401k or 403b, one-three months of maternity leave, company pays 100 percent of employee's tuition costs (no cap).

Top 5-11:

#11-9 Tie (alphabetical order): IMS ExpertServices: Retirement plan for employees who have worked for the company zero-one years—100 percent up to three percent employee deferred and then 50 percent up to five percent employee deferred, profit sharing for retirement aside from 401k or 403b; and on a case by case basis, advances on pay, temporary salary increases, additional time off, and full salary for additional days off for an injury and recuperation time.

O'Sullivan Creel, LLP: Company gives for milestones (\$500 five year, \$1,000 ten year, etc); bounty program that pays for recruiting friends; \$1,500 bonus for passing the CPA exam; new business incentive that pays for new clients, company pays for massages; and during busy seasons, a person takes care of "honey-do's"—everything from delivering lunch money to children at school to meeting the repair man at employee's homes.

Saltmarsh, Cleveland and Gund: On-site workout room that is available for staff to use 24 hours per day; Emergency Leave policy which will provide paid time off for a FMLA event; during the busy time of year, when employees are having to work on the weekend, they can bring their children to work as long as they are not disruptive to the workplace; during the busy tax season, lunch is provided for those who work on Saturday.

#8: Chemical Addictions Recovery Effort, Inc.: Financial planning on-site seminars; one-on-one consultation and customized individualized planning that is company paid; paid maternity and paternity leave for 1-3 months; financial, referral and paid time off for adoption assistance; company offers pet insurance; company vehicles and gas cards for traveling; pays for leave time on the books that is left over when an employee resigns or is deceased. In the event the employee is deceased, the leave time will be given to the beneficiary.

#6 and #7 Tie (alphabetical order): Allstates Employer Services (AES Human Resource Solutions): Financial reimbursement for child care when employees are out-of-town for business; paid vacation as a 10-year anniversary reward; full tuition reimbursement; employees are encouraged to ask for assistance, such as repairing their homes, buying a home, etc.

Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County: 50 percent up to seven percent of 401K retirement plan; company pays for some sick child care; paid time off for adoption assistance; employees are allowed to bring children to work when child care is not available; the work atmosphere encourages personal and professional growth.

#5: Lakeview Center, Inc.: On-site child care services that employees pay with a flexible spending account; financial assistance for adoptions; assisted 121 employees last year with employee crisis fund; four-six on site conveniences; a 20,000-square foot facility that houses a full-size gymnasium, fitness room, dance and exercise room, art studio, four classrooms and an executive meeting room; company offers a Bright Ideas program for employees to take ownership of and contribute ideas toward the improvement of the Lakeview culture and working environment.



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Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County