

BEST PLACES TO WORK

Healthy benefits: Novant wants to make it easier for its employees to do their jobs

BY MICHELLE CATER RASH THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

WINSTON-SALEM — The leadership of the Triad region of Novant Health, which includes Forsyth Medical Center and Thomasville Medical Center, has a pretty simple philosophy when it comes to dealing with employees.

“We want to do whatever makes it easy for an employee so they aren’t worried or distracted while they are here taking care of patients,” says Sallye Liner, the chief operations officer for Novant Health’s Triad region.

That philosophy runs the gamut from providing day care for the sick children of employees to having an on-site farmer’s market every Friday. And it helped to earn the company a score of 89.74 on the Best Places to Work survey, ranking it first among large employers.

To help give employees much needed downtime, Novant also hosts large events like a holiday party and summer picnic as well as smaller events, such as book sales in Forsyth Medical Center’s main lobby.

To meet a wide variety of needs, Novant offers a range of work schedules, from weekend shifts to working three or four hours mid-afternoon, to accommodate employees with children, who are taking classes or who have other scheduling needs.

Novant also places an emphasis on personal growth, encouraging employees to continue their education and offering tuition reimbursement as well as working shift schedules around class schedules so employees can continue to work full-time if they wish.



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Nadine Coles, a teacher at Today’s Child Learning Center at Novant Health, works with 3-year-olds at the center, which is a service provided to employees of Novant Health in Winston-Salem.

The hospital also has clearly defined career ladders, especially for clinical employees, to help them identify skills needed for the next promotion and help them get the appropriate training.

In fact, at least one employee who entered Novant in the entry-level position of certified nursing assistant is now working on her doctorate, thanks to the tuition reimbursement program, says Jason Carter, the vice president of human resources for Novant.

But, employees say, one of the biggest things they like about Novant is the autonomy and freedom they are given to meet patient needs. For example, Forsyth

Medical Center sets aside \$50,000 each year to give staff the opportunity to go above and beyond in meeting patient needs — whether that’s a 50th anniversary party for couple in which one person is hospitalized or a manicure and pedicure for a bedridden expectant mother.

“I think people want to be a part of something that’s bigger than themselves,” Liner says. “This helps to engage the employees in what we’re trying to accomplish as a company, creating a remarkable patient experience.”

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NOVANT HEALTH, TRIAD REGION

Address: 2085 Frontis Plaza Blvd., Winston-Salem 27103

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Description: Hospital

Web site: www.novanthealth.org

Head of organization in the Triad: Paul Wiles, president and CEO

Year established in the Triad: 1997

No. of full-time employees: About 10,000

2007 revenues: Undisclosed

Incentives and rewards: Novant

Health offers flexible scheduling, on-site day care for both sick and well children, and an on-site medical clinic for simple health problems.

What makes your company a finalist?

Novant leaders say they understand that working in health care can create a lot of pressure and stress, so they take extra steps to make sure employees can focus on patient care by taking care of some basic worker needs.

What employees say: “For nearly 21 years, I have felt so meaningfully used that Forsyth Medical Center is part of my soul and I have a niche here that is so special. I have never worked with better people and I have seen outstanding examples of leadership that make me want to work harder and to trust those who lead our hospital and Novant. I hope to work here for many more years and I am so grateful for my extended family at Novant.”