

Group highlights benefits to employers who embrace family-friendly practices

BY [GARRISON WELLS / FOR THE JOURNAL](#)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29TH, 2022 AT 9:18AM



Family Friendly New Mexico founder and CEO Giovanna Rossi, left, and COO Julianna Silva on Jan. 12 admire the view at Los Poblanos Open Space. (Adolphe Pierre-Louis/Journal)

In these dire COVID times and amid a massive labor shortage, being known as a family-friendly business can be a big advantage.

It might make the difference between a hire, and the potential employee who walks away.

“We’re seeing a real need to highlight those things that we’ve been saying all along,” said Giovanna Rossi, founder and CEO of Family Friendly New Mexico. “I think it is really being highlighted and it is being embraced in a stronger way right now, which is great.”

Aside from that considerable impact, being family friendly as a business policy offers a myriad of other benefits. Employees are happier, it helps with retention, productivity increases, and the bottom line likely will get a boost, said Julianna Silva, the nonprofit’s chief operating officer.

“One thing I can say is businesses are now recognizing in their recruitment strategy that potential employees are coming to them and saying I noticed you are a family-friendly workplace and that is why I decide to apply,” Silva said.

Family Friendly, which is seeking applicants for its next group of family-friendly awards, has impacted 247 businesses and 125,623 employees since it was formed in 2015. Awards are platinum, gold, silver and bronze. Companies are measured in such categories as paid leave, health support, work schedules, economic support and compliance with New Mexico laws that support family-friendly processes such as the Nursing Mothers Working Rights Statute, among others.

Policies that address pay equity, diversity and inclusion, and community investment come into play for recipients of the highest award, the platinum level.

At Kei and Molly Textiles in Albuquerque, which has won Family Friendly NM’s gold award the last four years, there are plenty of

- Three weeks of paid vacation between Christmas and New Years Day so staff can have quality time for their families,
- An annual \$500 Wellness Benefit for any health or education expenses – that includes paying employees up to two hours per child to attend parent teacher conferences,
- 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. work hours that allow moms to start work after they drop off their kids for school and to pick them up after school,
- Investment in leadership development to increase job skills and wages.



From left, Liberata Norora, Esther Kapinga and Tahira Akbari work with Kei & Molly Textiles inventory on March 6, 2020. (Roberto E. Rosales/Journal)

Kei and Molly Textiles is not the usual American company. A supporter of immigrants and refugees, it has a staff of 13 women who were born in 10 different countries and in all speak 18 different languages. So other benefits include a monthly potluck to celebrate native foods and cultures, language development on-site to help employees prepare for the test for U.S. citizenship and a volunteer who helps employees when they run into problems, such as help registering their children in school or understanding the U.S. health care system.

“I think that when businesses can really think about how to treat their employees in a way that respects their dignity and supports them in their lives is just good business sense to me,” co-owner Kei Tsuzuki said.

At multiple platinum award-winning company Albuquerque Plumbing Heating and Cooling, families matter, said Laura Smith, assistant communications editor.

“Family comes first at our company,” Smith said. “Every team member is not just part of the family in the company, but families matter. Everybody’s child matters. Because we can support the families here, we can support the families in the community.”



Children of Albuquerque Plumbing Heating & Cooling team members play with pink balloons for Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Oct. 2019. (Courtesy of Albuquerque Plumbing Heating & Cooling)

The company has about 110 employees, she said, and being family friendly has helped with employee retention.

“If my son is sick, I can be with him and not have to be afraid because I am missing a meeting or whether I can make up my hours. I am able to be with my son and be with my family,” Smith said. “We’re all team members. Nobody at our company is an employee.”

“We’re a company that values their team members and wants to invest in them just like the invest in us,” Smith said.

Family Friendly New Mexico is also planning to add leadership programs soon, according to Rossi. That’s spurred in part by trends toward four-day work weeks, remote work and flexible scheduling, in part caused by the pandemic, which has meant that managers also face change, Rossi said.

“The choice between being able to make a living and being able to care for your family is real and faced by thousands of New Mexicans every day,” she said. “Family Friendly policies have proven to attract the best workers and engender more loyalty, dedication and productivity in the workplace.”

Those policies, she said, “will yield enormous long-term benefits for both employees and employers.”

Get recognition

Family Friendly New Mexico is seeking applicants for awards.

Awards are platinum, gold, silver and bronze. Companies are measured in such categories as paid leave, health support, work schedules, economic support and following New Mexico laws. For the highest award, the platinum level, other categories include pay equity, diversity and inclusion and community investment.

For more information about the free program, visit

nmfamilyfriendlybusiness.org/apply-now/