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Rewarding family-friendly firms

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An Oregon group seeks nominations of small businesses that help balance work, home life

By JIM HILL
of The Oregonian staff

Know any Oregon companies that you consider family-friendly? Families in Good Company is looking for nominations to its third-annual awards program.

Entries —through fax or mail — must be postmarked by Friday. Awards will be handed out May 6.

This year, organizers are extending a special invitation to small businesses, which have been outnumbered by medium and large ones for the past two years.

"One of the things the judges will consider is the size of the firm and the fact that small businesses don't have as many resources as large ones," said Rose Yuska, project manager for Families in Good Company.

"What's really important is the overall, commitment and leadership that small business can demonstrate in helping their employees balance work and family."

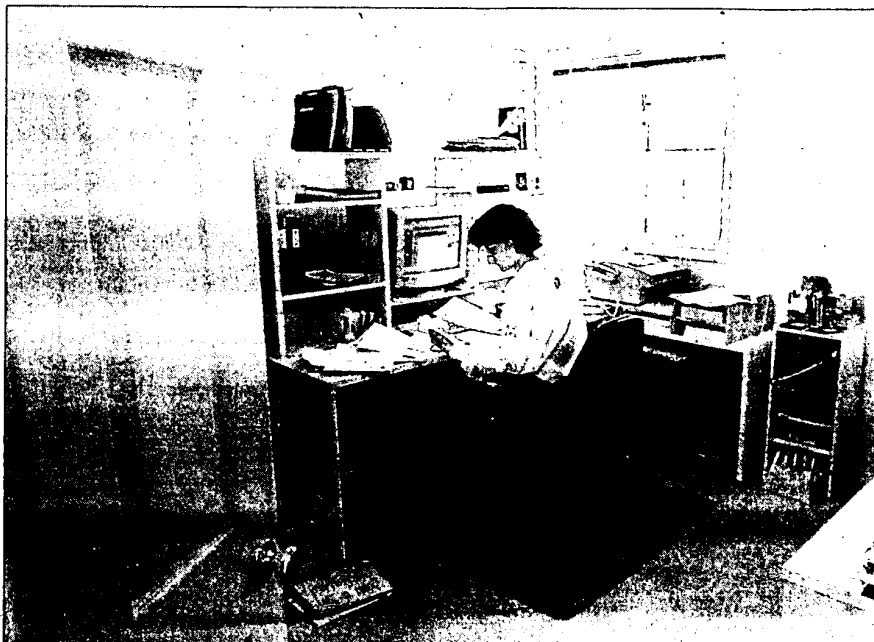
One worker's story

O'Neill Pine Co., based in Salem, was last year's small-company winner in the category for instituting family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace.

The company has a 30-hour workweek; flexible, worker-set schedules; paid time for volunteer work; a personal-leave bank — combining sick, vacation and personal time — and many other related policies.

O'Neill Pine was nominated last year by one of its employees, Pam Knell, who serves as an example of how the company works to accommodate its workers. She had been approached by the timber and property management company to be its operations manager but decided her family couldn't move from Beaverton.

Richard Pine, company president, responded by setting Knell up in her home with a special phone line, cellular phone, computer with e-mail, a fax machine



Pam Knell works in the home office that her employer, Salem-based O'Neill Pine Co., helped her set up in Beaverton so she could remain near her young daughter. Family-friendly workplace policies won the company a Families in Good Company award in 1998.

MICHAEL LLOYD/The Oregonian

SMALL BUSINESS

job, which allowed her husband to stay near his business in Portland and Knell to stay near their 14-month-old daughter.

Pine said that Knell continues to work for the company from her home but is expecting a second child and has reduced her work hours. She now holds the post of bookkeeper rather than operations manager, he said.

"We get people, with these policies, who are more able to live a balanced life," Pine said. "I think it makes our employees more productive and also happier. I think it gives our company a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining the best employees we can find."

Flex-time scheduling

Gymboree Play Programs, a franchise that operates play programs for parents and children together at sites in Lake Oswego and Beaverton, was a winner in the

The awards

■ **WHY:** To honor small, medium and large companies that exhibit family-friendly business practices. These might include flexible work hours, paid leave for school visits, child-care or elder-care support, telecommuting options and financial assistance for adoption.

■ **SPONSOR:** Families in Good Company is a program of Children First for Oregon, a statewide children's advocacy group

■ **APPLICATIONS:** Entries for this year's competition must be postmarked no later than Friday. To apply, contact Children First for Oregon at 503-294-1456 or toll-free at 800-544-0376 or by Internet at www.familiesingoodcompany.org

■ **AWARDS PRESENTATION:** Awards will be presented in as many as seven categories during a hosted reception at 6 p.m. May 6 at the Oregon Zoo. In addition, Families in Good Company is sponsoring a Work & Family Conference the same day from 2 to 5 p.m. for Oregon business owners and executives.

The company emphasizes flex-time scheduling for its 20 full- and part-time employees, most of whom have young children. It also provides care for children of employees attending company meetings.

Such policies, said business manager Jeff Black, "have allowed us to get a caliber of employees

Families in Good Company is a program of Children First for Oregon, a statewide children's advocacy group. The program operates in partnership with local commissions on children and families, the Oregon Commission for Child Care, the Portland Human Resource Management Association and the Women's Bureau of the U.S.