

Five local companies are workplace awards finalists

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Five local businesses and organizations are Kentucky finalists in a national competition that promotes flexible workplace practices.

American Patriot Getaways, Riney Hancock CPAs, Schwartz CPA Group, Alexander & Co. CPAs and the RiverPark Center are five of 56 Kentucky finalists in the When Work Works 2010 Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

Several organizations are involved in the competition, which is a project of the Families and Work Institute and sponsored by the Sloan Foundation.

The University of Kentucky's Institute for Workplace Innovation hosts the program for Kentucky companies, and the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce endorsed and promoted it locally.

"I think it's a great idea because this is the wave of the future," Chamber President Jody Wassmer said. "Flexibility in the workplace is a good way to keep talented workers and a good way to recognize that balance between work and home life."

The chamber board agreed to promote the initiative, and seven local companies applied, Wassmer said.

UK's Institute for Workplace Innovation received a grant from the Families and Work Institute to help in launching the program. Kentucky was one of five states chosen to participate.

It's a two-pronged program -- educating businesses on the benefits of workplace flexibility and recognizing those already practicing them, said Lee Ann Walton, employee engagement manager at the UK institute.

"One of my staff is a single mom, and if her child is sick, she can log in from home and work ...," Schwartz said. "I also have a part-time employee in Wisconsin who works remotely."

Schwartz doesn't have people clock in and out in the more traditional way of tracking work hours. Employees have some freedom as to the time and manner of working. They just have to put in the time to get the job done on time.

The growing accounting firm was established in September 2003 and has about 30 employees.

"I'm always looking for good talent," Schwartz said.

Other flexible workplace practices include paid time off from work for short or extended periods for situations such as attending a child's recital or caring for an elderly family member and compressed work week hours.

The Sloan Awards are open to companies that have been open at least a year and have 10 or more employees.