Navistar Employees Are Hard at Work -- For Their Community

Novel Program Retains Talent, Helps Local Community

Huntsville, Ala. (Feb. 23, 2010) — While the sluggish economy continues to spawn employee layoffs, one company has launched a program that gives employees a chance to work in the community instead of a pink slip. Devised by Chuck Sibley, the plant manger of Navistar Diesel of Alabama, the company's Employee to Volunteer plan has kept about 50 plant employees on the payroll — people who would have otherwise been sent to the unemployment line — by assigning them to volunteer work in the Huntsville, Ala., community.

Working with three service organizations, Navistar is piloting a three-month retention program that uses employee talents to help local nonprofit groups provide valuable services and programs to the Huntsville community. Now instead of assembling diesel engines, these Navistar employees are refurbishing homes with Habitat for Humanity, creating dozens of wheelchair ramps with CASA (Care Assurance Systems for the Aging and Homebound), and sorting inventory with the Salvation Army.

"This program is good for everyone — employees continue to receive their paychecks with full benefits, local residents are receiving needed assistance, and Navistar is able to give back to the community while retaining valuable talent," said Sibley, a 10-year veteran of Navistar.

"We've invested a great deal in training these employees and based on their performance, we wanted to retain them," said David LaPalomento, vice president of Global Integration for Navistar's Engine Group. "This program allows us to hold onto these employees and keeps the workforce together, minimizing the need to recruit and re-train employees when business picks

up.”

About halfway through the Employee to Volunteer pilot period (it debuted in early January), the program is already garnering rave reviews from management, employees, volunteer groups and aid recipients.
“Habitat for Humanity is really proud to have Navistar partnering with us. We are always in need of volunteers. And, right now, it’s even more important to have more hands as we have a lot more work to be done,” said Sandra Edwards with Habitat for Humanity of Madison County (Alabama).

CASA aid recipient Margaret Jones said she was grateful to the Navistar workers for helping equip her home with a wheelchair ramp. “I needed this ramp so that I could more easily get out of my house and help other people,” she said.

Congressman Parker Griffith, who represents Huntsville in the U.S. House of Representatives, got to witness firsthand Navistar employees at work at one of the Habitat for Humanity homes when he visited in January. “To have management say, ‘Let’s put them to work in the community, let’s avoid layoffs, let’s do everything we can to make this recession as painless as we can make it,’ I think it’s just wonderful,” said Congressman Griffith.

Navistar’s operations in Alabama represent a world leader in diesel engine manufacturing. In the two Huntsville assembly plants, 300 employees work together to build V6, V8 and big bore diesel engines under the MaxxForce® brand. Navistar points out that the pilot Employee to Volunteer program has allowed the company to retain dedicated employees with valuable talents while also assisting the community at large.

“I was obviously thankful that I wasn’t laid off, but I have discovered a whole new wonderful side of myself by providing clothes to the needy at the

Salvation Army store," said Roxanne Lee, a Navistar employee who now volunteers with the Salvation Army.

Broadcast quality b-roll (mpeg2 format) including sound bites can be found at files.me.com/markvoss1/53c4ay

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