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ENVIRONMENTS THAT WORK

By Niala Boodhoo Business Writer

Each year, the Great Place to Work Institute and Fortune magazine compile a list of businesses considered the best companies to work for. Companies apply to make the cut, which is determined by the institute through an independent survey of workers at the company as well as an audit of management style and practices.

Those who make the list include public and private companies, large to small, in virtually every industry. The businesses that consistently appear on the list not only offer perks like onsite gyms or child care, but also an environment that has three common hallmarks: trust, pride and camaraderie.

"Our definition of a great place to work is one where you trust the people you work for, you have pride in where you work, and you have camaraderie with those you work with," said Great Place to Work consultant Hal Adler.

What makes those companies different? Here's a look at some practices Baptist Health South Florida.

Training pays off

Miami-based Baptist Health has a program designed for an often-overlooked group of employees: the entry-level worker, such as someone in hospital security, food service, or patient admission or registration.

The eight-month "School at Work" course prepares workers who have a high school diploma or equivalent for college-level courses and more professional careers. Baptist pays employees to attend the class, which meets for two hours once a week for the students to learn about basic computer skills, office culture and health care terminology. Graduating workers can take advantage of the hospital's tuition reimbursement benefits to take community college or university classes.

Ann Louise Tisdale-Ramos said the program allows the company's "tremendously talented frontline staff" to move up at the hospital.

"We don't want to lose these people," said Tisdale-Ramos, who manages Baptist's Professional Development Institute and Career Center.

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