

TOP WORK PLACES

2026

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SUNDAY, FEB. 8, 2026



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Community engagement makes area's top workplaces stand out

By JAMES TRUMM

BLADE BUSINESS WRITER

What makes a business a great place to work?

Ryan Gundy, a project executive with Lathrop Construction Co., says part of the answer involves what a company does for its community.

"Today's work force — especially emerging professionals — want more than a job," he said. "They want purpose, connection, and the ability to make an impact. When employees feel proud of where they work and see their company living its values, they stay longer, they're more engaged, and they become our strongest ambassadors."

Mr. Gundy said Lathrop's reputation for community service comes up more often than not when the company interviews job applicants.



Gundy

"They say, 'we see you around town, we see what you're doing,' and they want to be part of that," he said. "I've come up through the ranks here and this was a big part of why I joined the company."

Lathrop is a general building contractor and a wholly-owned subsidiary of Turner Construction Co.

Corporate donations

Dan Ridi, owner and CEO of the S&G chain of convenience stores, shares that belief in the importance of community engagement. Instead of coming from the top down, he delegates to individual store managers the decisions about which community organizations to support.

Each of S&G's 86 store managers and their employees decide on a charity they want to support and collect donations from their customers. The only stipulation is that the chosen charity must do something to benefit children. Those donations are then matched by the company. The store managers and the organiza-



THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH

Each of S&G's 86 store managers and their employees decide on a charity they want to support and collect donations from customers, something Sam Semancik, manager of an S&G store on Navarre Avenue, takes pride in. In 2025, Mr. Semancik and his employees chose to support Adopt America, collecting \$1082.99 in customer donations. That amount was matched by S&G.

tions they support are celebrated at an annual banquet — the company's Day of Thanks and Giving.

In 2025, the program's donations to charity totaled \$215,000.

"I'm very proud of working for this company," said Sam Semancik, the manager of an S&G store on Navarre Avenue in Oregon.

In 2025, Mr. Semancik and his employees chose to support Adopt America, an organization that describes its mission as "connect[ing] children waiting in foster care with permanent families while providing support before, during, and after the family is united."

The store collected \$1082.99 in customer donations. That amount was matched by S&G. Mr. Ridi said community engagement helps his business.

"We get a lot of pride from our

managers," he said. "When you empower people to make decisions, that goes a long way to influencing how they feel about their employer."

Brand building

The desire to work for a company that is engaged with the community is not limited to small and medium-sized employers. Owens Corning, a Fortune 500 corporation, focuses its community engagement on three priorities: housing, health, and education.

"We hear from candidates that community engagement makes Owens Corning a recognizable employer," said Matt Schroder, the company's corporate communications leader.

"Caring is a core value at Owens Corning," he said, "and we're always proud to talk to potential candidates about how we

bring that to life."

Don Rettig, the president of the Owens Corning Foundation, said the company is proud to contribute both financially and through volunteerism in Toledo.

"We are also making a positive impact in communities around the world where our people and our customers work and live," Mr. Rettig said. "We focus on three priorities that are essential for successful communities: safe and efficient housing, basic health, and education."

As a result, over the past decade Owens Corning has provided nearly 800 free roof replacements for veterans, packed and served 1.7 million meals for those in need, and built or renovated 500 homes with Habitat for Humanity, he said.

Civic involvement

Supporting communities not

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only benefits the recipients of corporate largesse, but the companies themselves.

A 2021 article by Deloitte, one of the nation's "Big Four" accounting firms, calls the benefits a company realizes from involvement with its community "the purpose premium."

Deloitte cites greater brand recognition, protection from negative publicity, better employee attraction and worker retention,

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NO. 1 LARGE EMPLOYER: DANBERRY CO. REALTORS

Firm's focus on individuals empowers entire staff

By SHEILA HOWARD
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Danberry Co., Realtors has been recognized as a Top Workplace in the large company category — again.

President Maggie Fawcett says the company's "secret sauce" is its people, how they come together to get things done, and the emphasis on treating everyone fairly.

"Something magic happens when everyone gets in the same room and starts collaborating," she said. "It really comes down to listening and treating people the way you'd want to be treated."

Danberry, headquartered in Toledo, is a full-service real estate firm. Founded in 1962, the company employs 405 people in the Toledo metro area.

This is the company's seventh consecutive year claiming the title.

Ms. Fawcett and her partners,



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Dan McQuillen and Kevin Warren, pride themselves on listening, turning words into action,

and empowering their staff to achieve greatness.

"We truly do focus on the indi-

viduals, and it's amazing what you could do when you just simply listen. I think a lot of times

Dan McQuillen, from left, Maggie Fawcett, and Kevin Warren, pride themselves on listening, turning words into action, and empowering their staff at Danberry Co., Realtors to achieve greatness.

companies don't truly listen. I mean, there's listening, and then there's really listening — we truly listen," Ms. Fawcett said.

The firm values an environment of humility, transparency, and action, rather than just promoting catchy mission statements.

"The culture is really action-like. A lot of times companies have great mission statements and value statements, but they lack the actual action," Mr. Warren said. "So you have this mission to serve, you're listening to what it's going to take to get them to take action, then actually fulfilling those needs."

Leadership said it focuses on equipping agents with extensive resources and maintaining open feedback channels so employees feel heard and supported.

"I feel like we empower

See LARGE, Page T19



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NO. 1 MIDSIZE EMPLOYER: RE/MAX PREFERRED ASSOCIATES

Owners invest in agents with an eye to the future

By ALEX BRACKEN
BLADE STAFF WRITER

RE/MAX Preferred Associates has been ranked No.1 for midsize companies on The Blade's Top Workplaces for the 12th year in a row.

John Mangas and Angela Decker, owners of the brokerage, said the dozen years of recognition is due to their people-first approach. The two aren't focused on their own listings, but rather on their agents — an intentional decision to build others up, rather than compete against them.

"Instead of us going out and actively trying to attract buyers and sellers, we choose instead to pour back into our agents and help them ... come up with ways to build their business," Mrs. Decker said.

"We're very intentional at trying to meet agents where they're at," Mr. Mangas said, "but more importantly, identifying where



THE BLADE/ALEX BRACKEN

they want to go next."

Eddie Campos has been an agent with RE/MAX Preferred for

more than 20 years and said the owners have created a supportive environment.

"They've done a great job of making sure we all feel like we're in a family," Mr. Campos said.

Owners Angela Decker and John Mangas at RE/MAX Preferred Associates aren't focused on their own listings, but rather on their agents — an intentional decision to build others up, rather than compete against them.

"There's not a single person here that I don't feel like I could [go] into their office and ask for advice ... and it's because of the culture that they've created."

Some agents might be looking to grow their business quickly, while others may be looking to stay flat or scale back. Mr. Mangas hosts a weekly "jump start" session on Mondays where he coaches agents, especially newer agents, on how to hit the ground running.

The brokerage offers training to help its real estate agents use social media platforms like TikTok, improve their search-engine optimization, and carve out their own niche in the market.

"The industry has changed dramatically, and they're always on top of whatever the latest opportunities and technology are," Mr. Campos said.

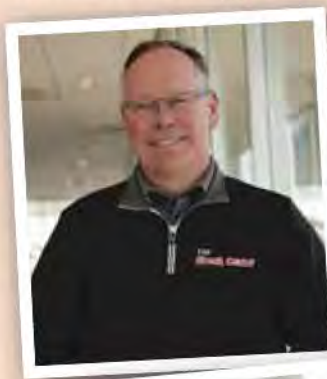
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NO. 1 SMALL EMPLOYER: WILLOW CENTER

Practice helps therapists nurture passion for care

By **KELLY KACZALA**
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Erin Wiley can remember why she wanted to start the Willow Center, a Toledo-based behavioral and mental health practice.

"I wanted to create a place where therapists would have the opportunity to really love their work by supporting them in ways that most practices don't," Mrs. Wiley said. "I wanted to create a family practice because it was important to me to serve families and couples, the heart of our community."

The Willow Center moved up a spot and earned first place in The Blade's 2026 Top Workplaces list for small companies with fewer than 75 employees.

The practice, which opened on Airport Highway in Toledo in 2016, has grown to include offices in Oregon and Bowling Green,

and a Findlay location is currently under consideration, Mrs. Wiley said.

There are 54 employees, including therapists, relationship specialists, psychiatrists, and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners in the practice.

A top priority for Mrs. Wiley has been to create opportunities for continuing education, collaboration, and consultation for the staff.

"I quickly began to realize when I became a therapist that I had a secondary calling, beyond helping families, which was to help therapists feel emotionally and professionally supported, and making sure they were receiving excellent training, more training than any other practice in town," she said.

She offers peer consultation and advanced training for couples counselors and pediatric and adolescent

therapists. The practice provides employees health insurance and 401(k) benefits. And Mrs. Wiley said she is looking into adding student loan debt assistance as a benefit in the future.

A top perk is a flexible work schedule to give staff more control over their lives. Lexe Wooten, a nurse practitioner at the center for three years, said the flexible hours help her better manage her large family.

"It's huge. I have five children from the ages of 1 to 17 years old," she said. "I have all sorts of schedules that I need to accommodate."

It's one of the reasons she enjoys working at the Willow Center, Mrs. Wooten said. Another is the support she gets from Mrs. Wiley.

"Erin is a visionary

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THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH

Since opening the Willow Center, a Toledo-based behavioral and mental health practice, a top priority for owner Erin Wiley, right, has been to create chances for continuing education, collaboration, and consultation for staff.



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EXPLAINING WORKPLACE RANKINGS

Real responses power scores behind survey

By **BOB HELBIG**
ENERGAGE

Top Workplaces don't happen by accident. They are created through a people-first approach to workplace excellence.

For the 13th year, employee survey company Energage has partnered with The Blade to honor the best places to work in metro Toledo.

The award is verified and earned through an employee survey process. Workplaces where employees offer positive feedback about their experience make the winners list.

Energage analyzes feedback based on responses to 26 questions. The survey asks employees for their feedback on such factors as pay and benefits, direction, leadership, meaningfulness, and appreciation. Energage scores companies based on the responses.

The award cannot be bought. It is earned. There is no cost to employers to survey their employees. If they choose, organizations can purchase the survey data from Energage. There is no obligation for winners to purchase any product or

service.

For the 2026 winners list, 1,172 organizations were asked to survey their employees and 72 agreed to do so. Based on the survey feedback, 60 have earned recognition as Top Workplaces in metro Toledo.

"Earning a Top Workplaces award is a celebration of excellence," said Energage CEO Eric Rubino. "It serves as a reminder of the vital role a people-first workplace experience plays in achieving success."

To qualify for Top Workplaces recognition, employers must have at least 35 workers in the region.

Beginning this year, employers are grouped by the overall size of their organization, and the number of employees invited to survey, which might include employees outside metro Toledo. Employers are grouped into similar sizes to best compare similar employee experiences. They are ranked within those groups based on the strength of the survey feedback.

Employers earn Top Workplaces recognition if their aggregated employees

feedback score exceeds national benchmarks. Energage has established those benchmarks based on feedback from about 30 million employees over 20 years.

Survey results are valid only if 35 percent or more of employees respond. Employers with fewer than 85 employees have a higher response threshold, requiring responses from at least 30 employees.

Why might a particular employer not be on the list? Perhaps it chose not to participate, or perhaps it did and employee feedback scores were not strong enough.

Energage also runs tests on feedback and in some cases may disqualify an organization if, for example, a high number of employees said they felt pressured to answer positively.

To participate in the 2027 Top Workplaces awards, or for more information, go to the nominations page at toledoblade.com/nominate.

Bob Helbig is media partnerships director at Energage, a Philadelphia-based employee survey company. Energage is the survey partner for Top Workplaces.

SPECIAL AWARDS

As employees complete the Energage survey, they rate specific statements on a seven-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Standout scores earn companies special awards based on those employee responses. This year, Well-Being was added as a new category in the awards.

Appreciation: Lott Industries.

Benefits: Wood Haven Health Care.

Clued in senior management: Integrity Home Exteriors.

Communication: Christian Home Care

LLC.

Direction: Plante Moran.

Doers: Danberry Co., Realtors.

Leadership: Erin Wiley, Willow Center; Emily Culbertson, Lakes of Sylvania; Josh Adams, Ohioans Home Health & Hospice.

Managers: PERRY proTECH.

Meaningfulness: NorthStar Anesthesia.

New Ideas: Designetics.

Values: Savage and Associates.

Well-Being: William Vaughan Co.

Work/Life Flexibility: Matrix Technologies, Inc.

EMPLOYERS MARKING MULTIPLE YEARS ON THE BLADE'S TOP WORKPLACES LIST

13 YEARS

Christian Home Care LLC
Cronin Auto, Inc./Perrysburg Automall
Master Fluid Solutions
Plante Moran
William Vaughan Co.
Yark Automotive Group

12 YEARS

Fifth Third Bank
Ohioans Home Health & Hospice
JDI Group

11 YEARS

CedarCreek Church
RE/MAX Preferred Associates
Wood Haven Health Care

10 YEARS

Cardinal Staffing Services
GenoaBank
Habitec Security
Savage and Associates
Danberry Co., Realtors
Wurtec

9 YEARS

Matrix Technologies, Inc.

8 YEARS

EverDry Waterproofing
Knight Insurance Group
Lathrop Construction Co.
Lott Industries
Middough Inc.
PERRY proTECH

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ProHealth Partners, Inc.
7 YEARS

MadAveGroup
Northwood Local Schools
White Family Dealerships
6 YEARS

Home Instead
Med1Care
Stapleton Insurance Group
Total Quality Logistics-TQL
Worthington Steel
5 YEARS

Midwest Tape | hoopla Digital
4 YEARS

Aktion Associates, Inc.
Double A Solutions
Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio

Integrity Home Exteriors
3 YEARS

Arista Home Care Solutions
Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo
CLA
Designetics
DGL Consulting Engineers
Northwestern Mutual
Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers
2 YEARS

Assured Health Services
Coil Steel Processing
Keystone Capacity Solutions
PENN Entertainment
Perficient
Willow Center

EMPLOYERS WITH CONSECUTIVE YEARS ON THE BLADE'S TOP WORKPLACES LIST

13 YEARS

Christian Home Care LLC
Cronin Auto, Inc./Perrysburg Automall
Master Fluid Solutions
Plante Moran
William Vaughan Co.
Yark Automotive Group

12 YEARS

Fifth Third Bank
Ohioans Home Health & Hospice

11 YEARS

CedarCreek Church
RE/MAX Preferred Associates
Wood Haven Health Care

10 YEARS

GenoaBank
Savage and Associates
Danberry Co., Realtors
JDI Group
8 YEARS

Habitec Security
Lott Industries
Matrix Technologies, Inc.
Middough, Inc.
ProHealth Partners, Inc.
7 YEARS

MadAveGroup
Northwood Local Schools
White Family Dealerships
6 YEARS

Home Instead
Knight Insurance Group
Stapleton Insurance Group
5 YEARS

Cardinal Staffing Services
Med1Care
PERRY proTECH
Wurtec
4 YEARS

Aktion Associates, Inc.
Double A Solutions
Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio

Integrity Home Exteriors
Midwest Tape | hoopla Digital
3 YEARS

Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo
CLA
DGL Consulting Engineers
Lathrop Construction Co.
Northwestern Mutual
Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers
Total Quality Logistics - TQL
2 YEARS

Assured Health Services
Coil Steel Processing
EverDry Waterproofing
Keystone Capacity Solutions
PENN Entertainment
Willow Center



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LARGE COMPANIES (300+ EMPLOYEES)

RANK	COMPANY	FOUNDED	OWNERSHIP	SECTOR	LOCATIONS	EMPLOYEES
1	The Danberry Co., Realtors	1962	Private	Agents / Brokers	5	391
2	Plante Moran	1924	Partnership	Certified Public Accountants & Consultants	1	3,054
3	Ohioans Home Health & Hospice	2011	Private	Home Healthcare Services	1	310
4	Master Fluid Solutions	1951	Private	Chemicals / Paint	2	384
5	NorthStar Anesthesia	2004	Private	Hospitals & Health Systems	4	2,433
6	Matrix Technologies, Inc.	1980	Private	Engineering	2	309
7	Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers	1996	Private	Restaurants	3	28,028
8	Fifth Third Bank	1858	Public	Banks	1	19,025
9	Yark Automotive Group	1981	Private	Auto Dealerships	8	500
10	PERFICIENT	1997	Private	Information Technology - Other	Remote	2477
11	PENN Entertainment	1972	Public	Casino	1	18,536
12	Midwest Tape hoopla Digital	1983	Private	Mass Media - Other	1	397

MIDSIZE COMPANIES (75 TO 299 EMPLOYEES)

1	RE/MAX Preferred Associates	2001	Private	Agents / Brokers	3	121
2	CedarCreek Church	1995	Nonprofit	Religion	6	96
3	Wood Haven Health Care	1919	Government	Skilled Nursing Facilities	1	107
4	The Lakes of Sylvania	2017	Parent company	Senior Living	1	136
5	Savage and Associates	1957	Private	Financial Advisers	2	161
6	Integrity Home Exteriors	2000	Private	Roofing & Siding	1	79
7	Assured Health Services	2014	Partnership	Hospitals & Health Systems	1	85
8	Double A Solutions	2003	Private	Mass Market Apps / Software	1	77
9	William Vaughan Co.	1959	Private	Certified Public Accountants & Consultants	2	104
10	Northwood Local Schools	1938	Public	Primary / Secondary Schools	1	125
11	Cronin Auto, Inc. / Perrysburg Automall	1938	Private	Auto Dealerships	1	138
12	EverDry Waterproofing	1986	Private	Construction - Other	2	78
13	Habitec Security	1972	Private	Security & Protection	1	80
14	Lathrop Construction Co.	1895	Private	Building Construction	1	75
15	ProHealth Partners, Inc.	2007	Private	Home Healthcare Services	1	107
16	Middough, Inc.	1950	Private	Engineering	1	78
17	Wurtec	1985	Private	Other - Intermediate Goods	1	161
18	White Family Dealerships	1915	Private	Auto Dealerships	5	181
19	Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio	1977	Nonprofit	Nonprofit - Other	1	133
20	Nexus Engineering Group	2005	Private	Engineering	1	238
21	Aktion Associates, Inc.	1979	Private	Value Added Reseller	1	241
22	Home Instead	2000	Private	Home Healthcare Services	1	134
23	CLA	1953	Partnership	Certified Public Accountants & Consultants	1	155
24	GenoaBank	1902	Private	Banks	9	134
25	Worthington Steel	1955	Public	Metal Products	1	223

SMALL COMPANIES (74 EMPLOYEES OR FEWER)

1	The Willow Center	2016	Private	Behavioral & Mental Health	3	49
2	PERRYproTECH	1965	Public	Information Appliances / Devices	1	45
3	Lott Industries	1955	Nonprofit	Human & Social Services	1	49
4	FIRST HEALTH HOSPICE	2020	Private	Hospice	1	53
5	Christian Home Care LLC	2009	Private	Home Healthcare Services	1	48
6	Northwestern Mutual	1857	Cooperative/Mutual	Life Insurance, Annuities, & Retirement Investments	1	38
7	Med1Care	1998	Public	Home Healthcare Services	1	56
8	Designetics	1987	Private	Manufacturing - Other	1	71
9	Total Quality Logistics - TQL	1997	Private	Logistics	1	42
10	National Flight Services	1972	Private	Other - Business Services	NA	44
11	TFO Wealth Partners	2010	Private	Financial Advisers	1	53
12	Arista Home Care Solutions	2014	Private	Home Healthcare Services	1	48
13	The JDI Group	2002	Private	Architecture	1	50
14	Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo	1914	Nonprofit	Human & Social Services	3	58
15	Keystone Capacity Solutions	2021	Private	Logistics	1	36
16	BluSky Restoration Contractors	2004	Private	Restoration	1	44
17	DGL Consulting Engineers	1926	Private	Engineering	2	70
18	Knight Insurance Group	1859	Private	General Insurance	1	49
19	MadAveGroup	1989	Private	Marketing & Branding	1	43
20	Communica, Inc.	1988	Partnership	PR & Communications	1	45
21	Coil Steel Processing	2014	Private	Metal Products	1	62
22	Cardinal Staffing Services	1994	Private	Staffing	NA	37
23	Stapleton Insurance Group	1927	Private	Insurance Consultants & Brokers	5	44



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A glance at metro Toledo's Top Workplaces

BLADE STAFF

At-a-glance information for the 60 companies in The Blade's 2026 Top Workplaces was pulled from survey forms the employers submitted to Energage.

The number of employees for each company represents those who are based in the Toledo area. The community support statements are directly from the survey responses. Some companies focused on their work, others included their values or mission, and still others did not respond to that question.

Aktion Associates, Inc.: Founded: 1979; Headquarters: Maumee; Sector: value-added reseller; Employees: 241; Community support: "We have a three-year growth initiative to build our total work force to 300. The work force is highly skilled and consists of application consultants, software engineers, and networking engineers located throughout the U.S. and Canada."



THE BLADE/REBECCA BENSON

Bonnie Skirvin, left, drops seeds in a hole that Jim Hauter, right, has dug as while they help plant sunflowers in the back of CedarCreek Church in Oregon on July 1.

quarters: Toledo; Sector: human and social services; Employees: 58; Community support: "Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo ministries serve people of all faiths and backgrounds in 19 counties across northwest and west central Ohio, providing food, shelter, crisis navigation, financial education and assistance, and more."

CedarCreek Church: Founded: 1995; Headquarters: Perrysburg; Sector: religion; Employees: 90; Community support: "CedarCreek Church exists to help everyone, no matter who they are or what they believe. We do this through irresistible weekend experiences and transformational personal connections to make a positive and lasting impact in our communities and beyond."

Christian Home Care LLC: Founded: 2009; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: home health-care services; Employees: 46;

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Assured Health Services: Founded: 2014; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: hospitals and health systems; Employees: 85; Community support: "We help people succeed — whatever success means to them. That in-

cludes our employees, the people we serve, and all our stakeholders."

Cardinal Staffing Services: Founded: 1994; Headquarters: Itasca, Ill.; Sector: staffing; Employees: 35; Community support:

"We act as a seamless extension of your organization, removing risk and administrative burden so you can stay focused on what matters."

Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo: Founded: 1914; Head-

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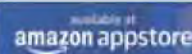
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Glance

Continued from Page T12

Community support: "We support our co-workers during difficult times, with donations of funds, food, equipment, etc. We participate in local events that benefit others. We have been members of various local Chambers of Commerce participating in many of their events and in professional organizations. CHC donates items for local charities examples: 'Restock,' (items for the homeless), Honor Flight and the Boys and Girls Club, Christmas trees in support of the Toledo Club. We have supported organizations that benefit others in our community in a myriad of ways."

CLA: Founded: 1953; Headquarters: Minneapolis; Sector: certified public accountants and consultants; Employees: 151; Community support: "CLA exists to create opportunities for our clients, our people, and our communities through industry-focused wealth advisory, digital, audit, tax, consulting, and outsourcing services."

Coil Steel Processing: Founded: 2014; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: metal products; Employees: 62; Community support: "As we continue to grow, our commitment to innovation and excellence drives us to consistently exceed our customers' expectations."

Communica, Inc.: Founded: 1988; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: PR and communications; Employees: 45.

Cronin Auto, Inc./Perrysburg AutoMall: Founded: 1938; Headquarters: Perrysburg; Sector: auto dealerships; Employees: 138; Community support: "Proud supporter of Catholic Charities. Annually we hold a food drive, with all donations going to Helping Hands of St. Louis in Toledo. We run a clothing drive numerous times throughout the year. Our employees have volunteered their time at La Po-

sada, an emergency shelter for families in north-west Ohio, as well as created care packages including dishes, personal care, everything they need to start their lives over. We have been an annual supporter of the Boys and Girls Club."

Designetics: Founded: 1987; Headquarters: Holland; Sector: manufacturing/other; Employees: 72; Community support: "Through the Designetics Cares Foundation we believe that little things can make a big difference. That's a guiding principle behind our work ... because we believe little things — help when needed, outreach and concern for each other — can lead to big differences in lives, our local community and the world at large."

DGL Consulting Engineers: Founded: 1926; Headquarters: Maumee; Sector: engineering; Employees: 57; Community support: "We encourage employees to volunteer their time and talents to local nonprofit organizations, provide STEM related talks to schools and universities, enjoy staff and family outings, and many other activities."

Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio: Founded: 1977; Headquarters: Maumee; Sector: nonprofit/other; Employees: 133; Community support: "Builds a community of support through engagement with individuals of varying ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds, gender identities, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, and physical and mental capabilities."

EverDry Waterproofing: Founded: 1986; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: construction/other; Employees: 76; Community support: "We improve lives while improving our own. ... We are encouraged to get what we want out of life not just exist in our life. Our owner Ken Rusk encourages personally each and every one of us on a daily basis by his examples to be who we want to

be through comfort, peace and freedom."

First Health Hospice: Founded: 2020; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: hospice; Employees: 40.

Habitec Security: Founded: 1972; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: security and protection; Employees: 71; Community support: "Habitec is proud to support local community organizations, including the Red Cross, Goodwill Industries, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Ronald McDonald House, St. Francis de Sales, Toledo Walleye, University of Toledo, Toledo Zoo and many more. We give away thousands of dollars each year to support our community."

Integrity Home Exteriors: Founded: 2000; Headquarters: Toledo; Sector: roofing and siding; Employees: 80; Community support: "We believe our employees and our clients should be treated like family — a win-win-win philosophy. ... We believe in putting others first. ... We are focused on serving our clients, community and employees."

JDI Group: Founded: 2002; Headquarters: Maumee; Sector: architecture; Employees: 49; Community support: "The JDI Group has a long history of community involvement, focused around military veterans and education. JDI played a signature role in designing and fund-raising for the 9/11 Memorial at the 180th Fighter Wing base in Swanton. ... With a passion for education, our architectural and engineering leaders frequently host co-ops students, as well as high school job shadow students. In a more formal arrangement, we've partnered with Junior Achievement of Northwest Ohio, serving as classroom volunteers, and hosting students in our office. We enjoy helping students discover new careers and identify their career paths."

Lakes of Sylvania:

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Glance

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Founded: 2017; **Headquarters:** Sylvania; **Sector:** senior living; **Employees:** 136; **Community support:** "Emphasizes compassionate senior care with a culture focused on service, humility, and excellence, supported by values of compassion, honesty, and respect."

Lathrop Construction Co.: **Founded:** 1895; **Headquarters:** New York; **Sector:** building construction; **Employees:** 75; **Community support:** Lathrop "Turner's commitment to making a difference in the lives of our people, customers and community is rooted in the belief that service is an essential part of good corporate citizenship. Throughout the year, Turner employees actively engage in community partnerships to sponsor, support, and participate in a wide variety of programs focused on youth education, health and welfare, and improving the viability of local businesses."

Lott Industries: **Founded:** 1955; **Headquarters:** Toledo; **Sector:** human and social services; **Employees:** 49; **Community support:** "Lott's Vocational Habilitation celebrates over 60 years of helping adults with disabilities thrive in a productive, safe, and person-centered workplace."

Master Fluid Solutions: **Founded:** 1951; **Headquarters:** Perrysburg; **Sector:** chemicals/paint; **Employees:** 85; **Community support:** "Charitable giving is a key value at Master Fluid Solutions. We support numerous local charities and one national charity. Our associates are encouraged to contribute their time to support their local community."

Med1Care: **Founded:** 1998; **Headquarters:** Holland; **Sector:** home health-care services; **Employees:** 56; **Community support:** "Med1Care is a locally owned agency that has been around for over 20 years. Our mission is to

serve the most underserved and vulnerable population and make them feel as though they are a part of our family. We enjoy serving the community in any way that we can."

Middough, Inc.: **Founded:** 1950; **Headquarters:** Cleveland; **Sector:** engineering; **Employees:** 78; **Community support:** "Middough still works for its first highly valued client established 75 years ago in the steel industry."

National Flight Services: **Founded:** 1972; **Headquarters:** Toledo; **Sector:** other/business services; **Employees:** 44.

NorthStar Anesthesia: **Founded:** 2004; **Headquarters:** Irving, Texas; **Sector:** hospitals and health systems; **Employees:** 105; **Community support:** "At NorthStar, our focus is our clinicians, so our clinicians can focus on great patient care."

Perficient: **Founded:** 1997; **Headquarters:** St. Louis; **Sector:** information technology/other; **Employees:** 35; **Community support:** "Perficient believes in the power of giving back and that simple acts of kindness can make a big impact. Individually and collectively, we strive to make the world a better place. ... Our Perficient Gives Charitable Match Program offers U.S. colleagues the opportunity to make donations via bi-monthly payroll deductions to eight wonderful organizations that are matched by Perficient, up to \$50,000 each year."

PERRY proTECH: **Founded:** 1965; **Headquarters:** Lima; **Sector:** information appliances/devices; **Employees:** 44; **Community support:** "We take our social responsibility seriously. We believe in acting on a local level by donating time, services and financial contributions to many local organizations such as Adopt-a-Family, Allen Lima Leadership, and Food Bank. Our employee owners also contribute to regional and national organizations such as the American Red

Cross and United Way."

ProHealth Partners, Inc.: **Founded:** 2007; **Headquarters:** Perrysburg; **Sector:** home health-care services; **Employees:** 107; **Community support:** "ProHealth is committed to the improvement of the quality of life for our patients by providing compassionate result driven clinical care to the home bound individual."

TFO Wealth Partners: **Founded:** 2010; **Headquarters:** Maumee; **Sector:** financial advisers; **Employees:** 53; **Community support:** "Our purpose is clear: to help families thrive by connecting their wealth and purpose. We believe wealth should support what matters most — family, values, meaningful experiences, and the legacy people hope to build."

William Vaughan Co.: **Founded:** 1959; **Headquarters:** Maumee; **Sector:** certified public accountants and consultants; **Employees:** 100; **Community support:** "WVC recently teamed up with the Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity to build a playhouse for a local family with two little girls. The design featured everything Disney Frozen down to the chandelier to make it the perfect fairytale playhouse. And the smiles on those little faces were priceless."

Wurtec: **Founded:** 1985; **Headquarters:** Toledo; **Sector:** other/intermediate goods; **Employees:** 110; **Community support:** "Wurtec employees come together annually to support community benefits and charities each year."

Yark Automotive Group: **Founded:** 1981; **Headquarters:** Toledo; **Sector:** auto dealerships; **Employees:** 516; **Community support:** "We are committed to giving back to the community that helps us maintain our success by sponsoring and donating to charities and nonprofit efforts within the Toledo area. Over the past 10 years, we've given more than \$1 million to local charities, schools, medical research groups, and many others. We are proud to support local."



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Area employees answer: 'I love my job because ...'

Employees at participating companies were asked to answer the open-ended prompt: "I love my job because ..." Below are samples of unnamed comments about the 2026 Top Workplace winners.

Aktion Associates, Inc.: I am able to mostly set my hours at a worthwhile activity that keeps my mind active and engaged as I continue to age.

Arista Home Care Solutions: Working at Arista you feel like you're a part of a family, admin staff really cares.

Assured Health Services: I can make a difference in people's lives.

BluSky Restoration Contractors: I help people during a difficult and stressful period in their lives. ... Putting my skills to use allows me to perform my job at the best of ... my ability. I'm able to ease the stress and hopefully give the client/homeowner peace of mind.

Cardinal Staffing Services: I can create my own success and love to help others.

Catholic Charities Diocese of Toledo: It gives me the ability to live out my calling.

CedarCreek Church: I feel like I'm a part of something bigger than the individual contributions I make. There is transparency behind the purpose and "why" behind everything that I get to be a part of, and I'm encouraged to ask questions and dig deeper.

CLA: I feel valued and I am supported by my leadership team to grow and thrive in my role. Also, the work-life balance is incredible.

Coil Steel Processing: Stable environment. Good pay and benefits. Cares about employees and our families.



THE BLADE/PHILLIP L. KAPLAN

Saundra Irvine, right, helps culinary student Deshawna Barnes with cheese-crusted bread at the Inspiration Kitchen at the Lott Industries Kitchen & Farm Workforce Development Training Program.

Communica, Inc.: Meaningful and fun work with a great team of people who are eager to create results, please the clients, and support each other.

Cronin Auto, Inc.: No two days are the same. We are constantly being challenged to work on new tasks. This makes for a very strong work force to overcome new hurdles. It is never boring.

Designetics: I am able to learn a lot of different skills due to everyone needing to wear multiple hats. The people are friendly and want to work together. Management is caring, serving, and supportive of their employees and their communities.

DGL Consulting Engineers: It's the right balance of mental and physical labor.

Double A Solutions: I love my job because I'm surrounded by humble, hungry, and smart people who push each other to be better.

Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio: I love the clients. Seeing them happy means so much. Being able to help the clients not

have to worry about anything and enjoy their lives.

EverDry Waterproofing: Community, impact, fulfillment.

First Health Hospice: I have autonomy and feel supported by my peers and ownership.

GenoaBank: It allows me to think abstractly and holistically. I'm made to feel that I'm a part of something larger.

Habitec Security: I receive positive recognition on a consistent basis, which drives me to work harder and perform even better. I absolutely love my co-workers and my manager.

Home Instead: We are able to make a difference in the lives of many seniors in the Toledo area.

Integrity Home Exteriors: I feel valued. The company is doing business for people not just for money.

JDI Group: The work is very diverse, interesting, challenging, and rewarding. I enjoy the people I work with as well.

Keystone Capacity

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Love

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Solutions: People are working as a team, working toward a common goal. There is no typical corporate backstabbing or throwing someone under the bus for your own benefit here.

Knight Insurance Group: Doing something important that people need and depend on. Lots of opportunities. Fast paced. Family oriented. Great people to work with.

Lakes of Sylvania: I love taking care of people in their time of need. I love working together to make a difference. I am thankful I enjoy going to work and feel valued in what I bring to the table.

Lathrop Construction Co.: I work among the best people in the industry. I am empowered to learn and grow, and I feel like I have the latitude to make mistakes while learning from them. My opinion is valued, and I am a meaningful part of the organization.

Lott Industries: Making a difference in the community for individuals with developmental



THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH

A plane is pulled out of the hangar at National Flight Services in Swanton.

disabilities; friendliness and hands-on approach; creating a positive vibe that keeps morale high.

Master Fluid Solutions: I work with great people, on a hard-working team, under a supportive manager. My work-life balance is awesome as I feel that

my responsibilities are manageable as well as flexible when I need it to be. There is also room to grow and get promoted down the line as well.

Matrix Technologies, Inc.: I am grateful because I feel I am the right fit for my position. I love the diversity of work, clients, and

employees who I get to work with. When I need help or have a question, I know I can reach out to the right person to get support.

Med1Care: I love helping patients.

Middough, Inc.: Every day is different and I get a chance to

work with various clients and locations.

Midwest Tape | hoopla Digital: I feel like I make a difference. I work with a great group of people who all work together to make things happen and encourage each other along the way.

National Flight Services: I am part of a skilled trade that is always challenging critical thinking and extreme focus on always improving and being accountable.

NorthStar Anesthesia: I'm empowered to make decisions that best support our patients and providers.

Northwestern Mutual: I am encouraged to provide ideas that will be incorporated in processes throughout our organization.

Northwood Local Schools: I genuinely feel as though people here treat everyone with respect and kindness, no matter the position you work.

Ohioans Home Health & Hospice: It allows me to continue growing my skills as a nurse. I feel supported by my peers and my managers. This job allows me to have an excellent work-life

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Love

Continued from Page T17

balance. This job allows me to continue being bedside with patient interactions, allowing me to care for other people — giving me a sense of purpose and problem-solving difficult situations for patients.

PENN Entertainment:

There are no two days that are the same. The environment is fun, the culture is welcoming, and we are able to take advantage of trainings and opportunities that help us with our current and future positions.

Perficient: The work-life balance has been everything I could ask for when it comes to a job. I am encouraged to grow my knowledge and skills via training and my leadership supports my ideas for my career growth/trajectory.

PERRY proTECH: PERRY proTECH provides an atmosphere for thriving and a culture to encourage you on every step of your journey in both life and work.

Plante Moran: I love my job because it allows me to combine my technical expertise with problem

-solving to make a real impact. I get to stay ahead of cybersecurity threats, guide organizations through complex compliance challenges ... and continuously learn while tackling high-stakes problems. I also love being able to teach, consult, and mentor, which gives my work purpose beyond just the technical side.

ProHealth Partners,

Inc.: It gives me such flexibility to be a wife, a mom, and career woman. I feel important in my work, and feel encouraged and heard by my employer.

Savage and Associates:

I am given the autonomy to build my business in a manner that best serves my clients' needs all the while working at a company that is just plain cool to be part of.

Stapleton Insurance

Group: Everyone is understanding, supportive of each other, and the benefits are amazing.

TFO Wealth Partners: I have a great leadership team and everyone is always willing to help when I have questions. For the first time, I feel like I'm working with a team and not alone. They truly be-

lieve in work-life balance and I am so appreciative of that.

Total Quality Logistics:

Everyday something is new, I get to train people and see their lives change for the better. I get to be a part of it and it makes me happy.

White Family Dealerships: I love taking care of the customers and I believe in the product.

William Vaughan Co.: I have a ton of flexibility to get my work done in the way that best works for me, and I am valued for my thoughts and opinions.

Wood Haven Health

Care: I work with great people and I get to make a difference in the lives of the residents we serve.

Worthington Steel: I have great work-life balance. The job is challenging every day. It truly does allow motivated individuals to excel.

Wurtec:

I am able to learn and grow at a pace where I can learn things the right way, which allows me to feel confident about how I do my job.

Yark Automotive Group:

I have a great work-life balance compared to many other industries.

Top

Continued from Page T2

and increased brand trust as the benefits of a concerted community engagement strategy.

One particularly innovative Toledo company, MadAveGroup, established a separate business unit tasked with providing marketing and creative services to nonprofits. That unit, the MadAveCollective, charges nonprofits far less than they would normally pay for web designers, copywriters, artwork, and video services.

It also uses those projects as a training ground for freelance creative teams comprised of people who may one day become full

-fledged company employees. Those workers are mentored by seasoned MadAveGroup staffers.

"It's like a residency program for aspiring creatives," said Jerry Brown, the company's founder and CEO.

The company also requires some of its employees to take on passion projects that provide nonprofits with sophisticated creative marketing materials at little to no cost.

One recent example of such a project was work the company did for Great Lakes Santas, an organization of about 50 or 60 gentlemen who play Santa Claus all year long.

The group focuses on bringing joy to children and families, its website says, via members attending hol-

iday events, meeting with sick children, and raising and distributing money to support children's charities and individual families.

"We created a visual brand for them, built a website, and helped them get started," Mr. Brown said. "If we sold those services to a regular client, they would pay about \$25,000."

Mr. Brown said his company would probably not have set up these programs if they didn't in some way help the firm.

"Our employees really benefit," he said. "They feel much more passionate about their work, like they're doing something more than just earning a salary."

Contact James Trumm at jtrumm@theblade.com



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Large

Continued from Page T4

everybody. We keep them up to date with regulation changes, changes in the industry. We give them the tools to be successful, to help them do their job better, and they know we care about them to do that," Mr. McQuillen said.

Heather Smith LaPoint, a 36-year veteran and one of the company's top Realtors, says it ranks so highly because of its supportive, nurturing environment, where both professional and personal well-being are prioritized and agents' wins are genuinely celebrated.

"We truly do focus on the individuals, and it's amazing what you could do when you just simply listen. I think a lot of times companies don't truly listen."

Maggie Fawcett, president of Danberry Co., Realtors

"There are a whole gamut of reasons why it's fantastic to work here," she said. "They care about the agents' success. I know that

sounds like something that would be easy for every company to want their agents to be successful, but it doesn't always work that way."

The unique combination of a family atmosphere, commitment to service, and continuous improvement has inspired her to remain with the company for nearly four decades. She's never worked anywhere else, she said.

"I cannot say enough, after 36 years, what this company means and what it's like to work in a place that is caring and thoughtful yet so professional and successful," she said.

Contact Sheila Howard at showard@theblade.com

Midsized

Continued from Page T6

But it also helps agents with the basics: credit scores, lending, creating an LLC, bookkeeping, and more. The brokerage is full-service and has marketing, compliance, administrative, and accounting teams that are available to agents.

"Not only do we invest in

people and help them grow and develop their skills within the real-estate industry ... but I also like to think we help them become better businesspeople as well," Mr. Mangas said.

Most recently, Mrs. Decker and Mr. Mangas say they're helping agents embrace artificial intelligence tools to boost productivity.

While they firmly believe that AI will never replace face-to-face relationships,

they said agents who work efficiently are able to better serve their clients.

"AI won't replace an agent, because of the emotional piece that goes into buying and selling real estate. It's the biggest asset somebody typically will ever own, and though it's typically a very exciting time ... there's also very sad times," Mrs. Decker said.

Contact Alex Bracken at abracken@theblade.com

Small

Continued from Page T7

leader. She's overcome many challenges to expand our mental health services in our community," Mrs. Wooten said. "She already had a strong therapy practice, then she built our psychiatry team to complement the therapy practice. It's created a model of care rooted in advocacy and compassion. Erin wants us to do our best. Therapists here collaborate and work together as a team,"

Lindsey Payne, a licensed professional clinical counselor supervisor, likes working at the center because of the many opportu-

nities for staff to grow.

"Erin invests in us — personally and professionally," she said. "She is investing not only in the practice itself, but the people who are working in it. ... She invests money in the training of her clinicians, educating them in different areas of expertise."

Ms. Payne also likes the flexible work schedule.

"That was a big reason I came into this profession. I wanted a flexible schedule. It allows me to not only prioritize my family but also my job," she said.

Mrs. Wiley's husband, Mike Wiley, is director of administration at the center. He said his wife has worked hard to make the workplace and space feel

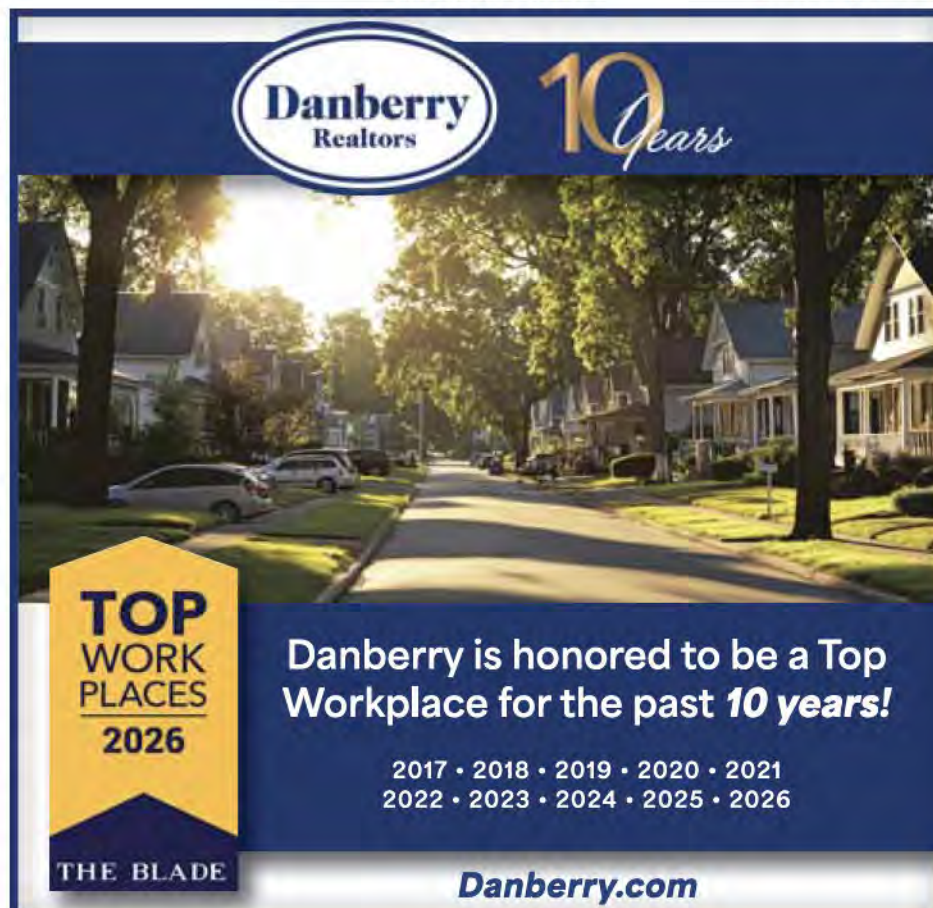
like a family setting.

"Not so much like you're in a medical office. If you go there, it feels like you're actually sitting in your living room," he said. "She has made it a comfortable setting."

Mrs. Wiley said she is honored her practice earned the top spot for Best Workplace in Toledo.

"I've won awards for top entrepreneur, but it is way more meaningful to me to be able to create economic opportunity for people in the community and have them love where they work and what they do because of how we have configured and structured this practice."

Contact Kelly Kaczala at kkaczala@theblade.com



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