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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Building a Best Place to Work

Balancing Culture with Margins, and Everything Else

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FROM THE PUBLISHER ▼

Meet the Class of 2026



SPECHT

Every year, our Best Places to Work edition gives us an opportunity to focus on one of the most important parts of any organization: the people who make it go.

Earlier this year, BIZ Magazine opened nominations in the publication and on BIZMagazineSB.com. We asked employers, employees and others familiar with local organizations to tell us about workplaces they believed deserved recognition.

Those nominations asked about culture, employee development, community involvement, benefits, advancement and what makes each workplace different. We also asked employees to share, in their own words, what they value about where they work.

From those submissions, along with organizations that have distinguished themselves through previous Best Places recognition and continued commitment to their employees, we assembled the Class of 2026.

This is not a ranking. There is no first place or thirteenth place.

Instead, these honorees represent different examples of what a strong workplace can look like.

This year's class includes Holy Angels Residential Facility, Carter Credit Union, Always Best Care Senior Services, Visit Shreveport-Bossier, Louisiana Blue, Kean Miller, Providence House, Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana, Flying Heart Brewing & Pub, BRF, Bonvenu Bank, Willis Knighton Health and Community Bank of Louisiana.

Some are among the region's largest employers. Others operate with relatively small teams. They represent healthcare, banking, law, tourism, nonprofit service, economic development, hospitality and more.

What they have in common is a commitment to their people.

That commitment can take many forms. Sometimes it means creating opportunities for employees to move into leadership. Sometimes it means supporting them during difficult seasons of life. In other cases, it means investing in training, encouraging new ideas or simply building an environment where people feel respected and heard.

Those things may sound simple, but anyone who has ever led a business knows they are not.

Workplace culture is not created by a slogan, a mission statement or a set of values posted on a wall. It is created over time through thousands of everyday decisions. It is reflected in how people are treated, how leaders respond when challenges arise and whether employees believe they have a future with the organization.

As a business owner, I also know there is another side to that equation.

Creating a workplace people want to stay in has to happen while watching expenses, protecting margins, serving customers, meeting payroll and making the decisions that keep the doors open. There are times when the thing you would like to do for employees and the thing the business can realistically afford are not the same.

That tension is real.

The challenge is finding ways to invest in people without losing sight of the financial health of the organization. Sometimes that investment is compensation or benefits. Other times it is flexibility, recognition, communication, training or simply making sure employees know where the business is headed and how they fit into that future.

None of that makes leadership easier. But it does make culture more intentional.

That is one reason this edition has always been important to me.

Our businesses spend a great deal of time talking about customers, revenue, growth and strategy. All of those things are necessary. But none of them happen without people.

The organizations featured in this edition understand that connection.

In the pages that follow, you'll see stories of employees who have built careers over decades, organizations that promote from within, teams that rally around one another during difficult times, employers that invest in professional development, and workplaces where community service is part of the culture.

You'll also hear directly from employees.

That may be the most important part of this edition.

A company can say it has a great culture. Employees are the ones who tell you whether that culture is real.

There is no single formula for creating a Best Place to Work. Different organizations get there in different ways.

But the common themes are fairly simple.

People want to know their work matters. They want opportunities to grow. They want to be valued. They want leadership that listens. And they want to feel like they are part of something larger than a job description.

For employers, there is something worth considering in all of this as well.

Recognition is certainly something to celebrate, but these stories can also serve as examples. Every organization, regardless of size or industry, can look at how it develops people, communicates with employees and builds a culture that gives talented people a reason to stay.

In a competitive labor market, that has become more important than ever.

The organizations in this year's class have demonstrated those qualities in their own ways.

I hope you'll take the time to meet each of them in the pages ahead.

Congratulations to the BIZ Magazine Best Places to Work Class of 2026.

DAVID SPECHT IS PUBLISHER OF BIZ. MAGAZINE.



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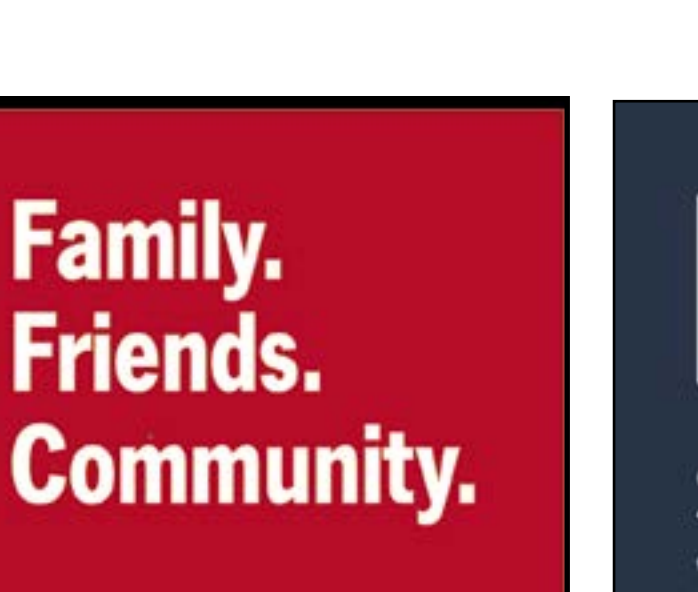
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"I REALLY APPRECIATE THE AVAILABILITY OFFERED TO WORK THE CAREGIVING SHIFTS, THE VARIETY OF CLIENTS, AND THE SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION FROM THE OFFICE STAFF."

LACRESHA MIMS

For the people who provide care in a client's home, support from the office can shape the entire workday. Always Best Care Senior Services describes its Shreveport workplace as compassionate, collaborative and focused on solutions, with a simple connection between the employee experience and the service seniors receive: caregivers need care and encouragement, too.

In its 2026 nomination, the company reported a team of 125 employees and an average employee-tenure range of three to five years. The story centers on the local team serving seniors in Shreveport-Bossier and the paths available to the people doing that work.

One example is Teice, identified in the nomination as a project manager. She arrived with private-caregiving experience and initially interviewed for a caregiver role. The company instead recognized skills suited to a receptionist position, followed by a move into office administration and, later, project management.

Her progression reflects a broader emphasis on recognizing strengths and creating room for employees to grow into larger responsibilities.

Learning also happens close to the work. The submission describes ongoing training and opportunities to build skills, while employee testimony connects professional growth to hands-on experience. Operations Supervisor Quincy Miles describes working both in the field and in the office and helping train new employees. That combination gives advancement a practical dimension: experience caring for clients can also prepare someone to support colleagues.

Caregiver Lacresha Mims highlights available shifts, varied clients and supportive communication from office staff. Colby Henderson points to companionship with clients and teamwork among caregivers. Their accounts bring the workplace story back to everyday relationships rather than a list of accolades.

The company also describes involvement with the Alzheimer's Association, councils on aging, local chambers and other community organizations. Those connections extend its work beyond individual clients and reinforce the purpose employees share.

For Always Best Care, the strongest workplace story is the connection between compassion and opportunity. Employees bring commitment to seniors' daily lives; the organization describes an effort to return that commitment through recognition, learning and room to grow.

Bonvenu Bank



A welcome that starts with the team

A community bank's relationships begin before a customer walks through the door. They take shape among employees who rely on one another, seek guidance from leaders and learn how to respond to the people they serve.

Bonvenu Bank's Best Places materials describe that internal network as central to its workplace identity. Its 2025 nomination characterized the culture as relationship-based, both among coworkers and with customers. Rather than separating community banking from the employee experience, the submission connected the two through volunteer service, recognition and a belief that employees do their best work when they feel supported.

That support has included an employee assistance program, health benefits, retirement contributions and performance incentives. The nomination also described reimbursement tied to fitness and wellness, reflecting an emphasis on employee well-being beyond the workday.

Recognition provides another point of connection. Employee of the Quarter and Employee of the Year programs, intranet recognition and Employee Appreciation Day were among the ways Bonvenu acknowledged contributions and milestones.

Community involvement is also part of the culture. The bank's nomination described paid volunteer time that allowed employees to support nonprofit organizations and community projects while remaining connected to their work.

Employee voices add a personal perspective. Candace D. recalled entering banking without knowing what to expect and finding friendships and opportunities to develop. Lisa H. emphasized support and guidance from leadership. Amy T. connected the bank's investment in employees with its investment in community initiatives.

Across those accounts, a consistent theme emerges: a welcoming organization is built through the way people are treated inside it.

Bonvenu's workplace story reflects the same relationship-centered approach it brings to banking — professional opportunity, recognition and service reinforcing one another as employees build careers and connections with the communities they serve.

BRF



Innovation starts with people

BRF has spent four decades working to build a stronger, more diversified economy for North Louisiana. Behind the business recruitment, biomedical research, defense investment and entrepreneurial development is a team whose work reaches across industries and into the lives of people throughout the region.

Founded in 1986 and headquartered in Shreveport, BRF serves as both an innovation hub and economic development organization. Its initiatives range from business recruitment through Shreveport Next and defense development through BRF Defense and Collaboration Link to STEM education, biomedical research, entrepreneurial support and redevelopment through InterTech Park.

The scope of that work creates a workplace where employees are frequently exposed to new industries, ideas and challenges.

William Anderson, a business analyst with BRF's Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program, said mentorship and professional growth are among the qualities he values most.

"I'm consistently encouraged to take on new challenges, step outside my comfort zone and learn along the way," Anderson said. "The team always celebrates successes and offers encouragement and guidance when things don't go as planned."

That culture of learning supports work producing measurable results across Northwest Louisiana.

"I'M CONSISTENTLY ENCOURAGED TO TAKE ON NEW CHALLENGES, STEP OUTSIDE MY COMFORT ZONE AND LEARN ALONG THE WAY."

WILLIAM ANDERSON

During fiscal year 2026, BRF helped recruit three companies to the region. Akston Biosciences is projected to create 69 jobs averaging nearly $100,000 annually. Starget Pharma is advancing cancer drug development in partnership with BRF's Center for Molecular Imaging and Therapy following an $18 million funding round. VRC Metal Systems plans a $1.56 million facility at Barksdale Air Force Base with 21 projected jobs averaging $80,000.

BRF has also helped attract $733 million in defense investment since 2020, while the Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program and BRF's defense efforts have contributed to the creation of 655 jobs since 2014.

But employees say the organization's impact is also measured on a much more personal level.

At the Center for Molecular Imaging and Therapy, Imaging Administrative Coordinator Shana Long sees that impact in patients and families undergoing PET imaging.

"What we do is much more than performing a scan," Long said. "We provide answers, hope and support to patients and their families during some of the most challenging times in their lives."

She said the CMIT team understands that compassion is as important as clinical excellence, with employees working together to make patients feel comfortable, valued and cared for.

BRF Resource Development and Communication Coordinator Adrien Hicks describes the larger organization in much the same way: collaborative, innovative and supportive.

"I feel valued, respected and supported with the flexibility and freedom to grow both personally and professionally," Hicks said. "BRF challenges me to be better and encourages new ideas."

That combination of professional growth and community impact connects BRF's many different initiatives.

Whether helping a startup raise capital, recruiting a new employer, advancing cancer research or supporting defense innovation, BRF employees work across disciplines toward a common goal: creating opportunity and strengthening North Louisiana.

For BRF, innovation does not begin with a program or a project. It begins with people willing to learn, collaborate and turn ideas into results.

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Carter Credit Union



Room to grow, reasons to serve

At Carter Credit Union, the phrase "We're Greater Together" describes more than a public message. The organization's 2026 nomination presents it as a way of working: employees are encouraged to contribute their individual strengths, while success is shared across the team.

An open-door policy is one expression of that approach. The submission says employees can take an idea or concern to the CEO, and that a person's title should not determine the value of a suggestion. Managers are also trusted to make decisions within their departments, giving employees room to take responsibility for the work in front of them.

Career growth provides another example.

The nomination's author describes joining Carter in a business-development and marketing role in 2010 and moving into senior management in 2017. Facilities Manager Jeremy Niebrugge recounts a similar path: he began by assisting the facilities manager and later moved into the manager's position.

"IT MAKES ME FEEL VALUED AS PART OF THE TEAM."

JEREMY NIEBRUGGE, FACILITIES MANAGER.

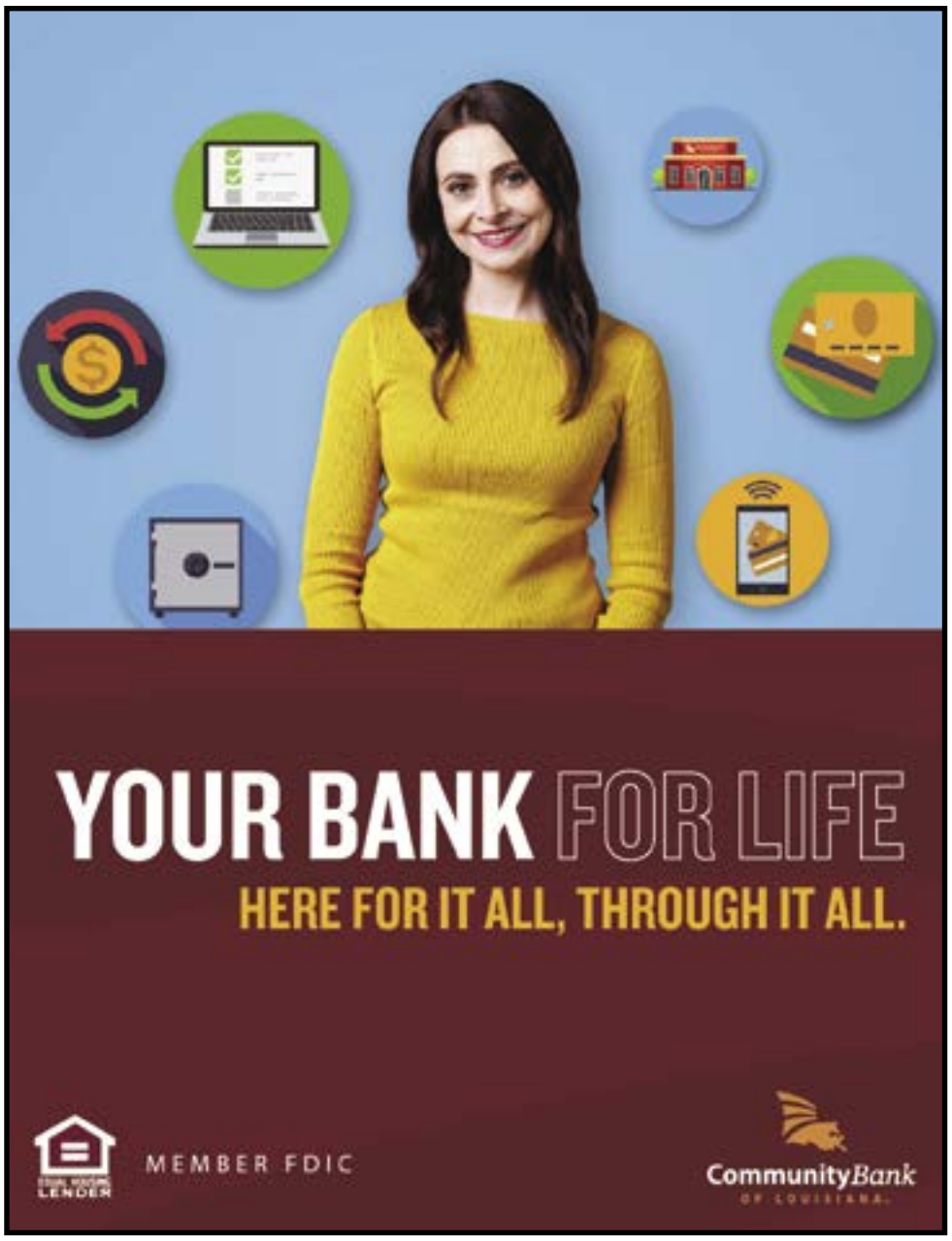
Niebrugge said the opportunity to contribute ideas and take ownership of his work makes him feel valued as part of the team.

Branch Manager Nikki Reeves connects that internal support to the service she can offer members. She describes having the time and resources to help people build household budgets, work on credit and plan for the future. The satisfaction comes from seeing members progress through different stages of life while also developing her own leadership skills and team.

The nomination also highlights Carter's free Auto Buying Consultant program. In one example provided by the credit union, a consultant's research helped a member reduce the cost of a truck purchase by $16,000. For employees, stories like that make the work tangible: service can have an immediate effect on someone's financial life.

Carter reported 108 employees in its 2026 nomination and continues to expand its footprint while maintaining an emphasis on access, service and employee development.

The workplace thread running through the submission is the connection between trust, growth and service. Employees describe room to take responsibility, build careers and help members in ways that feel personal.


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Community Bank of Louisiana



A career path close to home

"OF MY 54 YEARS IN BANKING I HAVE HAD THE HONOR TO WORK AT COMMUNITY BANK OF LOUISIANA AS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR ALMOST 13 YEARS AND I CAN HONESTLY SAY IT IS THE BEST ORGANIZATION I HAVE EVER WORKED FOR. I GET UP EVERY MORNING EXCITED ABOUT COMING TO WORK AND REPRESENTING COMMUNITY BANK THROUGHOUT THE AREA."

SANDY M. CIMINO

For more than 125 years, Community Bank of Louisiana has built its business around relationships. That philosophy applies not only to the customers and communities it serves, but also to the employees who have built careers there spanning decades.

Locally owned and operated since 1901, Community Bank traces its roots to the Bank of Logansport and Mansfield Bank & Trust, which merged in 1997. Today, the bank operates 12 offices across Caddo, DeSoto, Bossier and Sabine parishes, including six in Shreveport-Bossier City.

Through that growth, Community Bank has maintained a workplace culture employees consistently describe with one word: family.

For Senior Vice President Kenneth W. Dennis, that relationship has lasted nearly four decades. Dennis joined the bank in 1989 as a drive-through teller and has advanced through numerous roles while building relationships with customers at different stages of their lives.

"I have had numerous opportunities to learn and grow at the bank," Dennis said. "I love being able to help customers, whether it is opening their first checking account, selling them an insurance policy or making them a loan."

That combination of professional opportunity and personal connection is echoed throughout the organization.

Assistant Branch Manager Sara Cummins has spent 16 years with Community Bank and describes it as her "home away from home," crediting the organization with giving her opportunities to grow both personally and professionally.

Branch Manager Angela Martinez, now in her 17th year with the bank, points to its family-oriented culture and respect for employees' lives outside of work.

"I am especially thankful to work for a company that is family-oriented and understands the importance of balancing work and family," Martinez said. "I appreciate being part of an environment where family matters."

For Branch Manager Nicki Duncan, 27 years with Community Bank have reinforced that same sense of connection.

"After 27 years with Community Bank, I can honestly say it's more than just a job; it's family," Duncan said. "I love building relationships with our customers, working alongside an amazing team, and being part of a bank that values its employees and the communities we serve."

Community Bank also backs that culture with tangible employee support. Senior Vice President of Business Development Sandy Cimino points to expanded vacation time, Thanksgiving turkeys, Christmas bonuses and an annual Christmas celebration for employees and guests. More importantly, she said, coworkers and leadership step forward when an employee faces illness, a death in the family or another personal hardship.

Cimino has spent 54 years in banking and nearly 13 with Community Bank.

"I can honestly say it is the best organization I have ever worked for," she said. "We work as a team and a family that cares not only about our customers but each employee, stepping up whenever there is a need."

That loyalty provides perhaps the clearest measure of Community Bank's workplace culture. Employees who joined as tellers have grown into senior leadership. Others have built careers lasting decades.

For a bank that has spent 125 years cultivating relationships across North Louisiana, some of its longest-lasting relationships are with the people who come to work there every day.

Flying Heart Brewing & Pub



Teamwork on the menu

A hospitality workplace depends on people coordinating in real time. At Flying Heart Brewing & Pub, Best Places materials describe a culture built around teamwork, creativity and enjoyment of the craft.

The atmosphere employees help create for customers begins with the way colleagues work together.

The company's 2025 nomination presented Flying Heart as a place where individual contributions were valued within a collaborative team. It emphasized opportunities to advance through work ethic, initiative and dedication. Employees were encouraged to contribute ideas, take ownership of their roles and help shape the experience rather than simply complete a shift.

Recognition has also been tied to both individual effort and location-wide results. The company described monthly incentives linked to limited-time menu offerings, along with management bonuses and staff holiday gatherings.

Those programs gave employees a shared reason to work toward common goals. A successful promotion depended on the people preparing, serving and explaining the product all pulling in the same direction.

The nomination also described medical benefits and flexibility for appointments, reflecting the company's belief that employee health and well-being contribute to stronger performance on the job.

Community involvement extends those relationships beyond regular patrons. Flying Heart has partnered with nonprofit organizations through fundraiser nights and volunteer opportunities, giving employees another way to connect their work with local causes.

Earlier materials also documented the company's growth from a small operation into multiple locations and a much larger workforce. That expansion has made culture increasingly important as teams operate across different properties while maintaining a common identity.

Flying Heart's workplace story is ultimately about craft, opportunity and shared effort: people contributing ideas, being recognized together and supporting the communities around their locations.

Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana



The power of work starts within

Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana's mission centers on the opportunities work can create. Its workplace story asks how that same commitment is reflected inside the organization, among the people who support employment programs, community services and retail operations.

Its 2025 nomination organized that story around five values: People, Stewardship, Ethics, Learning and Innovation.

Rather than describing culture only as atmosphere, the submission connected those values to coaching, teamwork and the way managers support staff. Learning and innovation were presented as everyday responsibilities, with employees encouraged to grow and respond to changing needs.

Practical benefits formed another part of the account. Goodwill described health, dental and vision coverage for full-time employees, retirement benefits, paid time off and flexibility for certain positions. It also highlighted an employee assistance fund supported by fellow employees, along with discounts available through the organization and community partners.

The assistance fund stands out because it gives mutual support a formal structure. It reflects a workplace where employees can help one another when unexpected needs arise.

Recognition has included quarterly and annual awards, birthdays, work anniversaries and staff gatherings. Potlucks, holiday celebrations and shared experiences have given employees from different roles opportunities to connect.

Goodwill has also described a Culture Committee involving staff and board members, providing another way for employees to participate in conversations about the workplace.

The organization's broader mission gives those practices context. In its 2025 nomination, Goodwill reported serving 2,874 people and helping 529 individuals enter employment during 2024. Those outcomes illustrate the purpose employees support every day.

For Goodwill, the internal and external missions are closely linked: creating opportunity in the community while building a workplace where employees can learn, contribute and support one another.

Holy Angels Residential Facility

A calling with room to grow

Martha Hammock expected to spend three years at Holy Angels before moving on. In the organization's 2026 nomination, she describes a career that instead reached 42 years, beginning in recreation and growing into her role as senior director of residential services.

Her account gives the workplace story a personal starting point: meaningful work can become a lasting career when people find purpose and opportunities to develop.

Holy Angels serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The nomination describes a demanding care environment where employee support is closely connected to the quality and continuity of care. Its strongest workplace examples are concrete: paid training, certification pathways, promotions and practical help for staff working around the clock.

Angel University is central to that approach. Employees can receive training and certifications without paying related fees or administrative costs, and they are paid during training. The submission describes Direct Support Professional levels tied to certification and higher pay, giving staff a visible pathway for advancement within the organization.

"WHEN I FIRST ENTERED THE GROUNDS OF HOLY ANGELS, I FELT A SENSE OF PEACE, BELONGING, PURPOSE, AND LOVE."

MARTHA HAMMOCK

The organization reports 33 staff promotions during 2025–2026 and 285 employees in its September 2026 submission. Its service summary lists 84 employees with at least 10 years of service, including staff whose careers span several decades.

Support also takes everyday forms. Because the campus operates continuously and is some distance from quick meal options, Holy Angels says it subsidizes employee meals by 50 percent through its food-service arrangements. The nomination also describes recognition events, health activities and family participation in certification celebrations.

During severe weather, employees have received transportation assistance, meals and accommodations on campus. The submission also reported increasing minimum hourly pay by $3 in October 2025, another example of the organization's efforts to strengthen employee support.

For Hammock, the connection is emotional as well as professional.

"When I first entered the grounds of Holy Angels, I felt a sense of peace, belonging, purpose, and love," she said.

That sense of calling is reinforced by the organization's investment in training, advancement and practical support.

Holy Angels' workplace story is ultimately about sustaining the people who sustain care — giving employees a way to learn, progress and remain connected to the lives they help enrich.



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Kean Miller LLP



People first, progress together

A law firm's culture is shaped by how people work together under demanding circumstances. Kean Miller's Best Places materials describe a workplace where collaboration, personal relationships and client service reinforce one another.

The phrase "People First" gives that approach a concise expression.

Kean Miller has continued to grow across Louisiana and Texas while maintaining a strong presence in Shreveport. Its workplace materials emphasize that professional expectations are balanced by opportunities for employees to connect, contribute and build relationships beyond individual assignments.

Those connections appear in both professional routines and informal traditions. The firm has described office roundtables, community-service projects, themed lunches, monthly breakfasts, an annual crawfish boil and holiday gatherings. Service milestones are also recognized at five-year intervals.

Employee support has included counseling and other resources for staff and family members, along with health-related benefits and practical assistance tied to the workday.

Professional opportunity is another recurring theme. Kean Miller has participated in recruiting efforts through Louisiana law schools and minority law-student job fairs while also providing opportunities for attorneys and staff to develop within the firm.

Historical employee voices reinforce those themes across different roles.

Secretary Kim Gipson emphasized the professionalism of colleagues. Paralegal Mandy Lennon described camaraderie, mutual support and commitment to the work. Partner Brian Carnie connected internal collaboration directly with the quality of service clients receive.

Community involvement provides another shared activity. The firm has supported efforts such as United Way and encouraged attorneys and staff to contribute to organizations and causes meaningful to them.

The result is a workplace story centered on demanding professional work carried out within a culture that values relationships.

For Kean Miller, "People First" is less about a slogan than the idea that strong client service and strong workplace relationships can grow together.

Louisiana Blue



Purpose shared, people supported

At Louisiana Blue, employees describe purpose as a connection between their daily work and the people served across the state.

The organization's 2026 nomination pairs that mission with an internal commitment to belonging, development and well-being — an effort to support the people helping members navigate healthcare.

The submission reported 20 employees in the Shreveport-area operation and described a much larger statewide organization serving approximately 1.6 million covered lives.

The workplace practices are more immediate.

Louisiana Blue describes nine Employee Networks, cultural activities and opportunities for employees to connect through teams, leagues and clubs. It also emphasizes internal development, with employees encouraged to expand their skills and pursue new responsibilities.

"LOUISIANA BLUE IS MORE THAN A WORKPLACE, IT IS A COMMUNITY WHERE EMPLOYEES ARE GENUINELY VALUED, SUPPORTED AND INSPIRED TO GROW."

BRENDA GORMAN,

Wellness support includes seminars, health challenges, coaching, dietitian visits, exercise classes, meditation and support groups. Together, those programs reflect attention to different employee needs rather than a single approach to well-being.

Community service provides another visible connection between mission and workplace.

The 2026 submission says employees receive 16 hours of paid volunteer time and can participate in organized service opportunities across Louisiana. It also describes a Dollars for Doers program that provides financial support to eligible nonprofits connected to employee volunteer service.

During 2025, the organization reported more than 38,000 employee service hours statewide, along with more than $3.2 million in donations and sponsorships from the company and employees.

Brenda Gorman, an account executive in group sales, describes a workplace where employees feel valued, supported and inspired to grow. Regional Director Brad Bockhaus connects that experience to both people and purpose.

The workplace story is one of alignment: employees seeing meaning in the organization's work while finding opportunities to learn, connect and contribute themselves.

Providence House



Support for the people doing heart work

At Providence House, the work of helping families move toward stability can be both rewarding and emotionally demanding.

Its Best Places materials describe a workplace that responds to that reality with teamwork, flexibility and attention to the whole person. The organization's phrase "heart work" gives the story its emotional center.

Its 2025 nomination described employees as strongly connected to the mission and to one another. At the time, Providence House reported 37 employees, an average tenure of 11 years and annual turnover of 3 percent.

The practices behind those figures were specific.

Providence House described flexible scheduling, paid time off, performance incentives and professional-development opportunities. It also emphasized check-ins, mutual respect and appreciation for work that can carry an emotional weight.

Recognition took several forms. An Employee of the Quarter program highlighted individual contributions, while handwritten notes, meeting acknowledgments and celebrations marked personal and professional milestones.

Team activities were designed to connect people within departments and across the agency, creating opportunities for employees to strengthen relationships outside their daily responsibilities.

The nomination also described a Call to Health program through its insurance, with mental, physical, spiritual and financial well-being components.

Community service offered another way for employees to work together. The 2025 account included Fuller Center home projects, a Back to School Bash and the Love the Boot Cleanup. Staff and residents participated alongside one another, strengthening neighborhood relationships while extending the organization's mission beyond its walls.

Employee accounts underline the connection. Shelly Marshall described a team that lifted one another up, while Danae Vaughn connected her role to a mission that changes lives.

Providence House's strongest workplace theme is the relationship between caring for families and caring for the team — a culture built to make sustained service possible.

Visit Shreveport-Bossier



Seen, heard and trusted

At Visit Shreveport-Bossier, a workplace-culture tool is visible right outside employees' offices. The organization's 2026 nomination says team members post their Birkman Method assessment results near their doorframes — a reminder that colleagues communicate and work differently.

The point, the submission explains, is to treat people in the way they want to be treated. Rather than expecting one management or communication style to suit everyone, the team uses the assessments as a practical reference in everyday conversations.

It is a concrete example of a broader culture built around influence, initiative and impact.

The destination marketing organization reports 25 employees. Its work connects the team to restaurants, attractions, events and businesses throughout Caddo and Bossier parishes.

"THIS IS THE TYPE OF ORGANIZATION WHERE YOU DON'T HAVE TO BECOME A DIFFERENT VERSION OF YOURSELF TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY."

EMMA BOONE, PUBLIC RELATIONS & DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER.

The nomination describes employees being trusted to lead projects, represent the organization and suggest improvements, including changes to outdated processes.

That trust also appears in the way the organization responds to overload.

When someone feels overwhelmed, leaders ask what can be taken off the person's plate, where support is needed and whether a process can be improved. The workplace story is not simply that employees are encouraged to be resilient; the workload itself can be discussed.

Public Relations and Digital Content Manager Emma Boone describes being able to speak openly with her supervisor and feel that her perspective is heard. Marketing Coordinator Holly Jenkins points to meaningful feedback and encouragement to grow.

Visitor Center Manager Lila Davis has spent more than 33 years with the organization and emphasizes the support and relationships that have shaped her experience.

Informal connection is part of the culture, too. Team members describe downtown walks, shared lunches, laughter and celebrations.

For Visit Shreveport-Bossier, the strongest workplace story stays close to the team: people encouraged to contribute, leaders willing to adjust and colleagues making an effort to understand one another.

Willis Knighton Health



Care begins with the team

The people who care for a community also need opportunities to learn, feel supported and see their work recognized.

Willis Knighton's Best Places materials describe those needs as part of its workplace culture, connecting the employee experience with the organization's approach to care.

The Always Here Promise provides one expression of that connection through empathy, compassion, respect and clear communication. Those same qualities that shape patient interactions also influence how colleagues work together across a large healthcare organization.

Professional development has long been one of Willis Knighton's strongest workplace themes.

Best Places materials have described certification opportunities through the James K. Elrod Innovation Center and reimbursement for national certification fees. They also highlighted employees who have pursued advanced education and specialized training while continuing their careers within the system.

Recognition provides another visible expression of culture.

The Gold Star Program has highlighted employees for exceptional service, with recognition extending beyond the workplace through community billboards and employee events. Internal communication through WK Connect has also provided a way to share accomplishments and milestones across campuses.

Practical support has included retirement benefits, insurance, fitness-center discounts, wellness incentives, health assessments and employee-assistance resources.

Employee voices bring those programs into a more personal frame.

Maintenance team member Doyle Moody described learning from colleagues and feeling that he had a place on the team. Tony LaSuzzo's nursing account emphasized teamwork, while Dr. David Drummond focused on colleagues' shared standards and commitment to care.

Willis Knighton's workforce numbers underscore the scale of the organization, but its workplace story is ultimately about individual careers inside that larger system.

The strongest examples are employees who continue learning, receive recognition for their contributions and find opportunities to grow while doing work that affects patients and families across Northwest Louisiana.



What Makes People Stay?

Best Places to Work honorees point to training, advancement and employee support

Employee retention remains a major challenge for employers, but responses submitted for BIZ Magazine's 2026 Best Places to Work recognition show several ways local organizations are working to keep employees engaged and build long-term careers.

At Holy Angels Residential Facility, that includes paid training and advancement opportunities through Angel University.

Holy Angels said employees can receive advanced training and certifications at no cost while being paid for their training time. Direct Support Professionals can progress through DSP levels I through IV, with higher certification levels tied to increased pay.

The organization reported 33 staff promotions during 2025 and 2026.

Holy Angels also reported that 84 employees have been with the organization for at least 10 years, including 10 employees with 40 to 49 years of service and one employee with more than 50 years.

Senior Director of Residential Services Martha Hammock is among the long-tenured employees. She began working at Holy Angels 42 years ago and said the training opportunities available today give employees a clearer path for advancement.

"Angel University's offerings of advanced training, certifications, and professional development is a benefit like I have not seen at any other employer," Hammock said.

Carter Credit Union also highlighted advancement as part of its workplace culture.

In its nomination, Carter said employees are encouraged to build careers within the organization rather than simply hold jobs. Employees who develop their skills, take initiative and accept greater responsibility are given opportunities to move into larger roles.

Jill Folks, who submitted the nomination, cited her own career path. She joined Carter in 2010 in business development and marketing and was promoted to senior management in 2017.

Other employees described similar experiences.

Facilities Manager Jeremy Niebrugge said he began by assisting Carter's facilities manager and was promoted to the manager position when the previous manager left.

Branch Manager Tisa Gio said Carter has also provided opportunities for her professional development.

"Throughout my time here, I have been encouraged and challenged to grow not only as a leader, but also as a person," Gio said.

Carter's nomination also emphasized employee autonomy. Staff members are encouraged to offer ideas, and the organization maintains an open-door policy that includes direct access to the CEO.

At Visit Shreveport-Bossier, employee support includes an intentional approach to communication and workload.

Each employee completes the Birkman Method assessment, which is used to help team members better understand individual communication styles and workplace needs. The organization said employees keep their assessment results posted near their offices as a reminder that coworkers may respond differently to communication and management styles.

The nomination also described how leadership responds when an employee becomes overwhelmed.

"When an employee is overwhelmed or approaching burnout, leadership asks what they need, what can be taken off their plate and whether a process can be improved," the submission said.

Visit Shreveport-Bossier employs 25 people, and employees said the individualized approach has helped create a supportive workplace.

Public Relations and Digital Content Manager Emma Boone said employees are encouraged to bring their individual strengths to their work.

"This is the type of organization where you don't have to become a different version of yourself to be taken seriously," Boone said.

Visitor Center Manager Lila Davis has worked for the organization for more than 33 years.

"The supportive atmosphere encourages loyalty, teamwork, and a strong sense of belonging," Davis said.

The three organizations use different approaches, but their Best Places to Work submissions point to several common retention practices: giving employees opportunities to advance, providing training, allowing employees to contribute ideas and responding to individual needs in the workplace.

For Holy Angels, Carter Credit Union and Visit Shreveport-Bossier, those efforts have also produced employees whose careers span years and, in some cases, decades.



Courtesy Photo

Local Ideas, Growing Impact

BRF and EAP Celebrate 11 North Louisiana Companies at the 2026 Dolores George LaVigne Wall of Entrepreneurial Achievement Ceremony

Eleven companies making an impact across North Louisiana were celebrated at the 2026 Dolores George LaVigne Wall of Entrepreneurial Achievement ceremony, hosted by BRF's Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program (EAP). Held at BRF's InterTech 1 facility on October 23, the ceremony recognized businesses that reflect the innovation, growth, and entrepreneurial spirit shaping the region.

The Wall of Entrepreneurial Achievement highlights companies that have reached meaningful milestones along their entrepreneurial journeys. This year's honorees represent a wide range of industries, from technology and health care to entertainment, hospitality, food, and professional services, demonstrating the variety of ideas and opportunities being developed in North Louisiana.

For more than a decade, EAP has worked directly with entrepreneurs to help move their businesses forward. The Shreveport-based program provides hands-on, one-on-one support to help companies strengthen their business and financial models, prepare for funding opportunities, and navigate the challenges that come with starting and growing a business. EAP also supports the region's entrepreneurial community through training programs, workshops, and events that bring entrepreneurs and resources together.

Over the past 12 years, EAP has sat down with nearly 2,300 companies to learn about their businesses, goals, and needs. EAP-supported entrepreneurs have collectively raised more than $578 million throughout the years through funding sources including angel investment, Small Business Innovation Research grants, bank financing, grants, and self-financing.

During the ceremony, EAP Executive Director Dave Smith welcomed honorees and guests and spoke about the importance of celebrating the businesses growing in our region. He stated that the Wall "represents the creativity, determination, and hard work that make our entrepreneurial community so special" and recognized the honorees for not only building businesses but also contributing to a stronger Northwest Louisiana.

Dr. John F. George Jr., BRF President and CEO, also congratulated the honorees and reflected on the role entrepreneurs play in creating new opportunities. "Your success is a great example of the talent and innovation we have right here in North Louisiana," he said. "We celebrate what you have accomplished today, and your story as a company on the Dolores George LaVigne Wall of Entrepreneurial Achievement encourages entrepreneurs who will follow in your footsteps tomorrow."

2026 HONOREES

The following companies were recognized for their innovation, impact, and leadership.

AMOUR RIVIERA
Owned by Lauren "Margo" Hackett

Inspired by the rich café culture of New Orleans, Amour Riviera aims to bring a taste of that tradition to Shreveport. Blending café culture with a love for sweet treats, Lauren is building a distinctive local destination where specialty beignets, fresh-baked treats, and handcrafted coffee can become part of the city's identity for generations to come.

AROVIA INC.
CEO Alex Wesley

Arovia develops portable display technology for places where traditional screens may not work well. Its Splay products provide bright, eye-friendly visuals for field operations and everyday work. The Splay is being manufactured right here in Shreveport at Louisiana Association for the Blind.

FUELJOBBERX
Owned by Richie Sidhu

FuelJobberX provides software that helps fuel distributors manage dynamic pricing, tax allocation, invoicing, payments, fuel demand, and delivery schedules in one system.

GOD'S COUNTRY (BLUE METRIC FUND LA GOD'S COUNTRY)
Park Managers Jade & Pacer West

God's Country is set inside the Soda Lake Wildlife Management Area. This RV and cabin resort offers a rare mix of quiet nature and easy access to the energy of Shreveport. God's Country RV Resort is your oasis on the road — surrounded by water, trees, and wide Louisiana sky.

GOOD HANDS
Owned by Amy Rinder

Good Hands specializes in hand therapy, rehabilitation, and persistent pain management, helping patients overcome pain and regain function. Through personalized, patient-centered care, Amy helps individuals restore mobility, build strength, and return to the daily activities that matter most.

JURA HEALTH
CEO Chris Moore & Head of Community & Patient Experience Robyn Horton



Courtesy Photo

Jura Health makes genetic testing and personalized care more accessible, especially for families affected by rare diseases. Its services include testing, treatment guidance, genetic counseling, education, and ongoing support.

KANTEEN PARK
Owned by LeMar Flukers

Kanteen Park is an open-air event and entertainment venue in Shreveport's Far End District. Once a blighted property on Texas Ave., it is now a gathering space for music, art, food, local makers, pop-ups, and community events.

SISTEMATIK GRAPHICS, INC.
President Dustin Glass & CFO Heather Kitchens

Sistematik Graphics is a full-service custom print shop producing signs, banners, vehicle wraps, apparel, embroidery, business cards, and more, with in-house graphic design. Backed by decades of combined printing experience, the team customizes every job around the client's needs and treats quality and service as the priority on every project.

VEGANS ON THE RUN
Owned by Dr. Joslin Mar-Dai

Vegans on the Run is a Shreveport staple built inside SUSLA's Kitchen Incubator. This 100 percent vegan eatery reimagines familiar comfort foods with bold flavors and creativity. Now housed in Shreveport's Far End District, Vegans on the Run serves delicious plant-based plates and offers curated culinary experiences, catering, private chef services, and meal preparation.

VELOCITY MATCH
Owned by Levy Rivers

Velocity Match uses artificial intelligence to connect CDL drivers with trucking carriers to reduce turnover. This automation will work to identify and recruit qualified drivers more efficiently, while helping drivers find opportunities that better fit their individual priorities like pay, routes, and home time.

WEDDING WAR, LLC.
Directed by Hannah Dorsett Floyd

Based on the book The Wedding War by USA Today best-selling author Amy Talley, this film adaptation tells the story of two childhood friends, once inseparable, whose friendship was shattered by a secret revealed at one friend's wedding. Twenty-some-odd years later, their children fall in love. This was filmed in Shreveport this past summer.

Following the ceremony, honorees and guests gathered to celebrate the companies represented on the Wall and connect with others from across the region's entrepreneurial community.

The Dolores George LaVigne Wall of Entrepreneurial Achievement represents more than individual business milestones. It tells the larger story of entrepreneurship in North Louisiana and the people willing to act on their ideas, pursue an opportunity, and build something here at home. By recognizing companies EAP has recently had the opportunity to support, BRF and EAP are celebrating their progress while showing future entrepreneurs what is possible in our region.

Each new name on the Wall adds to that story and reflects the continued momentum of entrepreneurship across Northwest Louisiana.

TWO CITIES. ONE HEART.



MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT

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