



2024

EMPLOYERS OF  
**CHOICE**



THE COURIER

SEPTEMBER 28, 2024



# ADVANCED HEAT TREAT CORP.: SMALL CHANGES HAVE BIG IMPACT FOR SEVEN-TIME EMPLOYER OF CHOICE RECIPIENT

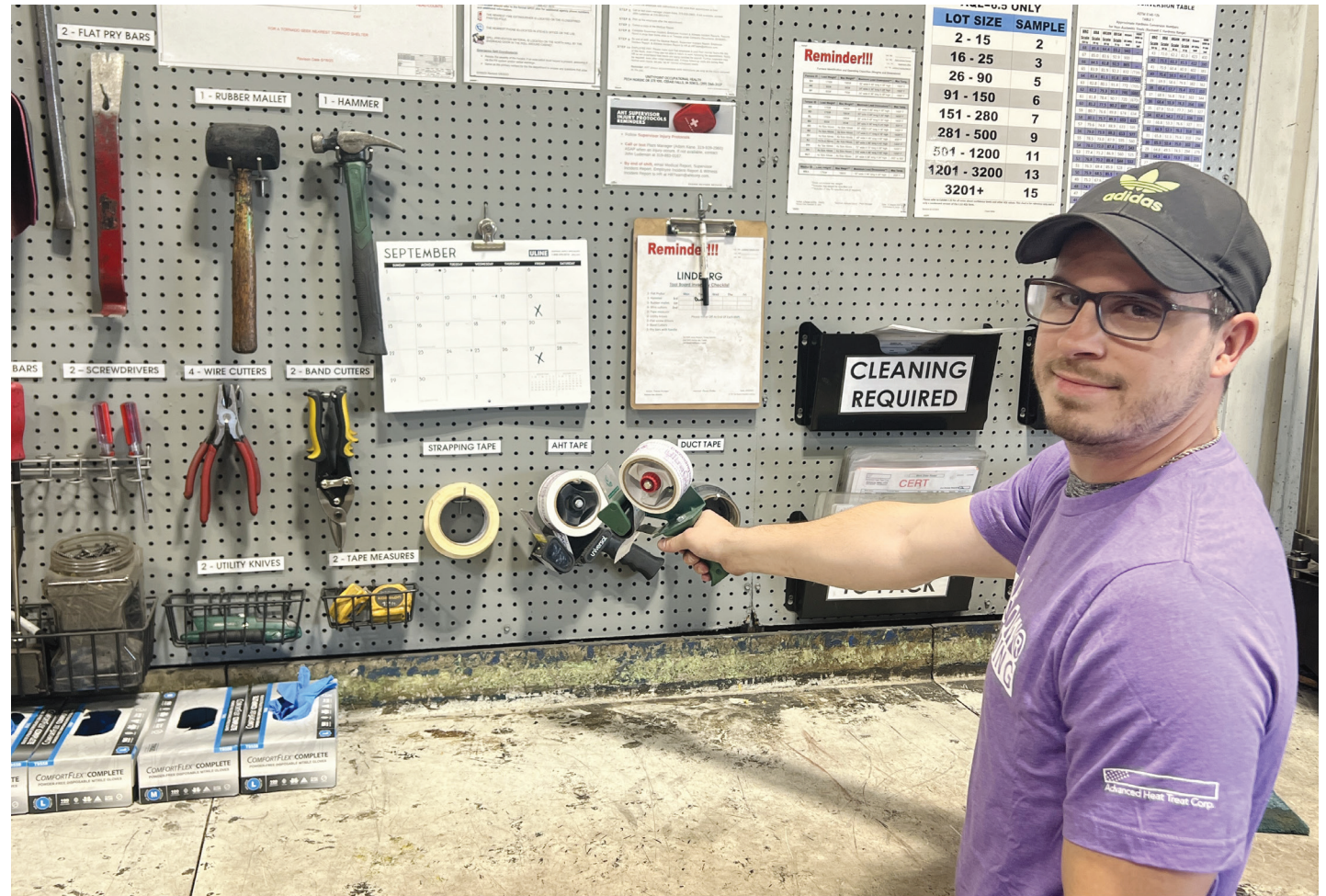
**“What bugs you?”** While normally this question has a negative connotation, at Advanced Heat Treat Corp. (AHT), it’s a question that is encouraged and viewed as the starting point for positive change.

In August 2023, the seven-time Employer of Choice award recipient, AHT, was in the planning stages of a new fiscal year. With an initiative to reduce costs and based on a customer’s recommendation, AHT president Mike Woods and a small group of employees began reading the book, “2 Second Lean.”

The book’s premise was around building a “lean” culture, identifying wastes and then empowering employees to solve those problems with multiple small fixes over time. Fixes could include reducing the amount of time an activity takes, strategically setting up work areas to be more efficient, ensuring spaces are organized, fully utilizing employees’ strengths/skills, etc.

The initial 2-Second Lean (2SL) group found great value in the book’s principles, so another group began reading it, and then another, and by March 2024, it had spread throughout the entire organization – every location, every employee. Employees were organized into multiple cross-departmental groups and met every day for ten minutes to discuss a chapter of the book, share wins and losses, and talk about their ‘two-second lean’ ideas – how to fix what bugs them. The daily meeting also started with a quick ice-breaker question, allowing employees from the various departments to get to know each other better.

Lindsey Newcomb, AHT marketing manager, commented, “I’ve really enjoyed our 2SL groups and the exposure it’s given me to other departments. While I am in Marketing, I now feel more in tune with what’s going on in Finance, Operations, Quality, etc. We celebrate each others’ successes – whether that’s a new customer or an improved way of



Nick Cronan, equipment operator at AHT’s location on Burton Ave. in Waterloo, returns an item to the clearly labeled tool board, ensuring other employees can easily find the tools they need to do their job.

doing things – and we are made aware of issues too, such as equipment that needs maintenance or a goal that wasn’t met.”

While every employee has read the book now, the cross-departmental meetings continue to occur daily. The 2SL teams have also dedicated one day each week to cleaning collectively as a group. During this time, they might go outside to pick up debris, paint walls inside the facility, or other deep cleaning activities.

This weekly cleaning activity has also helped to identify other 2SL opportunities.

“We used to only have a couple spots in our shop for brooms and dust pans,” commented Chase Gibbs, AHT quality specialist. “So, when I was going to clean up, I had to walk to the other end of the shop... sometimes to find someone else was using the supplies or had not put them back. Now, we have several clearly

labeled stations at key locations in our plant so the items I need for cleanup are always nearby and available.”

Joe Patava, continuous improvement specialist and leader of the two-second lean program, defined the program as a mindset that allows you to view all your daily tasks (big or small) and evaluate what does not provide value or what stands in the way of achieving your goals efficiently.

Patava added, “Once you are able to see this waste, then you can go about limiting it as much as possible or remove it entirely. Often the question; “What bugs you?” is a trigger to seeing these wastes because we are naturally annoyed by waste, for example; trying to find a tool that has not been put back or walking 40 steps each way to get supplies when you could move the supplies to your work area instead.”

To minimize these wastes, AHT has implemented changes such as additional labeling to ensure items are returned to the proper place; QR codes in strategic locations so information is available where you need it, when you need it; and automation to reallocate employees away from repetitive, non-skilled tasks.

AHT president Mike Woods concluded with “2SL has been a great way to get to know teammates better, celebrate successes, fix problems, better utilize resources and continually improve the way we operate. I couldn’t be more proud of our team and I look forward to even more ideas being rolled out in the future.”

Interested in learning more about employment with Advanced Heat Treat Corp.? Visit [www.ahtjobs.com](http://www.ahtjobs.com) or call 319-232-5221.



Jordan Bass, heat treat technician, rolls the mobile cleaning cart to where he needs it on the shop floor. This frees up his hands and allows him to have all the necessary items conveniently located in one place.



Adam Dehl, regional sales manager, prepares to paint the safety railings at AHT’s MidPort Blvd. location in Waterloo.



“Lori Mattson, accounts payable clerk, stands next to labeled drawers to save time when searching for items

Advanced Heat Treat Corp.

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## KRYTON AND LT CORPORATION

At the root of all the products that Kryton and LT Corporation produce is a core focus to “build an enduring company for our people.” A lot of transformation has taken place in the last few years at Kryton on our journey towards building our “enduring company”, and yet our foundation

has not changed. The world around us continues to be divisive and chaotic with no standard of Truth to hold things together, and yet within these walls, we have not moved from what we believe. Grit, Humility, Trust, and Integrity are not just core values that form a checklist to follow – they are

built on a way of life that is rooted in Wisdom and focused on the character of our employees and the company as a whole. This is the essence of our mutual trust which results in a unity of purpose. We strongly believe that this is the bedrock from which our corporate and personal growth will

spring.

During the summer of 2024, Kryton employees began to see the incredible reality of being employee-owners through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), the result of being acquired by LT Corporation at the end of 2022. As employee-owners, Kryton

“no task is too small a vessel to hold the immense dignity of work given by God”

- a quote by Tim Keller

employees that were with the company at the time of purchase in late 2022 received their first ESOP statements showing shares of LT Corporation company stock as part of our benefits package – at no cost to our employees. This additional benefit has helped all of us learn even more how to “think like owners” with a growth-mindset in our day-to-day work – regardless of our role. We fully believe that “no task is too small a vessel to hold the immense dignity of work given by God” – a quote by

Tim Keller that we placed on a wall in our biggest meeting room as a daily reminder to all of us. We are thankful to have this additional retirement benefit as another way that Kryton can help our employees and their families.

Many workplaces in today’s world do not take full advantage of the perspective and talents of their employees due to organizational dysfunction and artificial harmony. This can result when corporate cultures don’t focus on Truth but get bogged down

in an environment where employees are afraid to take a principled stand. Authentic, honest, and fearless communication is a rare commodity in workplaces that are not singularly focused on the same objective. In deliberate contrast to this, Kryton has chosen to create a culture where teamwork, mutual trust and respect allow healthy and respectful disagreement. In such an environment, uniquely created people with diverse perspectives, backgrounds and ways of thinking are welcomed and in-

cluded in the pursuit of collaborative work – all the while being collectively sharpened by a standard of Truth that all of us are held accountable to. This is our competitive advantage. This is how we sharpen one another and become honest with ourselves and others. We believe this is what keeps our best employees here and attracts like-minded and like-hearted women and men to join and serve our quest to build an enduring company for our people. We are honored to be chosen for this award in 2024!



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## STRONG CULTURE LEADS TO GROWTH AT GRUNDY COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

At Grundy County Memorial Hospital (GCMH), we recognize that each day, our patients make decisions about their health care, and we are honored when they choose us. These decisions say to us that they are confident in our commitment to excellence, compassion and innovation. We also recognize that our associates have a choice in where they work, and we are incredibly thankful for each individual who has chosen to be part of our GCMH family.

While our patients are a major part of our growth and success, it is our associates who really allow us to provide the exceptional care our patients have come to know and trust. GCMH has achieved unprecedented milestones in both patient care and our workforce in the past few years. Thanks to the trust and loyalty of our patients, over the past three years GCMH has experienced a 33% increase in patient visits going from 51,221 visits to 67,869 visits. This growth represents real relationships built on trust and mutual respect between our patients and our care teams.

One of the most significant impacts of this





Together with our associates, patients and community members, we are not only shaping the future of health care; we are building a healthier and stronger community for generations to come.

growth is in our workforce. As our patient base has expanded, so too has our need to expand our team. Our team has grown by 22% since 2021, allowing us to invest in and retain top talent, even during the greatest workforce shortages our industry has faced. By nurturing a supportive culture and investing in our teams, we ensure that our patients receive the highest quality care possible.

In a recent employee engagement survey, associates used words like family, caring, friendly and nurturing to describe the culture at GCMH. "Hearing directly from our associates is the best way for us to improve our workplace culture. It's encouraging to our leadership team to know that our teams feel cared for and enjoy being part of the family here at GCMH," says Adam Scherling, MHA, GCMH Administrator.

Patient loyalty, coupled with a committed team of health care professionals has

empowered us to reinvest in our facilities, adopt cutting-edge technologies, and introduce new services. These advancements not only enhance the care experience and increase access to health care in our rural communities, it also allows for growth opportunities for our workforce. Every enhancement is a testament to our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

As the county's largest employer, the ripple effects of our growth is felt throughout our community. By expanding our operations, we create new jobs and opportunities, supporting the vitality of Grundy County and the surrounding areas.

Together with our associates, patients and community members, we are not only shaping the future of health care; we are building a healthier and stronger community for generations to come.



Next-level care  
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Nationally recognized, locally celebrated.

At **Grundy County Memorial Hospital**, our team is committed to providing personalized care using advanced medical technology **right here** in rural communities. Join us in making a meaningful impact, delivering healthcare excellence driven by compassion and expertise.



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**Grundy County  
Memorial Hospital**  
UnityPoint Health

# PATHWAYS BEHAVIORAL SERVICES

“Working at Pathways Behavioral Services has truly been an amazing way to serve the community. Pathways serves children, adolescents, and adults in the community and helps them to be successful. Pathways also recognizes employees for a job well done. Realizing that taking care of our employees helps all of us better care for our clients in the community,” writes one staff member. Pathways Behavioral Services is a non-profit corporation licensed and accredited by the Iowa Health and Human Services and nationally accredited through CARF International to provide mental health and substance use disorder outpatient services and substance use disorder residential services. Pathways was also just recently nationally accredited through CARF International as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). Pathways’ mission is offering help for today and inspiring hope for tomorrow through outstanding personalized care, support and education. Another staff member states that, Pathways is “compassionate toward members served and employees. I appreciate they are looking at new and innovative ways to increase mental health services and look at employees within the company first to achieve these goals.” Pathways has several office locations in Northeast Iowa including Waterloo, Waverly, Independence, Allison, and Fredericksburg. “I love that Pathways helps so many people in the Cedar Valley and beyond to help them on their journey to recovery.” (a long-time staff member). Pathways’ clinical staff includes psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, clinical social workers, licensed mental health counselors, and substance use disorder counselors that provide a wide range of services including individual, family, and marital counseling, school-based programming, medication management, and 24-hour emergency service. Pathways’ goal and

mission is not only to provide support and resources to the people in our community but also to take care of their employees, which Pathways excels. Check out what staff write about Pathways working environment:

“Pathways is committed to providing the best services possible to a vast array of people. They are compassionate and caring. They hire only the best clinicians, nurses, counselors, and support staff who make up a great work environment as well. Everyone is a team player which helps with coordination of services for all our clients! They are friendly, nonjudgmental, and supportive. Come check them out!”

“Pathways has given me many opportunities to strive with confidence as a young professional. At Pathways great work never goes unnoticed or underappreciated, even



the “smallest” accomplishments are celebrated. I am always proud and excited to tell people about where I work and what I do.”

“There are so many great things about working at Pathways, which is why so many of our staff stay with the agency for long careers. Our staff know they make a difference in the work they do – from support staff to billers to care coordinators to peer support to counselors to community educators. We are all working together to offer help for to-

day and inspire hope for tomorrow in our communities. Pathways values work/life balance in its culture and its policies; staff are valued as whole people, not just employees. Staff are encouraged and supported by Pathways to pursue education and experiences to grow in their careers. It really is an atmosphere of encouragement, which helps us be energized and ready to support the clients and communities we serve.”

“Pathways is a fantastic place to work.



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Costumes are not required but are encouraged

“ I love that Pathways helps so many people in the Cedar Valley and beyond to help them on their journey to recovery.”

*(a long-time staff member)*



They are incredibly flexible in making sure I have a flexible work/home balance. They are aware of issues that are important to staff members and are always working to make sure that staff are happy in their jobs and willing to make changes that are needed to improve the quality of our work life. Working as part of a team that is connected and supportive to each other is one of my favorite parts of my job. I know that my team is looking out for each other making my job so much easier.”

“I have been employed at Pathways for a little over 6 years and have worked at 2 different locations during my employment. I love working at Pathways for numerous reasons some of which are helping others, making a difference, flexibility, and the wonderful benefits they offer. Most employees I work with also have great senses of humor and love my daily dad jokes.”

“I have worked for Pathways for nearly 15 years and have witnessed their services and staff grow significantly during that time. Through this progress and growth, Pathways has always remained dedicated to work/life balance for staff. This is evident in treatment of staff as whole people with full lives and in policy which supports things like time off, benefits, and an employee assistance program. Pathways has a low turnover rate, with many staff staying 10+ years. Pathways has seen many staff continue their education, become parents, and/or receive promotions while employed at Pathways. Training is valued at Pathways and staff are encouraged to seek out trainings which reflect their interests, allowing them to become experts in their fields. It is common to see agency-wide emails boasting staff suc-

cesses from small acts of kindness to major professional accomplishments. At our main office on University Ave. in Waterloo, our executive director is known for making daily rounds, where she walks throughout the building and checks in with staff regarding their days and any staff needs. Pathways offers an exceptional workplace.”

“Pathways Behavioral Services has it ALL! Unfortunately, we live in an era of big business that can ultimately make employees feel unheard, unseen, and undervalued. It is fair to say that Pathways continues to expand, adding invaluable services to the communities served, though remarkably the integrity of the agency has never wavered. Pathways is an organization where employees feedback is encouraged and appreciated, where voices are not only heard but valued. Executive Management is not a group of strangers on an email list or with an open-door policy, but rather leaders who know employees personally and in return are respected as mentors. Pathways is a place where employees skills are recognized and valued and where promotion happens from within. It is a place where passions are discovered, and you will always hear cheers of encouragement and of a job well done. As an employee of Pathways, your health and wellbeing matters. You’ll find a work/life balance isn’t only promoted, it is encouraged and always met with flexibility and understanding. Since joining Pathways, I have discovered Mark Twain’s quote to be true, ‘Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life.’” Pathways has been serving the Cedar Valley since 1967 and currently employ 125 people in the Cedar Valley. “Our staff help so many



people.” writes Vicki Mueller, Executive Director of Pathways. “I would like to say thank you to our staff for their dedication to our communities and commitment to providing excellent service. Pathways is the staff we employ, and we are fortunate to have amazing, caring, and hard-working people on our team.”



**Need Support? Pathways Behavioral Services Offers:**  
Mental Health Counseling, Substance Abuse Treatment, & More  
**WE'RE HIRING!**

**2nd and 3rd shift Residential Techs** in our inpatient substance use treatment program. For questions or to submit a cover letter/resume, please email Lead Residential Tech Matthew Flaherty at [matthew.flaherty@pathwaysb.org](mailto:matthew.flaherty@pathwaysb.org)

**Part-time Community Prevention Educator.** For questions or to submit a cover letter/resume, please email Prevention Supervisor Teresa King at [Teresa.King@pathwaysb.org](mailto:Teresa.King@pathwaysb.org)



# CBE COMPANIES: INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH A PEOPLE-FIRST APPROACH

Another year and another honor – CBE Companies is grateful to once again be recognized as an Employer of Choice in the Cedar Valley! As a proud Employer of Choice, CBE has consistently shown that innovation isn't just about technology, it's about people.

With over 90 years of experience, CBE is known for its forward-thinking approach to business, rooted in a philosophy that puts employees first. This people-first mindset drives CBE's success in delivering cutting-edge solutions while ensuring a culture of support, collaboration, and growth for all team members.

## Delivering Brand Consistency Through a Team-Driven Approach

At CBE, the foundation of our success is the belief that every employee contributes to the larger mission of delivering exceptional service. This approach ensures that the services provided to clients are consistent with their brand values, helping them maintain their reputation and meet customer expectations.

"CBE focuses on solutions, but the people driving these solutions are what makes the difference," shares Nick Michael, Chief Risk Officer. "Our team is our greatest asset, and we've built a culture where collaboration, communication, and care come first."

## People First: The Key to Innovation

CBE's people-first approach extends beyond the workplace, creating a strong connection between the company's operation and our employees. This connection encourages innovation by allowing employees to explore new ideas, develop skills, and confidently approach challenges.

"Our team members are empowered to think outside the box and collaborate across departments," explains Erica Parks, CBE President and CEO. "Innovation at CBE means finding new ways to meet client needs while maintaining our commitment to supporting employees."

## CBE's Commitment to Caring for its Employees

At CBE, leadership goes above and be-



An aerial view of CBE's Cedar Falls office showcases the heart of our operations, where innovation and teamwork drive our commitment to delivering exceptional service. Located in the vibrant Cedar Valley, this facility represents our ongoing dedication to growth and community impact.



A dedicated group of CBE employees participated in the Cedar Valley Heart Walk, raising an impressive \$6,268.45 for the American Heart Association and earning recognition as a 'Top Fundraising Business'. Special recognition was given to CBE's Bill Atkins, who raised \$5,463.64 and was named a 'Top Walker'.



CBE's United Way Campaign has been recognized as #5 in Cedar Valley United Way's Top 50 Campaigns of 2023. This achievement highlights CBE's ongoing commitment to making a positive impact in the community.



On behalf of CBE's Employee Community Outreach Program, Maura McNamara and David Alderman presented a check for \$3,779.79 to Retrieving Freedom, supporting the training of service dogs for veterans and others in need. To learn more about CBE's Employee Community Outreach Program, please visit [www.cbecompanies.com/cbecares](http://www.cbecompanies.com/cbecares).



Members of CBE's Veterans Business Resource Group volunteered their time and skills to support the Americans for Independent Living (AFIL) foundation. The team worked on various community-focused projects, highlighting their commitment to giving back and supporting local initiatives.



CBE's HR team had an enriching experience attending the Women Lead Change Cedar Valley Women Connect Workshop: Beyond HR. The event focused on leadership and professional growth, empowering participants to make a positive impact within their organizations and communities.

beyond managing day-to-day operations to genuinely caring for the well-being and success of each employee. The leaders at CBE are deeply invested in creating a supportive and compassionate work environment where employees feel valued for their contributions as individuals.

"CBE has some of the most caring leaders in the Cedar Valley," said Amanda Gantois, Vice President of Human Resources. "The leaders of CBE check in on employees, so you constantly feel valued."

This culture of care is reflected in every aspect of the company, promoting an atmosphere where employees know they

have the support of their leaders.

### A Supportive Environment for Career Growth

For CBE Companies, success comes from fostering an environment where employees feel supported and valued. With an established commitment to personal and professional growth, CBE offers extensive training, mentorship, and career development programs that help employees thrive in their roles and meet their goals.

"CBE is a great place to grow," says David Alderman, Supervisor of Training. "Most of our upper management started at the same position as a new hire associate, so we understand their challenges and concerns, and we celebrate their triumphs. CBE does an amazing job of identifying skills and talents that a new hire associate may not even see in themselves, and CBE's wide range of clients, departments, and roles allow all employees to explore opportunities they may not have thought of otherwise."

From customer service to IT, marketing, and more, we ensure that each employee has the opportunity to grow their skill set and take on new challenges, all while contributing to the overall success of the organization.

### Flexibility and Balance

Employee well-being is central to CBE's philosophy. Whether through flexible schedules, remote work opportunities, or an understanding approach to personal circumstances, CBE prioritizes employees' balance between work and life.

"Whether it is an unexpected event, a



CBE's team enthusiastically participated in Cedar Valley United Way's Rally for the Valley event, marking the kickoff of their annual campaign. By joining forces with the community, CBE is committed to supporting those in need and contributing to lasting positive change.

family event, or a personal event, employees are offered flexible scheduling to ensure they can meet their personal needs," explains Operations Team Captain Renee Keninger.

### Looking Ahead

As CBE Companies continue to evolve, the focus remains on empowering our em-

ployees to drive innovation and provide exceptional service. By fostering a culture that emphasizes collaboration, brand consistency, and employee growth, we ensure that CBE remains an Employer of Choice for years to come. With a people-first approach leading the way, CBE is not just shaping the future of business, it's shaping the future of our people.

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## CEDAR FALLS UTILITIES

Employees at Cedar Falls Utilities appreciate that the company culture continues to create a work dynamic where employees feel supported and valued.

This year was a year of change at CFU. Susan Abernathy was selected to lead CFU as General Manager and Missy Timmermans was selected as the

“ We invest in creating a work environment where employees can thrive, and CFU works hard to ensure our employees feel supported and empowered. The outstanding culture at CFU is a crucial part of how we can help support the community and be a trusted provider for them.”

new Director of Employee and Legal Services, filling Susan's previous position. Despite changes to top leadership roles, employees continue to find working at CFU a rewarding experience and CFU was named an Employer of Choice for the 14th time.

Missy quickly saw how CFU's positive culture leads to success for both employees and the community.

“CFU prides itself on fostering a culture of excellence, collaboration and innovation. We are always looking to improve our services for our customers, and a part of that is fostering an environment where every CFU employee has the opportunity to grow, both personally and professionally,” says Missy.

As head of the HR department at CFU, Missy now is a key component of ensuring this positive culture continues.

“We invest in creating a work environment where employees can thrive, and CFU works hard to ensure our employees feel supported and empowered. The outstanding culture at CFU is a crucial part of how we can help support the community and be a trusted provider for them.”

Alexus Donohue, a Customer Service Assistant, has been with CFU since March of this year and has seen firsthand how important workplace culture is to quality of life.

“Working at Cedar Falls Utilities has been not only the best decision of my career but one of the best of my life,” says Alexis.

“It has been a complete game changer for me and my family as the work-life balance is unmatched. Not to mention, I was welcomed with open arms and positivity from the second I walked in the door. I am thoroughly enjoying building

more and more connections throughout the community and wouldn't want to be anywhere else.”

Devin Shields, a Meter Reader at CFU since August 2023 values both the positive experience within the company and the community.

“CFU has been an amazing company to work for. There is great teamwork, you receive recognition for your hard work and it is very family oriented,” says Devin.

“I've also enjoyed getting to work out in the community. I get to meet new faces on a daily basis and always hear such positive feedback about this company and the services we provide.”

Andrew Lee, a GIS Analyst at CFU since December of 2023, recognizes how CFU's culture creates an environment where employees can grow and advance.

“CFU has a uniquely excellent work culture. The entire staff has authentic, positive working relationships that transcend circumstance,” says Andrew.

“From day one there is a clear path for growth in job skills and responsibilities, and everyone--from peers to senior leadership--genuinely wants you to succeed. I'm very grateful to be a part of this team.”

The kind of culture that CFU enjoys does not happen overnight and must go beyond any one leader. Susan Abernathy, newly appointed General Manager, recognizes this task.

“In my time at CFU, both in my previous role and now as General Manager, I appreciate that we have something special. Decades of continuous commitment to our core values by both previous leadership, and each employee at CFU, has fostered an environment where the expectation is to treat everyone with kindness and respect,” says Susan.

“As we embark on this new chapter at CFU, I am honored to lead our team and help maintain this culture so that we may continue to provide our community with the kind of excellent service obtained when you have employees that feel respected and supported.”

## THANK YOU

We appreciate the opportunity to serve the Cedar Falls community and the employees that make it possible.



Join us. Learn more at [cfu.net/careers](https://cfu.net/careers).



# MARTIN BROS. DISTRIBUTING CO., INC. FOSTERING A CULTURE OF EMPLOYEE GROWTH AND SUCCESS

Nestled in the heart of Cedar Falls, Iowa, Martin Bros. is a third-generation family business that has built its 84-year reputation on a foundation of strong values, exceptional service, and a commitment to employee success. With a diverse portfolio serving senior living communities, restaurants, educational institutions, and more, we are poised for growth while maintaining our core belief that our employees are our most valuable asset.

At Martin Bros., our mission is clear: we aim to serve our legendary customers, vendors, and employees with innovative solutions and exceptional service. This mission is not just a statement; it is a guiding principle that shapes our organizational culture. As we set our sights on the future, our strategic plans remain anchored in a dual commitment to Employee Success and Customer Success.

## Employee Development Programs

We understand that the success of our company is intrinsically linked to the growth and development of our employees. This is why we invest annually in a variety of developmental programs designed to enhance

skills and foster leadership. Our partnerships with prestigious institutions like the IFDA Darden UV School of Business have allowed us to graduate dozens of leaders within our organization. Additionally, our collaboration with Hawkeye Tech provides essential leadership and CDL training, ensuring that our team members are well-equipped to meet the demands of their roles. Moreover, we have partnered with reputable organizations in the foodservice industry, such as UniPro, to offer training that focuses on both soft and hard skills. This comprehensive approach to employee development not only prepares our workforce for current challenges but also empowers them to take on future opportunities with confidence.

## Prioritizing Work-Life Balance As Well As Health and Wellness

At Martin Bros., we prioritize the well-being of our employees and their families. Our comprehensive health and wellness initiatives include enhanced options that lower healthcare premiums, provide mental and physical health education, and offer other valuable support programs. We also

provide voluntary benefits such as vision, identity theft protection, critical illness, hospital indemnity and accident insurance. By investing in the health of our employees, we create a supportive environment that fosters productivity and engagement.

We also recognize that achieving work-life balance is essential for employee satisfaction and overall well-being. Martin Bros. promotes a culture that values flexibility and encourages employees to prioritize their personal lives alongside their professional commitments. Our casual work environment, company outings, and holiday parties contribute to a workplace that feels more like a community than just a job.

## Employee Ownership

One of the unique aspects of Martin Bros. is our Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). Since 1981, every full-time employee has been an owner of the company. This structure not only aligns the interests of our employees with the success of the business but also fosters a culture of shared ownership and accountability. Employees are motivated to contribute to the company's success because they directly benefit from it.

This sense of ownership enhances collaboration and teamwork, creating an environment where everyone is invested in the company's future.

## A Culture of Recognition and Appreciation

At Martin Bros., we believe that recognizing and appreciating our employees is crucial to maintaining a motivated workforce. This is evident when you walk into our Operations and Marketing Centers, each with a prominent wall listing all employees who have worked for Martin Bros. for 25 years or more. This wall not only serves as a tribute to our tenured employees, but also highlights the longevity of our staff. Our reward and recognition programs celebrate achievements big and small. Whether it's through formal awards or informal shout-outs, we ensure that our team members feel valued for their contributions.

Over the years, Martin Bros. has been recognized several times as a Top Workplace and an Employer of Choice by both The Des Moines Register and The Courier, recognizing our company as one of the best places



to work in Iowa. For us, there is no greater honor, as we know these accolades are based solely on employee feedback, measuring aspects of workplace culture, including alignment, execution, and connection. Such recognition reinforces our commitment to fostering a culture where employees feel engaged, supported, and empowered.

### Strengthening Customer Partnerships

Delivering exceptional service to our customers begins with fostering a culture that nurtures happy, engaged employees. When employees feel truly valued for their contributions, they are inspired to go above and beyond exceed customer expectations. As a result, our teams excel in building and nurturing lasting partnerships with operators, broker agencies, vendor partners, and consumers. We prioritize active listening, solution identification, and impeccable execution to ensure that we meet and exceed customer expectations.

Innovation is at the heart of our operations at Martin Bros. We continually seek to integrate new technologies and tools that enhance our service delivery. Our use of

tech integrations and customized platforms, along with automation solutions for establishments exemplifies our commitment to improving outcomes for our customers. By leveraging the talents of our team—such as chefs, dietitians, and service technicians—we anticipate customer needs and deliver tailored solutions.

### The Future Is Bright

As we look to the future, Martin Bros. stands firm in its commitment to maintaining our position as an Employer of Choice. Our dedication to employee success, employee development, and a positive workplace culture sets us apart in the foodservice industry. We believe that by investing in our employees, we are not only enhancing their lives but also ensuring the long-term success of our company. We continue to build a legacy of excellence, innovation, and community at Martin Bros. We believe in a workplace where everyone thrives, and where our commitment to legendary customer service remains unwavering. We can confidently say with the great people working alongside us, great things lie ahead for Martin Bros. as well as our customers, vendors and employees. “Here comes Martin!”



## Our Employees Make The Difference.

At Martin Bros., we take great pride in our 84-year reputation built on a solid foundation of strong values, exceptional service and a commitment to employee success.

### Join Our Family.

Learn more about our culture, our benefits and our vision for creating a difference in the lives of our employees as well as our business partners.



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# SERVING. GROWING. LEADING.

## 2024 Employers of Choice Recipient NewAldaya Lifescapes

**HUMBLLED & HONORED**

**CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT  
OF CARE AND JOIN US.**



7511 University Avenue  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613  
newaldaya.org



Since our founding in 1958 as the Cedar Falls Lutheran Home, we've been deeply rooted in the values of service and care. Today, as NewAldaya Lifescapes, we remain committed to these values which guide us as a senior living community.

We are redefining what "home" means for the aging population by offering a wide array of living options, wellness services, and a thriving Main Street that welcomes the wider community.

Over the years, it is the people—our dedicated staff and beloved residents—who have shaped a culture steeped in purpose, action, and meaningful relationships. Together, we've created an environment that is both nurturing and progressive. Under the leadership of Administrator Crystal and Chief Operating Officer Erin, our team has continued to foster growth and innovation. As we approach the close of 2024, we remain focused on expanding opportunities, recruiting new talent, and developing our team to better serve our community.

# SERVING. GROWING. LEADING.

Every decision we make is centered around our residents, as we embrace new initiatives to strengthen and grow the fabric of NewAldaya. We are especially humbled to be recognized as the 2024 Employers of Choice, an honor that belongs to our dedicated team. It is their commitment, passion, and spirit of service that make NewAldaya truly special and reflect our ongoing dedication to enhancing lives throughout The Cedar Valley.

## From Our CEO, Marcy McNeal

“NewAldaya is more than just a place to live—it’s a place where lives are enriched every day. Thank you to our team for making this possible.”



Leadership Team



Crystal Jasper, Director of Clinical Services  
AJ Cooper, LeadingAge Iowa Caregiver Recipient  
Erin O'Neill-Gleason, COO



Recreational Therapists- Hannah, Jocelyn Jones,  
Kirstin Lunn & Jessica Kennedy



Transportation- Jack Johnson &  
Jessica Ryan



# PDCM: BUILDING CAREERS AND COMMUNITY THROUGH INSURANCE

At PDCM, we know insurance isn't the most glamorous topic. We like to joke that no kindergartener has ever replied "I want to work in insurance!" when asked "what do you want to be when you grow up?"

Most of our employees would agree that a career in insurance wasn't initially on their radar. That said, each member who has joined our PDCM Family understands the importance of insurance and the protection it provides, as well as providing high-quality service to our clients.

"I have spent my career working in insurance as it is a continually changing industry. It is challenging, and it has allowed me to continue to learn, grow, and develop daily," said Tammy Acuff, Personal Lines Sales Agent and Team Leader. "While insurance isn't tangible,

## PDCM By the Numbers

<b>55</b>	Number of employees
<b>108</b>	Years in business
<b>11.2</b>	Average years of service per employee

it is a product that we all need in some aspect as it protects our most valuable assets. I enjoy bringing value to our clients and prospects by listening to learn about their specific insurance needs, providing education on coverages and explaining the "WHY," and finding the solution that best fits and protects them in the event of a loss - it's very rewarding."

Kelsey Carriger, Employee Benefits Account Executive, appreciates the ability to make connections and help others through working in insurance: "I continue to work in the insurance industry because of the people. The people I get the opportunity to work with internally and externally of our organization, and the opportunity to help others when they need it most. Navigating insurance is arguably as challenging as learning a second language, at PDCM, we strive to help communicate effectively and efficiently, providing guidance and solutions in a timely manner."

Since developing a passion for insurance takes time, having a strong culture and team is paramount to our agency's success. Chris Uhland, Accounting Coordinator, shared, "The people at PDCM are

cares, understanding, and make coming to work enjoyable. It's a beautiful place to work, and they provide us with a lot of perks - all the functions and events they put on for us, the Lunch & Learns and other trainings, as well as the fun activities - it's nice to have something fun to do at work."

Our commitment to culture and our corporate values allows us to retain employees long-term. While not everyone on our team are like Tammy and Chris, who have a combined 60+ years at PDCM, we are proud of the longevity on our team, as well as in our community: our 55 employees average 11.2 years of service, and we are in our 108th year of business in the Cedar Valley.

As PDCM celebrates our past, we also look to our future, where attracting new



## PDCM's Corporate Values

1. Do what's right.
2. Tell the truth. Even when it's hard.
3. Trust each other.
4. Value our differences
5. Take ownership.
6. Learn something new every day.
7. Live a balanced life.
8. Celebrate our successes.
9. Give back and pay forward.
10. People may not remember exactly what you did, or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

talent is a top priority. On who would be a great fit for our team, Kent McCausland, Partner and Vice President of Commercial Lines shared, "People who thrive in the insurance industry are those who love to help others. Typically we are called on when our clients have experienced their toughest challenges, so individuals who are smart, caring, and do everything they can to help someone – that's who we need." He added, "I like being around our team every day, and we enjoy having fun. That's what sets our agency apart!"

Aden Zwanziger and Don Patnode, both Commercial Insurance Producers, agree that PDCM is unique. "Our team chemistry is great, and coming to work is joyful," said Aden. Don mentioned, "One reason I



chose to work here is because I realized PDCM lives and breathes the corporate values every single day. Not only by promoting work life balance for employees, but we care about our clients like our family, and we focus on doing what's right."

While we know insurance can be boring, we have a different perspective: through insurance, we are able to positively impact and serve our employees, our clients, and our community. Tammy sums it up best: "I have been blessed to work with the industry's best of the best at PDCM. I love the culture, the opportunities, and the PDCM Family."

If you or someone you know is interested in joining us, please visit our website today at [pdc.com/careers](http://pdc.com/careers).

Thank You Cedar Valley!



# CARING FOR OUR EMPLOYEE OWNERS

VGM Group, Inc., founded in 1986, has been 100% employee owned since 2008. In that time, the company has grown in size five times over. Today, the company is made up of 1,600 employee owners, located in 40 states, as well as Canada. And there's more growth for the company on the horizon.

VGM isn't shy about admitting the secret to its success. It's a philosophy that's been around even before it became 100% employee owned: Take care of your people, and they'll take care of the business.

"VGM has always been a company that cares about its employees," said VGM Group Chief People Officer Sara Laures. "And because our employees own the place, they get to shape it in a way that works for them."

## Keeping Employees Healthy and Connected

VGM has always taken employee well-being seriously. This year, the company hired Cara Hintz as its wellness coordinator. VGM offers a variety of benefits to help employee owners meet their physical, mental, and financial wellness goals. And Hintz is there to help navigate them.

"Everyone is at a different spot in their wellness journey," Hintz said. "I'm excited to build on VGM's foundation, and bring more awareness, connection, and vitality to support our employee owners in their individual journeys."

Wellness goes beyond physical health, though. It's also about feeling connected. VGM has numerous clubs and committees to help employee owners connect with one another and find a sense of belonging.

Another large initiative, the VGM Language Learning Program, launched last year. It aims to help employee owners connect with peers and their community by eliminating language barriers.



Brenda Abarca, HR Coordinator, (L) and Tosha Harris, First Impression Receptionist, (R) attend the VGM Group Health and Wellness Fair

## Offering Support in Times of Need

VGM is also there to help employee owners encounter life's unexpected financial situations. In addition to ongoing financial wellness education and access to financial planners, VGM continues to add new programs to support employee owners in times of need.

This year, VGM group launched the Earned Wage Access Program. This gives hourly employee owners access to a portion of their paycheck before payday. Any funds withdrawn are simply deducted from their next paycheck. This benefit provides employees some breathing room before payday should any unexpected financial needs arise.

In January 2021, VGM also created the VGM Family Fund, an employee-funded program that helps fellow employee owners in their time of need. To date, the fund has awarded over \$200,000 and helped more than 200 employee owners experiencing hardships get back on their feet.

"There really is no limit to what VGM employee owners can accomplish together," Laures said. "When we see an opportunity to help, we find a way to make a difference."



Irina Hageman, program underwriter, VGM Insurance, and her son Easton attend the grand opening of the VGM On-Site Child Care Center



The playroom, Busy Bee Boulevard, at the VGM On-Site Child Care Center Right: The infant room, Caterpillar Canopy, at the VGM On-Site Child Care Center

**Easing the Way for Working Parents**  
VGM is home to many working parents in the Cedar Valley. And for years, the area had a shortage of child care options. Again, VGM heard employee owners and decided to make a difference.

In November 2023, VGM's on-site child care center officially opened. The center, operated by Community United Child Care Centers, is available to any child whose par-

ent, legal guardian, grandparent, aunt, or uncle is an active VGM employee.

"I appreciate that VGM listened to its employee owners and the community and then did something about it," said Irina Hageman, a program underwriter with VGM Insurance, whose son is enrolled in the center. "So few companies would see parents struggling like that and choose to do anything about it. And VGM did."

### Investing in the Future

When you give control of a company to 1,600 people, you unlock potential you can't find with just one person. And thanks to 100% employee ownership, VGM sees plenty of growth and change in the future.

"Everything comes back to employee ownership," said VGM Group CEO Jeremy Stolz. "We all have a vested interest in seeing each of our fellow employee owners

succeed. When they succeed, so does our company!"

To learn more about VGM, the industries it serves, and employee ownership, visit [vgmgroup.com](http://vgmgroup.com).

VGM's on-site child care center and language learning program were funded in part by State of Iowa grants.

# Employee Owned. 100%.

When you work at VGM, you're not just an employee—you own the place! Join VGM and start creating life-changing wealth for your future. Enjoy the various perks VGM provides, such as:

- Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP)
- Earned Wage Access
- On-site Child Care Center
- 24/7 Fitness Center
- Health, Vision, and Dental Plans
- FREE Health Clinic
- Work at Home Options

CREATE YOUR FUTURE AT VGM

Apply now at [vgmgroup.com/careers](http://vgmgroup.com/careers)



# PUTTING EMPLOYEES FIRST IS A PRIORITY FOR CEDAR VALLEY HOSPICE

BY ANNIKA WALL

For an organization to thrive year after year, they must constantly answer the question: “How can we continue to be better?” Cedar Valley Hospice has embraced this question, both in taking care of patients and families and their own employees. Their mission, “To Enrich Lives with Knowledge, Respect and Compassionate Care”, is evident in the service provided to the community and is a direct reflection of the training and support the staff receive.

## History

For 45 years, Cedar Valley Hospice has lived out the goal of Making Each Moment Matter for patients, families and clients. But, an organization is only as successful as the individual people who work for it. What originally started from a grassroots effort who believed our community deserved high quality end-of-life care has grown into a team of over 120 dedicated staff and nearly 300 volunteers.

“Cedar Valley Hospice is one of the best places to work in the entire Cedar Valley,” Abbie Bedard, staff RN, said. “The work we do is very challenging, but so rewarding in various ways. Our organization is always looking for ways to improve and adapt our services to provide care for more people during the most difficult times of their lives, and I’m proud that we get to walk besides them in their journeys.”

## Creating a Positive Culture

Over the years, Cedar Valley Hospice has continued to reassess the needs of their employees with the goal of creating an engaged culture that is inclusive, transparent and enjoyable, despite the serious nature of their work.

To create a positive culture, leadership has implemented several initiatives, including:

- Developing a merit-based pay system based on quarterly and annual reviews separate from cost-of-living adjustments.
- Implementing flexible work schedules to allow for better work-life balance
- Encouraging monthly or quarterly team-building to foster relationships and reconnect to the Cedar Valley Hospice mission
- Organizing weekly one-on-one meetings with supervisors to discuss workflow and plans.



Staff members from the Independence office and surrounding area walked in the annual Independence 4th of July parade in matching T-shirts to promote Cedar Valley Hospice's Release & Remember event.

- Holding monthly meetings with the executive director to promote transparency and discuss opportunities within the organization.

- Initiating wellness programs and benefits to support mental and physical health.

- Establishing an Employee Engagement committee known as the SWAT (Super Workers Achieving Togetherness) team to plan activities that encourage teambuilding across the entire organization.

“I am in awe each day with the level of engagement and teamwork I see at Cedar Valley Hospice,” Katie Unland, director of human resources, said. “We strive to provide an experience at work where employees feel cared for and valued. We feel this helps energize them to provide great care to our patients, families and clients. We couldn’t do this

amazing work without our dedicated and compassionate employees. We do everything we can to listen and respond to challenges and to ensure a healthy culture for them.”

## Award-Winning Organization

As Cedar Valley Hospice has continued to raise the bar for employee and patient care, they have been awarded numerous national and regional honors. This is highlighted by being named a 5-time national Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award Winner (2019-2023). This award is given to only the top organizations across the nation who meet high standards of excellence set forth by Gallup.

“Receiving the National Gallup Exceptional Workplace award says a lot about where I work,” said Nathan Schutt, clinical services manager. “Caring for our employees

is a key component of our organization, and we’re encouraged to celebrate our employees and plan group activities. So far, my team has enjoyed a Waterloo Bucks game, planted flowers together and enjoyed ice cream in nature, along with other activities. These small celebrations create a culture employees, myself included, want to work in.”

The high level of care for employees directly translates into compassionate quality care for Cedar Valley Hospice’s patients and families. Cedar Valley Hospice has been awarded a 5-Star rating from Medicare.gov, making them the only hospice in the area and 1 of 11 in the state of Iowa to receive this honor. Ratings are determined by the results of the Hospice Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS), which asks family members and

caregivers to rate the care their loved one received and if they would recommend this hospice to others.

"This is very important to us as it represents feedback from those that we serve," said Cedar Valley Hospice Executive Director Michaela Vandersee. "Every day we work hard to bring our mission to life – To Enrich Lives with Knowledge, Respect and Compassionate Care. The overall scores on this survey are confirmation that we are doing that every day. I am so proud of our employees for helping to achieve and maintain this new milestone."

Cedar Valley Hospice has also received the 2024 Hospice

To celebrate their 45th anniversary and 5th consecutive Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award, Cedar Valley Hospice held a staff outing at Lost Island Themepark in Waterloo. Employees enjoyed an afternoon complete with lunch, socializing and entertainment for thrill-seekers and casual theme park fans alike.

CAHPS Honors Award from HEALTH-CAREfirst (one of six in Iowa and the only one in the area); was named Best of the Best by the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier for Hospice, In-Home Care, Large Company to Work for and more; and



Team members Mendy Sellers, Abbie Bedard and Olivia Brecht arranged an outing for patient Judy Focht and her husband, John, which is one way Cedar Valley Hospice is Making Each Moment Matter for patients and their families. The pair enjoyed a day date at Wilbo Burgers, Brats & Beers in downtown Cedar Falls.

named an Employer of Choice for over a decade.

"Cedar Valley Hospice appreciates their staff, and not a day goes by without providing positive feedback," Angie Mohn, staff RN, said.

"It's a fun environment to work in. Everyone is looking after each other and looking for ways to help everyone out. I love this work community that I am a part of and love the staff that I work with. I wouldn't trade it for anything!"

# Making Each Moment Matter



As an Employer of Choice, we care for our employees so they can **Make Each Moment Matter** for the families we serve.



Join our team!



**CEDAR VALLEY HOSPICE**

Making Each Moment Matter.

800.626.2360 | [cvhospice.org](http://cvhospice.org)



2024

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