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QSR FEATURE

The Best of 2009

March 25, 2010

## HR Best Companies to Work For

BY NICK DIULIO

### Bruegger's Health Incentive

In an effort to encourage healthy habits amongst its crew, Bruegger's implemented a wellness program this year for all of its employees. The program offers an insurance incentive of up to 20 percent for employees who participate in a health-risk assessment and make lifestyle changes that have a positive impact on their health such as exercising, quitting smoking, and eating a nutritious diet. Additionally, employees receive discounts on gym memberships and receive discounts on Bruegger's "good for you" menu items.

### Culver's Scholarship Program

In an effort to continue encouraging higher education, more than 200 student team members at Culver's across the country received scholarship money this year. This year the Culver's VIP Foundation Scholarship Fund awarded \$220,000 to 205 student team members during its annual VIP scholarship reception on August 5 in Madison, Wisconsin.

Each recipient was awarded between \$1,000 and \$2,000 in scholarship funds, and more than 125 restaurants and their team members from 14 states were represented in this year's program.

"Helping our talented young team members pursue their educational goals is an investment in the future," says Lea Culver, the chain's co-founder and executive director of the VIP Foundation Scholarship Fund.

### El Pollo Loco's Safety Contest

For the past five years WKS Restaurant Corporation, which is the franchisor of 60 El Pollo Loco quick-service restaurants, has held a safety contest in which the winning employee receives a new car.

And despite the recession, this year was no different. The 2009 winner was a cashier in Bakersfield, California, who has been with El Pollo Loco for four years. Roland Spongberg, president and CEO of WKS, says that while many companies have eliminated similar programs because of the troubled economy, he is still running them because he has seen how successful they can be.

PHOTO: EL POLLO LOCO



### Charley's Grilled Subs Raises Awareness

In 2008, Charley's Grilled Subs franchisee Marcus Gilbert did something extraordinary—he donated his kidney to a 16-year-old employee named Juan Delgado. Delgado learned he needed a kidney transplant shortly after being hired at Charley's, and since no one in his family was a match, Gilbert agreed to donate his kidney.

As a result, Charley's launched a company-wide campaign for National Philly Cheesesteak Month in January 2009 to raise money and awareness for the National Kidney Foundation. Participating restaurants also put out donation canisters in order to help Delgado pay for his medical expenses.

### Chipotle's Corporate Ladder

When it comes to finding the best and brightest new managers for its 900-plus store locations, Chipotle discovered the secret is right under its nose. In 2005, the national Mexican chain, which previously offered workers few chances to advance in the company, revamped its company career paths.

In an effort to afford more chances for entry-level staff to get a leg up, Chipotle created more levels to advance into, including kitchen manager, service manager, apprentice, and general manager. The final rung is restaurateur, an elite managerial position that oversees multi-level operations. This year saw the most significant benefits of the initiative with the company promoting nearly 80 percent from within in 2009.

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