

## NEWSLETTER AUG 2007

Tami and her daughter Ashlyn (North Spokane) joined my sister Mary, my daughter Layla, and I on a "Chinque Chicas" whirlwind trek through Germany, Austria, and Northern Italy for the month of August. We had a great time hopping trains and staying in youth hostels, inexpensive bed and breakfasts, and with friends. The special part was taking her mother's ashes to a hilltop overlooking the little Villages she loved. I have enclosed one picture.

Thank you everyone for your thoughts on the employee retention issues. Here is what you said:

### **Anne, Wooster, OH:**

Beside the 15% discount on the things they wish to buy and the bin system that I use to allow them to stash their items till payday, here are a couple of other reasons: Wooster is an economically depressed area where employment is scarce. Most of our new jobs to replace good paying union jobs that are no longer available are in the service and retail industry. I find that by being as flexible as possible inspires loyalty and having an open forum about things that can and should be changed in the store give the staff a sense of ownership and responsibility that they just can't get at Wal-Mart. I like to spring for pizza and pop at store meetings and it really is an open forum. They know that the final decision about any procedure is up to Greg and myself, but we have implemented enough of their ideas and suggestions that they know we take what they say into consideration. All my employees say they like to work at Other Mothers for a variety of reasons. We get to meet so many different people and see their children grow. I know it makes us all feel like a very special part of our community. Things change on an hourly basis and it never gets boring. I feel like we have a family in our little store way out here in the Midwest. I don't have a problem getting good loyal people in here. One of the things I do when I am looking to hire, is to require a resume' instead of a standard application. I think it can help separate the people who are genuinely interested in a post with Other Mother's and those who have a Department of Human Services requirement. The main thing I stress when covering the benefits is the discount and the availability of the inventory. I really don't limit what they buy as long as it is paid for on payday, and I do keep an eye on the bins. I have never had too much trouble with anyone hoarding things. They know if they put too much in there, they will be told to clean the bins out. I guess the biggest perk is the feeling of belonging to something. That's the way I see it, and I think my associates do too. Of course, in our part of the country, it's either someplace like Other Mothers, or Wal-Mart. Maybe in Albuquerque, people are still paying a living wage

### **Tami, North Spokane, WA:**

She offers incentives such as buying them lunch on quarter sale Friday, takes them to dinner and movies after a busy season such as fall or after summer clothes are put out. Work Christmas parties and she also started a picnic this year. Tries to be flexible with scheduling also.

**Nancy & Val, Boise, ID:**

We like to reward our girls as often as possible to let them know they are appreciated. We always buy everyone lunch on our quarter sale days. After especially hectic weekends, I will have an envelope in the office for each of them with movie tickets, gift certificates, or special goodies at the break table. On days when we surpass a certain number of trade-ins, those girls who worked put their names into an end-of-the-month drawing. We give away a gift certificate to Bath & Body, Old Navy, or whatever. (This is a monthly drawing) Last year after our busy (& prosperous) fall season, we had a huge surprise for all the staff. I was so appreciative of all of them and how hard they worked and I wanted them to know it. So, I had them all meet in the parking lot of the mall. They were so excited and were all trying to guess what "treat" I had in store for them. Some thought maybe dinner; others thought we were going to catch the bus for downtown Boise (we met near the bus stop). After everyone was there, I thanked all of them for being such hard workers and told them how much I appreciated them. Then, I handed each of them an envelope with cash in it. The amount of cash they got depended on how long they had worked for us. It varied between \$20-\$50-\$100. You should have heard them when they opened their envelopes (the money was all in ones!) I told them that they had exactly 2 hours to shop in the mall. They had to spend all of the money on themselves or give back to me any leftover (As if they would have any left over). At the end of the 2 hrs, we met at Baskin & Robbins and I bought them each some ice cream and everyone showed what they had bought. The girls talked about that event for a long time. It cost me less than \$500 and I gained loyal employees who love working here at Other Mothers. I believe that the work environment and the feeling of "family" among your employees are worth more to them than the amount of money they make. Happy employees=happy customers=happy store owners.

**Michelle, Now in Albuquerque, New Mexico:**

At my store we have a very casual/laid back atmosphere. As long as the girls are getting done what they need to do in a timely manner, we have very little "bossiness" and "because I said so's" We offer a lot of flexibility in scheduling, and always accommodate emergencies with no repercussions, and family time whenever possible (99.9% of the time). It is a very family like environment, and the girls have said on more than one occasion that the thing they like best about working for me is that I don't play the "owner card" and that most of our customers just think I'm a regular employee because I'm working side by side with them.

This months gift-certificates go to all of you for your wonderful input. Thank you! Melinda

**P.S. Pay special attention to the recalls this month, there was a lot of important ones. Also, if you haven't read the last month's newsletter about the 2% royalties reduction and enforcement of non-payment for that 2%, please make sure you do!**