



Daniel Hoselton and Steve Etheridge of Henson Robinson.

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

One of the most coveted compliments an employee ever paid Dan Hoselton was telling him, “This is the best place I’ve ever worked.”

“That’s special,” said the president of Henson Robinson Company, located at 3550 Great Northern Ave. Hoselton has been with the company since 1990.

“There are people who come here and don’t leave,” said Julie Becker, who worked for the company in the 1990s and came back in 2003 when she heard there was an opening in the payroll department. “I was thrilled to come back.” She never really left because she had continued to work part-time assisting with inventory every year.

“There are very few who come and don’t like it,” she added, explaining how much she enjoys the spirit of cooperation found throughout the company. “We’re a group of people who were meant to be together. We were all very thrilled about the award.”

Becker credits this culture to her two very smart, well-educated bosses. “Everyone here feels like they’re important and part of the success of the company,” said Becker, who added when you have good management, it trickles down. “It makes you want to do better.”

Every May, employees receive a bonus. “It’s like a big pat on the back,” said Becker.

“We have a great, committed group of people,” said Hoselton, who was pleased to be recognized. “They’re a big part of our success.”

Henson Robinson rewards the hard work of its employees. Not only do they receive excellent benefits – 401(k), an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP), health insurance and personal and vacation days – but the company also hosts summer picnics, an office Christmas party and a party for the workers in the shop, where the annual safety award winner is announced.

Employees are encouraged to work to

their full potential, and management creates opportunities for advancement and offers training programs. There are incentives to do a good job and better oneself.

The employee-owned company has been in business since 1861 when Henson Robinson, a friend and neighbor of Abraham Lincoln, was recruited to supply Union soldiers with tinware for the Civil War effort. Since then the company has earned its reputation as a leader in the roofing, architectural sheet metal, heating, cooling, ventilation, plumbing, mechanical and special sheet metal fabrication industries.

The company moved from its former location on Clear Lake Ave., where it had been since the mid-1960s, to its current headquarters about a decade ago. “We outgrew the location,” said Hoselton, who pointed out that their current site is three times larger than the old one, which Henson Robinson still owns. The company currently

employs between 150-160 employees, but that fluctuates based on the amount of work in progress at a given time and can number as many as 240.

In 2011, the company acquired Petersburg Plumbing and Excavating, LLC. “They were a longtime friendly competitor,” said Hoselton, who knew the company CEO. “They joined us under our umbrella.”

Project manager Brian Vogt, whose family owned Petersburg Plumbing and Excavating, joined the company as part of the acquisition. “Even though this is a not a family-owned business, it feels like family,” he said. “There’s a good dynamic from the two guys in the corner offices to the guys in the shop. It’s a good mix of people. Everyone has an upbeat attitude.”

Sheila Norman echoes that sentiment. Also a former Petersburg Plumbing employee, she was offered a position at Henson Robinson as an administrative assistant. “Even though this is a large



Henson Robinson is located at 3550 Great Northern Ave. in Springfield.



Laurie McCarthy, Holly Ferrill, Dana Blair, Ben Bell and Mark Patrick.



Brandon Dennis, Sheila Norman, Bob Esperum, Debbie Pichler and Stephanie Elder.

company, everyone knows everyone," she said. "Everyone enjoys being here and being together. I love my job here. I can't think of anywhere else I'd want to be."

Hoselton said everyone shares a commonality of purpose and works together for the common goals of the company and its long-term success. "We all own this company," he said. "If the company does well, we all do well. We share the good times and the hard times."

Several employees have been with the

company for more than 20 years. A recent retiree was honored for 40 years of service. "The people who work here are great," said Hoselton. "They're dedicated."

The number one priority for Henson Robinson remains customer satisfaction. "Without them, this doesn't exist," said Hoselton. The company's mission remains the same as in 1861:

"To provide and install quality products, backed with superior customer service and support. We strive to maintain this

dedication to ensure our customers' comfort and peace of mind throughout their place of work and residence."

The company also strongly believes in giving back to the community. "We live and work in this community," said Hoselton. "The citizens of this community do business with us."

Among the causes the company supports are the Salvation Army, Toast of the Town and Memorial's Festival of Trees. One year it donated a new roof to the Saint Martin

Deporres Center. "They're all great causes but we can't do it all," said Hoselton.

In addition, Henson Robinson's management team serves on union committees while employees are encouraged to become involved in funds and participate in their industries at all levels. "It's important to give back to the industries," said Hoselton.

These industries are always changing. "If you can keep the culture the same, the business will go the test of time," said Hoselton. □



Corey Johnson and Jean Winn of Horace Mann.

PHOTO BY GINNY LEE

Horace Mann (1 Horace Mann Plaza) aspires to be the company of choice to help educators protect what they have today and prepare for a successful tomorrow. “We believe in the community we serve,” said Marita Zuraitis, president and CEO.

“Public educators are a very worthy group of customers,” continued Zuraitis. “They have a calling and believe in what they do.” Educators need someone to look after their future. The company’s number one priority is taking care of its base.

Founded in 1945 by Les Nimmo and Carroll Hall, who believed teachers deserved quality, affordable auto insurance, the company employs roughly 1,100 employees in its Springfield headquarters and more than 1,500 nationwide. It serves more than 4,100 school districts.

“We are the only company in the

educator space,” said Zuraitis. Today the company has broadened its product lines and offers homeowner and life insurance as well as annuities.

The company was quite excited to learn it had been nominated as one of the Best Places to Work in Springfield but Zuraitis added it doesn’t change who they are. “It’s an acknowledgement that our employees feel the same way we feel about our mission,” said Zuraitis. “Everything starts with our employees. We have a lot of tenured employees.”

According to statistics provided by the company, 198 employees have been with the company 25-39 years, 24 have been with the company 40-44 years and five have been with the company for 45 years or more.

Corey Johnson has been with the company since 1997 and currently works

as a support tech in finance. “I love what I do,” he said.

He remembers as a kid that his neighbor, William “Bubba” Gamble, was employed here. “I would always ask him to get me an application.” He began working at Horace Mann as a shipping and receiving clerk after graduating high school. “It got my foot in the door.”

“We’re like a family,” said Johnson. “The people make it feel like home.” He was recently named employee of the month for his hard work, winning a trip to Mexico. “It made me feel good,” he said.

“This is a truly wonderful place to be,” said Jean Winn, who joined the company right out of college and has been here for almost 30 years. Her brother-in-law called her and told her there was a position available in fitness, which was her field of

study. From there she advanced to a group billing position and is now director of finance in human resources.

“This company has a culture that is very much a family environment,” said Winn. Indeed, it is common to hear employees referred to as the Horace Mann family. “It’s not just a place where you go to do your work and go home. There is a connection with this place.”

While she has had plenty of opportunities to leave, she has no plans to do so. “I don’t think I’d change anything at this point,” said Winn, who loves the team environment. “Everyone works together. It’s a collaborative effort.

“We make a huge impact on educators,” she continued. Employees recently took lunch to teachers at Harvard Park School. One of the teachers got choked up, saying



PHOTO COURTESY OF HORACE MANN



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PHOTO BY GINNY LEE

no one does things like this for them. “They take care of our future,” said Winn. “It’s a good reason to get up and come to work every day.”

The publicly traded company with nearly \$10 billion in assets is one of Springfield’s biggest employers and believes in supporting the community. “We make a huge impact,” said Winn.

“We’re good corporate citizens,” said Zuraitis. “We’ve always called downtown Springfield home.” The company has been

at its current location since 1972.

The company encourages its employees to become involved. “It creates a sense of community,” said Zuraitis.

Among the causes the company supports are United Way, the Central Illinois Food Bank and Toys For Tots. The company’s recent golf outing raised \$31,000 for the Springfield Public Schools Foundation.

The company also recognizes its employees. “We work very hard as an organization, and we play hard,” said

Zuraitis. Employees wear jeans on Friday and the company sponsors celebration parties. She hosts coffee with the directors and the employee of the year is announced at the annual employee recognition luncheon.

Horace Mann also offers a full array of benefits, which Zuraitis refers to as table stakes. “You can’t be a good company without them.”

Along with a flexible work schedule and promoting a healthy lifestyle, the company provides opportunities for advancement and

to do exciting work. Everyone brings their skills to work every day and this is recognized.

Employees have a voice. “They understand how to move the company forward,” said Zuraitis. They understand where the company is going and how they fit into the company’s vision.

“We plan to stay true to our history,” said Zuraitis when asked about future plans. “We plan to continue doing the same thing we’ve been doing for 70 years. It’s personally fulfilling to do something good.” □



St. Joseph's Home



Sister Lenore and Sister Patricia with staff at St. Joseph's Home.

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

Sister Lenore Highland was surprised to learn that St. Joseph's Home (3306 South Sixth St.) had been designated one of the Best Places to Work in Springfield. "I've always thought St. Joe was a great place to work," she said. "You never know how the staff feels."

She was further surprised to learn the nomination had been submitted by a former employee. "I was pleased she felt that way."

The nonprofit licensed nursing home, which currently houses 79 residents, has been a fixture on the south side of Springfield since 1925, following a move from its original location at Sixth and Lawrence, the current site of the Cathedral

of the Immaculate Conception. Sister Lenore remarked someone once called St. Joe "one of the best hidden jewels in Springfield."

At the turn of the century, Springfield resident Thomas Brady bequeathed \$17,000 to the Diocese of Alton to establish a home for the elderly. Bishop James J. Ryan asked the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Immaculate Conception at the St. Joseph's Home in Peoria to come to Springfield.

St. Joseph's Home opened its doors in 1903. Following the relocation of the See City from Alton to Springfield in the 1920s, Bishop James A. Griffin began a \$100,000 capital campaign to raise funds to construct a new St. Joseph's Home at its

current location.

Over the years, benefactors have supported numerous remodeling projects at the home. In 2008, the home raised more than \$4 million through a capital campaign to build an addition tailored to care for individuals with dementia.

Terri Hempstead, director of fund development and communication, writes, "Knowing that hundreds of people each year volunteer their time and contribute their money really is awe-inspiring. I saw the benefactors come through with amazing contributions to bring that vision to fruition. For someone to make a gift like that, they must really believe deeply in our ability to

provide high-quality and compassionate care for those who can no longer take care of themselves."

The word "care" is echoed again and again by administrators and employees. Sister Lenore attributes this to their success. "We care for them [employees] as individuals," she said. "We feel what happens to them is as important as what happens to our residents. We want to make them feel as important."

Carol Jackson has worked at St. Joseph's for 14 years in housekeeping. "We all get along," she said. "It's a great environment." She enjoys it when someone tells her she's doing a good job. "It's a pat on the back. I tell



St. Joseph's Home has been located at 3306 South Sixth St. since 1925.

the residents it's my job. It's what I do.
"I'm here for the residents," she continued. "It's sad when one passes. It's like you lose part of yourself."

Sister Lenore expects the employees to care for the residents as if they were their own parents or grandparents. "I've always had a fondness for wisdom figures in our world," she said. The residents who walk our hallways once held a sense of purpose. "We respect them as seniors."

The staff is rewarded for their efforts in small ways. Each year the home hosts a Christmas party and employees are recognized on their birthdays and employment anniversary. After the annual Illinois Department of Public Health survey, everyone is treated to a pizza party.

Family members, staff and residents are invited to nominate an angel who walks among them and there is a drawing for a gift card. Employees with 10 years or more of service have a brick with their name on it placed in the garden walk.

There is not a high attrition rate. Nineteen employees have been there 10 or more years, seven for 20 or more years and three for 30 or more years. Sister Lenore credits this to the small ratio of staff to residents.

"You do this work because you want to," said Hempstead. She says everyone at St. Joseph's Home is like family. "There are mothers and daughters who work here, sisters who work here."

Hempstead, who had previously worked here for more than 13 years, recently returned when Sister Lenore called and made an offer of her old position. "There was no hesitation on my part," said Hempstead, whose mother is a resident.

The sisters have dedicated their lives to living in community. "They model a kind of

family relationship," said Hempstead. "The atmosphere encourages us all to respect and value each other."

Several employees remarked on the peace and serenity they find working here. "This facility is different from other long-term care places I've worked at," said LPN Lisa Bailey, who has worked here for 16 years. "To say this is a nice place to work is an understatement. I wouldn't want to be

anywhere else."

She loves the low-key, calm environment. "I have plenty of time to care for the residents," she said. "I get to know them."

Marge Hayes considers herself lucky to work here. Following a job loss, she was taking classes at Novatech when her husband called and told her there was an opening for a secretary. Her father was a resident here.

Seventeen years later she is still here and currently works as a receptionist. "It's the spirit here," she said. "There's a feeling of peace." She knows she's helping someone. "I help make this place their home."

"The sisters are cognizant that we all have to be a blessing to each other," said Hempstead. "When you work in a place where you know your boss is praying for you every day, it's different." □



Sister Lenore in the chapel at St. Joseph's Home.



United Community Bank's Best Places to Work in Central Illinois



2009 Hanson Professional Services, Inc.

Hanson is committed to a culture that helps their employees develop personally and professionally. Training, mentoring, coaching and sharing are all hallmarks of Hanson's employee-owned philosophy. Their focus on people means they offer flexible work arrangements, encourage open communication, and foster a team-oriented environment.

2009 Horace Mann

In return for the dedication employees show to the community, clients, and coworkers, Horace Mann offers numerous benefits, including tuition reimbursement, a flexible work week, and a company wellness program. Horace Mann has also implemented a variety of employee recognition programs.



2009 Sikich LLP

Sikich offices are "open door" facilities where top level management strives to always be inviting and encouraging. Their diverse and friendly environment fosters learning, creativity, and the passion to grow as a professional. Decisions are frequently made in a team setting where the views and ideas of both management and staff are given consideration.

2009 Springfield Electric Supply Company

Springfield Electric offers employees the chance to work in a team environment with great people who are dedicated to satisfying customers' needs. Springfield Electric encourages community involvement; employees volunteer with a number of charitable organizations, mentor school children, and provide Christmas gifts for needy families.



2010 Brandt Consolidated

The Brandt culture supports real people core values and rewards forward thinking in an environment that feels more like an extended family than a corporation. Brandt is committed to promoting communication, self expression, and encouraging employees to reach their fullest potential.

2010 Lincoln Land Community College

Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) considers its employees as its greatest asset. LLCC offers a tuition reimbursement program that extends to immediate family and a unique "sick bank" for employees requiring additional time off. While LLCC offers competitive employee benefits, staff members feel most rewarded by the educational opportunities provided for students.



2010 Orthopedic Center of Illinois

OCI is dedicated to making all employees feel like part of the family by fostering a team based work environment in a state of the art facility. They offer flexible scheduling and employee recognition programs. OCI strives to offer employees a rewarding place to work by allowing them opportunities to give back to the community through many charitable organizations.

2011 BJ Salons Inc.

At BJ Salons, they feel education is the secret to their success. Owners, John and Gail Lorenzini, make company paid education and training a top priority to ensure all employees stay current in the latest trends and techniques. BJ Salon is also dedicated to helping their employees achieve a work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements.



2011 M.J. Kellner Foodservice

Bill and Julie Kellner, owners of M.J. Kellner Foodservice, embrace the philosophy of treating employees like family. They make sure that every decision is made with the big picture in mind so that employees are looked after while keeping the business strong. The company recognizes and rewards employees by acknowledging birthdays, holding holiday parties and monthly company luncheons.

2011 Springfield Clinic

Springfield Clinic is in the business of caring for people, patients and employees alike. Their Commitment to Quality (CTQ) encourages employees to go above and beyond to enhance the patient experience. Springfield Clinic places a high priority on employee recognition. Employees are recognized with monthly "Employee Excellence Awards" and an "Employee of the Year Award".



2012 Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals values community involvement by establishing a philanthropic committee which designates funds to a variety of causes through the corporate giving program. This enables employees to help communities, organizations and individuals succeed on both an international and local level.

2012 & 2013 St. John's Hospital

St. John's Hospital believes that the power of people makes the difference in patient care. They strive to create a warm, family-oriented work atmosphere in order to provide the best possible care for patients. St. John's Hospital also provides the staff with the latest tools to deliver excellent care in professional and nurturing work environment.



2012 Systemax Corporation

Systemax prides itself on its reputation for quality, dependability, and knowledgeable service. The staff is encouraged to work with management daily to create a better customer experience. Systemax promotes a professional and fun work environment to encourage employee commitment to excellent customer service one solution at a time.

2013 Kerber, Eck & Braechel LLP

Kerber, Eck & Braeckel operates under 21 partners and principal owners and includes more than 130 professionals. Although KEB focuses primarily on public accounting and management consultant services, it offers a wide range of other products to its clients including, but not limited to, information technology, retirement planning and even investment planning services.



2013 Sacred Heart-Griffin

Sacred Heart-Griffin's inception came from the merger of Sacred Heart Academy and Griffin High in 1988. In that time, much has changed. The school has expanded with classroom additions, facility renovation and even a new multipurpose athletics stadium. But the core principle, the marrying of academic pursuit with a literal religious adherence, remains the same.

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2014 Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.

Levi, Ray & Shoup (LRS) cares deeply for the community, but also for its employees. They donate to a different charity each week and regularly give employees appreciation gifts. LRS has a full, on-site gym for its employees and their families to use that is accessible 24 hours a day and even cater parties for employees to spend time together outside of the workplace.

2014 Prairie Eye Center

At Prairie Eye Center employees are given time off to donate eye services to charity and to assist low-income patients at SIU School of Medicine. They are also encouraged to support each other through hardships and celebrate with each other in times of prosperity. They offer their staff a multitude of benefits to make Prairie Eye Center a unique and fulfilling work experience.



2014 The Real Estate Group

The brokers at The Real Estate Group take the complicated task of purchasing a home and make it easy for the home buyer. They also donate time and resources to the community, volunteering with Springfield Sharefest to help local schools in need. The Group offers its employees flexible hours, a mentoring program, and a fun, light-hearted environment.

2015 County Market

The key to Niemann Foods success is its associate owners. Everyone is family, and this tone is set by Rich Niemann, Sr., company chairman. Niemann Foods, parent company to County Market, is a third-generation, independently operated, family-owned business. The company formally became an ESOP company 17 or 18 years ago, which Niemann said is the best thing they ever did.



2015 Green Family Stores

Green Family Stores believes in giving back to the community. The company started the Green Family Charitable Foundation and every month writes checks to local not-for-profit organizations. Among the organizations they support are: The Matthew Project, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Sparc, Boys and Girls Club, St. John's Hospital and youth football.

2015 Springfield Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company

A fourth-generation, family-owned business, Springfield Pepsi sponsors little league teams, softball teams and other types of youth athletics. John Faloon, President, says, "If someone's kid is on a ball team, it becomes a Pepsi team. It's important to me if it's important to them." The company has been in the Vecchie family since 1941 and currently employs 75 people.



UCB: Auburn Bunker Hill Bushnell Carlinville Chatham Colchester Divernon Gillespie Greenfield Loami
Macomb Pawnee Pittsfield Roodhouse Springfield Winchester | **Mercantile Bank:** Quincy Palmyra, MO
UCB Marine: Augusta Carthage Hamilton | **UCB BCSB:** Golden Mt. Sterling