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P.J. Keating Company helps employees make the grade

LUNENBURG _ As the economy sluggishly works on recovery; more and more people are re-considering not only their jobs, but their educational background. For many people financial constraints make it impossible to further their education. At P.J. Keating Company, a quarrying stone and manufacturer of hot mix asphalt and construction of paving projects with offices in Lunenburg, Dracut, Acushnet and Cranston Rhode Island, employees are given the opportunity for educational advancement.

“We support all our employees in continuing their education,” said P.J. Keating Human Resources Manager Joanne Pagnotta.

Pagnotta noted that for many people, having those thousands of dollars to go back to school is just not there; however, a tuition assistance program P.J. Keating Company offers enables them to fulfill a type of formal degree program that directly correlates to the job they are doing.

“There’s a two-fold benefit. The employee is exposed to things not in their day-to-day job, which benefits both the employee and the company,” she said. “A formal degree program should not be overlooked by someone because of finances. We’re at a point in our lives where we need a balance between the two.”

“At P.J. Keating Company we will support up to eight (8) credits a semester. We pay 100 percent of the tuition and books,” Pagnotta said. “If you don’t attain that grade (3.0), you reimburse the company.”

According to Pagnotta, P.J. Keating Company offers its employees the opportunity to go to school for their associate, bachelors degree, graduate degree or appropriate certificate program.

“We have people who go to Fitchburg State, and we have some who go to WPI,” she said, adding that the different costs of tuition are a non-issue so long as a 3.0 is attained.

One person currently involved in the program is Brendan Devereaux, assistant site manager at the P.J. Keating Company facility in Cranston, Rhode Island.

“I’m going to WPI for my MBA and I’m almost halfway through,” he said. “I’d be foolish not to utilize this.”

Pagnotta said the program has been in place for some time, and in fact, when Pagnotta came to P.J. Keating Company in 2004, no one was taking advantage of the program.

“The program is such a wonderful one that I don’t know why everyone isn’t onboard,” she added.

Pagnotta herself feels very strongly about the program particularly since she was able to finally go back to school and finish her bachelor's degree.

"My daughter and I got our degrees at the same time," she said proudly. "I had to resign from life a bit and dedicate my time and effort to do this."

In 2009, six people utilized the program, and Pagnotta noted that the success rate was very good.

"We did not have any failures," she added.

"Our employees are a vital part of our company, and giving them the opportunity to advance themselves not only helps them, but helps to better P.J. Keating," said P.J. Keating Company President Jim Reger. "This really is a program that is a win-win for everyone."

Since 1923, P.J. Keating Company's primary business is quarrying stone, manufacturing Hot Mix Asphalt, and the construction of Asphalt Paving Projects. The company is headquartered in Lunenburg, MA, with locations in Dracut, Acushnet and Cranston, Rhode Island.