

Top workplaces for mothers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Working Mother magazine released its annual list of the top 100 places to work, with its chief executive touting an improvement in mother-friendly benefits in corporate America.

Working Mother CEO Carol Evans, who authored the book "This Is How We Do It: The Working Mothers' Manifesto," said that in order to retain female employees, a growing number of companies are offering customized schedules.

"There are some very, very creative ideas, and this is all related to what we saw in the past, with women dropping off the edge of a cliff, when they said it's either working full time or not at all," Evans said.

This year's list includes Bank of America Corp. and Wachovia Corp., both based in Charlotte. The list also includes 18 new names, representing some churn, and the magazine cites growing concern among companies that they will lose qualified female employees if they do not upgrade their benefits.

"Our country needs women to have babies, our companies need women's brainpower and time," she said. "Those two things going together really demand that companies wake up to this new culture."

The magazine used five main criteria as the basis for its judgments: flexibility, leave time for new parents, child care, elder care and the number of women occupying top jobs.

The top 10 companies that best satisfied the five criteria were: Abbott Laboratories; Bon Secours Richmond Health System; Ernst & Young LLP; HSBC USA Inc.; IBM Corp.; JPMorgan Chase & Co.; Patagonia Inc.;

PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP; Principal Financial Group, and S.C. Johnson & Son Inc. IBM and Johnson & Johnson are the only companies that have been on the list every year since it was initiated 21 years ago. IBM offers new mothers the option to take up to 144 weeks of leave, Evans said.

The Boston Consulting Group is one of 18 companies new to the list, for which the magazine solicits applications that consist of 550 questions. Among the consulting group's benefits are three months of paid maternity leave and emergency child care.

Julie Gish, a 31-year-old project leader in the Chicago office of the consulting company, credits the maternity leave and flexible work policies for easing her work life after the birth of her son Charlie, who turned 1 on Saturday.

Gish took the three-month paid leave and an additional six weeks of unpaid leave before she returned to work on a 60 percent basis. Since then, she has increased her working time to 80 percent, and said she is grateful for how accommodating the company has been.

"They do that because they recognize that while women may need to take time out in their careers, it is certainly in their interest in the long run to offer flexible working arrangements," Gish said.

Gish said she plans to have at least one more child, and that after her children start school, she plans to go back to work full time.

On the Net:

Working Mother Media:
www.workingmother.com/
Boston Consulting Group:
http://www.bcg.com

Black colleges face low enrollment

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The University of the District of Columbia, which boasted 9,663 students in 1995, had 5,168 in 2004.

More troubling are the names of those foundering in recent years, black powerhouses like Fisk, Tuskegee and Bennett, revered as the "Vassar of the South."

That school had a \$2 million budget deficit when the former president of Atlanta's Spelman College, Johnetta Cole, arrived in 2002.

Experts point to an expanding black middle class and the continuing effort of predominantly white—and often elite—schools to diversify enrollment. Lacking affirmative action programs that have been questioned on constitutional grounds, colleges and universities have worked hard to attract and keep black students.

At Virginia, for instance, a peer advisory program pairs incoming black students with

black upperclassmen for guidance. Last year, the school expanded Access UVA, a financial aid program. And when black students matriculate, they're presented a stole of bright African cloth in a ceremony called the "Donning of the Kente."

Valerie Gregory, director of outreach at the Charlottesville school, is the Hampton graduate. She's seeing more students like her daughter—heady black youths who don't feel like they must be surrounded by other blacks to be successful.

"Students are more apt to want to be in an integrated environment and now aren't as shy to look and see if there's a possibility," said Gregory, whose high schooler is weighing mostly white James Madison University in the Shenandoah Valley against Spelman.

Lomax, of the United Negro College Fund, said black parents are interested in degrees

from schools with universal clout—and schools where their children will receive the support to graduate.

At Virginia State University, for instance, only 40 percent of eligible black students graduated in 2005. U.Va. graduates 86 percent of its black students, on average.

Mindful of enrollment erosion, HBCUs are trying new strategies, stepping up marketing and building on reputations in specialty majors.

Lomax's group, which gives scholarships to students attending 39 private historically black colleges, recently initiated the Institute for Capacity Building, a program that will help schools build funds, shore up academic gaps and improve recruitment. The idea is to help schools identify strengths, then make those programs airtight and promote them heavily, he said.

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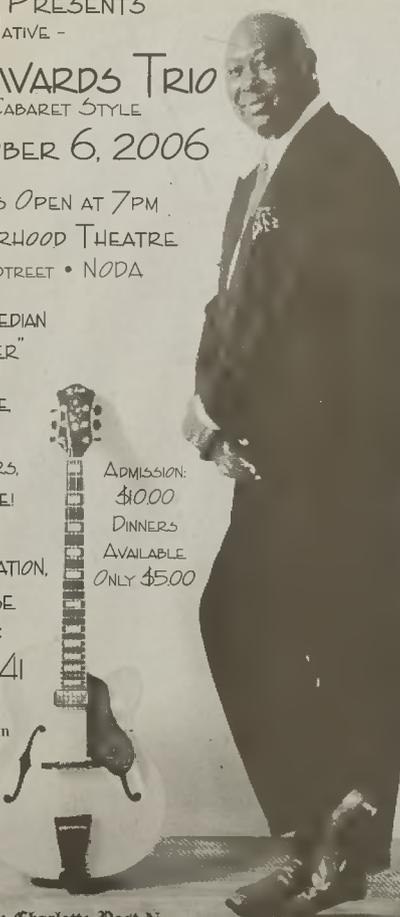
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Build Your Dream

It can be a rather exhilarating experience once we discover what it is that we really want out of life. It may be that we are at a point in our lives where we realize that it is okay for us to dream. It may have been that for so long others discouraged us from going after what we knew deep down in our hearts we really wanted.

This new inspiration to live our dreams can feel so good that it may seem that our feet will never touch the ground. Yet, discovering our dream and realizing what it is that we really want out of life is actually only the first step to creating the kind of life of which we have dreamed.

The next critical step for realizing your dream is making sure that you build them upon a solid foundation. Part of creating this strong foundation is preparation.

First, work out a plan to help you achieve your goals. Once you have established a plan, put it in writing and keep it in a place where you can review it each day to see how far you have come.

A second step as you lay a solid foundation for your dream is to commit yourself to doing at least one thing each day to work toward your dream. Remind yourself each day that no matter how tired or discouraged you may be, you will do at least one thing that will take you a step closer to accomplishing your dream.

A third step is to expect the unexpected. No matter how well thought out our plans may be, there can always be something that we could not have foreseen. When the unexpected comes along, do not allow it to catch you by surprise and throw you off track from your goals. Be determined to use whatever comes your way as a stepping stone to ever greater success.

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