

Balancing Time On-The-Clock With Time At Home

(NAPS)—For many American workers, the key to managing their time has meant balancing their personal and professional lives. Many employers have responded smartly by implementing corporate work/life programs aimed at helping employees keep their lives in sync.

According to Julia Schor, economist and director of women's studies at Harvard University, the average person in the U.S. works 163 more hours a year than in 1971, which is the equivalent of an extra month every year. During that same time period, women have seen the most dramatic increase of work, with their average weekly hours increasing by 45 percent.

These extra hours, and the fact that both partners work in 70 percent of all marriages, have resulted in many job hunters looking for employers that offer work/life flexibility. Many businesses have responded to that trend.

"Increased competition for an educated work force, along with an understanding that a healthy balance between work and personal life increases employee performance, has prompted many companies to adapt," says Miles D. White, CEO and chairman of Abbott Laboratories.

White says his company has made important strides towards helping its employees balance their personal and professional lives, and has focused particular attention on issues important to working women and minorities.

In fact, the company was recently named to *Working Mother* magazine's list of the 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers and has been ranked on *Fortune* magazine's list of the 50 Best Companies for Asians, Blacks and Hispanics for the past four years.

The company has such work/life benefits as financial assistance for employees adopting children, counseling for managing work/life conflicts and



Sonja Cherry-Mendenhall, a mother of six and employee of Chicago-based Abbott Laboratories, balances her work and personal life by taking a lunch break with her daughter at the company's on-site child care facility.

flexible work hours.

The company's child care program, which was developed based on an employee survey, includes an on-site child care center, a school holiday program and a summer camp fair.

In addition, Abbott has on-site ATMs and a credit union, workout facilities and even a cafeteria that sells cakes and cards, as well as breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Such programs have helped employees like Sonja Cherry-Mendenhall successfully manage a career and family. Cherry-Mendenhall, a government affairs specialist at Abbott, is a mother of six with a working spouse. "I take advantage of a flexible work schedule on some days and use company day care and school holiday programs on others," she says. "My husband and I appreciate the fact that my company lets me accomplish my work in a family-oriented environment. My flexible schedule has helped me remove a lot of stress from my life and be a more productive employee."

The employee programs have helped her to thrive professionally and personally—and that balance, according to White, should be every company's real bottom line.

For more information, visit www.abbott.com.