



## News Release

Maine Contacts: Richelle Wallace (207) 743-7986; David Pease  
Best Companies Group Contact: Jackie Miller 1-877-455-2159 ext. 284  
Employment Times Contact: Jeanne Paquette (207) 786-4200

### ***Employment Times* has Partnered with SHRM for Fourth Annual “Best Places to Work in Maine” Program**

***Project Offers Resources for Employers during Challenging Economic Times***

Portland, ME—March 2, 2009— The Maine State Council of the Society for Human Resources Managers has kicked off the fourth annual "Best Places To Work in Maine" program. The event, endorsed by Best Companies Group, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, *Employment Times*, and *Mainebiz*, recognizes companies that have established and consistently fostered outstanding workplace environments.

"The ‘Best Places to Work’ program recognizes that a healthy, vibrant economy starts with a healthy workplace," said Maine Governor John E. Baldacci. "This program honors businesses that excel in this critical area. It also provides pragmatic advice and encouragement to those employers who are striving for excellence."

In June, Best Companies Group will survey all the Maine companies that have registered online by the deadline of May 29th. The scientifically validated survey will incorporate a company’s employee benefits and policies and responses from a comprehensive employee engagement and satisfaction survey. The data collected from the assessment will be used to determine the Best Places to Work in Maine.

Here are some examples of unique benefits offered by companies that made the Best Places to Work list in 2008:

- Offered the option to work compressed work weeks
- Paid all or part of employee’s health club membership or fitness/wellness program
- Provided cafeteria or meal subsidies, free daily snacks or beverages
- Allowed employees paid time off for community service activities/volunteer work

John Richardson, commissioner of The Maine Department of Economic & Community Development added, “In these economic times it is imperative for employers to hold on to their valuable employees and one way to do this is to offer unique benefits and incentives. The ‘Best Places to Work’ Program helps Maine businesses evaluate and discover new best practices to help keep an educated and strong workforce with growing companies. Our department would encourage all companies that meet the criteria for the program to participate because it is important to highlight and acknowledge the Best Places to Work in Maine.”

Winners of the third annual “Best Places to Work in Maine” program in 2008 included Norway Savings Bank, based in Norway (large size company category) and Jotul North America, located in Gorham (medium size company category)

Norway Savings Bank has participated in the program for two years. In 2007 it ranked #2, improving to the top position in 2008.

“When we got our 2007 survey results, I scheduled meetings bank-wide by department and functional area, said Richelle Wallace, Vice President of Human Resources at Norway Savings Bank. “While we were selected as one of the Best Places to Work, we learned that we still had areas that we could enhance to make our organization an even better place to work.”

Richelle continued,”at the meetings, I solicited specific suggestions from employees. They provided open and honest feedback and came up with some very practical ideas. As a result, I used the feedback and worked with managers, and we implemented 79 strategies bank-wide. I was careful to ensure that we communicated these strategies back to employees and emphasized they were a direct result of their suggestions. We felt it was important to show action as a result of their feedback. “

“I am confident that this entire process developed a sense of inclusion for all employees, and in turn, the organization demonstrated that employees were heard. As a result, we enjoyed 92% participation in the next survey process for the following year, and a bump to the coveted and prestigious #1 ranking for 2008!”

The program also helps companies that want to improve their score. The Best Companies Group “Employee Feedback Report” is presented to each participating company, even if they did not make the list. The report includes the summarized employee engagement and satisfaction data, the Maine Benchmark Report, and the transcript of employee written comments. The report is used by many to make significant improvements in their workplace culture.

Any company with at least 15 employees in the state of Maine is encouraged to participate. Companies selected as a “Best Place to Work in Maine” will be announced at a gala event in the fall of 2009. A complete list of top companies will be featured in a statewide publication. Winners can expect a positive effect on employee morale, employee relations and recruitment.

Interested companies can apply to participate in the program online at [www.bestplacestoworkme.com](http://www.bestplacestoworkme.com). The deadline for registration is May 29, 2009 and all registered companies will be surveyed simultaneously following the deadline date.

Further details about the **Best Places to Work in Maine** program can be found online at [www.bestplacestoworkme.com](http://www.bestplacestoworkme.com).