



Montana Department of LABOR & INDUSTRY

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Three Montana Businesses Selected for 2021 MSEC Employers of Choice Award

The Department of Labor & Industry's Montana State Employers' Council (MSEC) is pleased to announce the selection of three Montana businesses for the MSEC 2021 Employer of Choice Award.

Child Care Connections (Bozeman, MT), TowHaul (Belgrade, MT), and onXmaps (headquartered in Missoula and nominated for locations in Bozeman and Missoula, MT) were selected for their dedication to providing healthy and positive workplaces and commitment to employees.

“Montana employers of all sizes are finding innovative ways to engage both their employees and their surrounding communities,” said Department of Labor & Industry Commissioner Laurie Esau. **“I congratulate each of these employers, recognized by their own workforce, for fostering a positive work environment and their good corporate citizenship statewide.”**

“These three companies epitomize some of the best businesses in Montana,” said Missoula Job Service Workforce Consultant Deborah Derrick Gass. **“By creating innovative workplaces and providing opportunities for their employees and communities to thrive, these companies are attracting the talented workforce they need to grow their businesses and make Montana a great place to live.”**

Businesses from across the state were nominated for the awards in April. Award winners were selected for each of three categories based on size: businesses with 50 or fewer employees, 51 to 150 employees, and businesses with more than 151 employees. All three awardees won their local Employer of Choice designation in March.

The Department of Labor & Industry's Montana State Employers' Council is the statewide council for 11 local Job Service Employers' Committees across Montana. The council collaborates with business and community leaders across the state to advise on solutions to employment, training and related issues.

About the Winners:

onXmaps, Inc. employs more than 170 people statewide. They are headquartered in Missoula and were nominated for locations in Bozeman and Missoula. onXmaps has spent the last 11 years developing its passion for the outdoors and technology. “We aim to awaken the adventurer in everyone,” according to Laura Orvidas, CEO. The app company began by providing GPS map overlays of public and private land

boundaries for hunters – onX Hunt. It expanded to include onX Offroad with 400,000+ mapped trails and roads. onX Backcountry was released at the end of 2020.

onXmaps was nominated for the award by Janine Unruh, their Employee Experience Manager who highlighted the winning aspects of the entire team and their commitment to collaboration. onX's innovations extend beyond its apps to the benefits and environment it offers its employees. Beyond competitive salaries, incentive stock options, comprehensive medical benefits, insurance, paid time off and paid family leave, the company allows employees to use their 401(k)-company match to help pay off student loans. It also offers discounts for industry-leading outdoors brands and paid company outdoor excursions. There is also a Get Out, Get Active stipend, which employees can spend on outdoor-related activities and equipment, such as purchasing National Park passes, a mountain bike or cross-country skis to use during lunch breaks, or attending an avalanche safety course. With a commitment to collaboration, onX offers the onX Incentive Plan, rewarding team members with a yearly bonus for meeting and exceeding the company goals. During the pandemic, onX provided employees with a stipend for setting up their home offices and assisting with expenses brought on by the shift to working from home.

Laura Orvidas, CEO of onX: "We're honored to be recognized as the Montana State Employer of Choice. Our mission at onX is to awaken the adventurer in everyone, and that begins by embracing innovation and creating memorable outdoor experiences. Working at onX also means that innovation extends beyond our products to the benefits we offer our employees. We're proud to provide competitive and equitable salaries, outdoor-focused stipends, incentive plans, and professional and personal growth opportunities, among other company-wide initiatives."

TowHaul, was nominated for the award by Joe Polus, the company Production Manager. TowHaul manufactures off-road equipment for the mining industry with a unique product-design feature that serves two purposes – towing and hauling in one machine. The company serves a diverse customer base, exporting 80-90% of their product to 26 countries. TowHaul has been in business for over 30 years and employs 68 production workers, welders, engineers, office personnel and managers. According to Joe, TowHaul “provides a fun, productive, and inclusive work environment.” The TowHaul team says that they are “in it for the long haul,” and this is more than a simple play on words. 65% of their employees have been with the company for over a decade. Some have been with the company from the beginning, over 30 years. They feel that this is their strength as a team, and it is also one of the most important contributions to their successful relationships with each other and their customers.

Joe Polus, TowHaul Production Manager: “We just have such low turnover. Over the last year, we didn't have any turnover. Fifty percent worked remote. Everyone who could, did.” He is proud of the fact that the company did not accept any federal Payroll Protection Program funding that helped businesses keep their workforce employed during COVID. “We prepared for rainy days,” he said. Employees who needed COVID leave were covered by the company. The Employer of Choice Award is a boon to the company. “We really see the value of being recognized in this manner and we appreciate it.”

Child Care Connections is a 501c3 nonprofit that serves as the only child-care resource and referral agency in Gallatin, Park, Meagher, Broadwater, Jefferson and Lewis and Clark counties. Based on research that demonstrates how consistent nurturing, quality child-care, along with good parenting, helps children develop to their full potential, Child Care Connections supports families and the local economy by encouraging quality child-care and safety. Child Care Connections' workplace culture includes the belief that each team member is an individual who brings unique qualities to work. With that understanding, team members work together to accomplish duties, tasks and activities, and everyone plays an important role in influencing big ideas and actions to support their common goal of quality care for all children.

Kami Ryles from Child Care Connections: “We got through COVID by having a flexible work environment.” Staff worked at home. The organization made technology upgrades so that phone calls could be made through staff’s laptops. CCC also used state grants to organize drive-through events in Helena and Bozeman; child-care providers were able to stock up on gloves, masks, and disinfectant at the events. The grants were also used to supply Best Beginnings childcare scholarship families with the same supplies and gift cards. The Employer of Choice award is a great award for CCC to win,” she said.

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