

Bakery's good work pays off

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At Royal Bay Bakery in Colwood, staff buzz around rolling pastries, serving customers and organizing the long display counter.

But, if they need a day off or to pop out midway through their shift, owner David Grove always tries to accommodate that.

"Flexibility. That's all it is," Grove said. "We care about people. So, we do the right thing."

This simple philosophy earned the bakery recognition from the Quality of Life Challenge in the form of a window decal.

"We look for somebody who deviates from the norm in a positive way," said Alvaro Moreno of Quality of Life Challenge.

"Often it's really simple things that make a big difference."

The challenge, in its eighth year, will honor 25 businesses in the Capital Regional District. This is the first time Royal Bay Bakery received a decal.



"It's funny to be recognized for something I just do intuitively," Grove said.

He has been running the bakery this way since he bought it with his wife 12 years ago. When they opened the bakery, they were new parents and didn't want their children in day care. So, they staggered their schedule so one of them was always home with the kids.

So, Grove said, he understands the importance of family and the need to put that over work sometimes.

When Rosalind Wilkinson, a mother of two, started working for Grove five years ago her kids were nine and 10. She would leave midway through her shift to drive the children home from school and return to finish her shifts at the counter.

"It's never a problem," she said.

"Some places I've worked you feel bad asking for a day off, but here it's easy."

Because of the flexibility she receives, she doesn't mind staying late or doing extra work when needed, she said.

Grove said that's exactly what he's going for. He works less desirable shifts, coming in at 3 a.m. to start the bread. But that doesn't stop him from filling in for an employee when they need it.

"It all translates to a better business," he said. "Happy employees work harder and take pride in what they do. Customers see that."

He said most of the staff live nearby and he looks for personality as much as experience when he hires.

"We hire a lot of students, even though they might only work for the summer," he said, noting that they still give them good training and a wage that is about 15 per cent higher than industry standard.

He said his staff retention is good, even in the competitive labour market. There are many different jobs to do in the bakery, and he said that means people can keep learning.

"We adjust the job to the person, rather than force a person into a job that they might not like and quit."

Wilkinson said she really appreciates working at the bakery with Grove.

"I don't think of him as a boss," she said. "He's more like a coworker or a friend."

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