



2022 Family-Friendly Focus



Photo By Tom Meinhold

The Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program is a partnership among First 5 San Luis Obispo County, the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce and the County of San Luis Obispo. This FREE initiative, housed within the Chamber, aims to help businesses hire and retain employees, support working parents' balance between job and home life, and bolster the economic vitality of our communities. The program builds on the SLO County Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit which was created by the "We Are the Care" Initiative – a countywide coalition dedicated to addressing local child care and related work-life balance challenges faced by local families.

JULY HERO: Lumina Alliance

You're navigating the complexities and wonders of life with a newborn, and you're feeling torn on how to be both an employee AND parent. What might help to ease the anxiety? Well... a lot of things. But let's start with the option of bringing your baby to work.

Lumina Alliance offers just that—in recognizing the value of prioritizing families. This non-profit, created in 2021 through the merger of RISE and Stand Strong, serves survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence and their loved ones. Lumina's core principles are reflected right down to its Human Resources position, titled Chief People & Culture Officer. When the daily tug-of-war that exists for parents hit excessive levels during the Pandemic, Lumina was already ahead of the curve with supports for impacted employees.

Chief Communications Officer Jane Pomeroy can attest. When she gave birth to her son Charlie in 2017, there was no question as to whether she could take him to the office. Now, 8-month-old Ruby gets to spend her days alongside mama at work and is often whisked away by colleagues for a baby fix and bit of selfcare (contingent on COVID safety precautions). Ruby has become comfortable with lots of people—something Jane calls a bonus, because Ruby will be starting child care soon!

Babies-at-work programs provide plenty of benefits for both businesses and employees. Employers report greater employee retention, especially among women, which saves businesses money over time. According to the Society for HR Management Foundation, the direct replacement costs of an employee can be

up to 60% of that person's annual salary. If that is not incentive enough, many businesses with baby programs also find parents are more willing to return to work earlier after parental leave, resulting in further cost savings. Finally, businesses that allow babies-at-work consistently report higher morale among their employees (higher morale equals higher productivity), and an increase in teamwork and collaboration for all. Employees who are allowed to bring their babies to work report numerous advantages, including decreased stress and anxiety, better bonding, lower child care costs, easier breastfeeding, and more access to social support. In Jane's experience, her son had trouble breastfeeding and taking a bottle, so Jane was grateful to be better positioned to mitigate those challenges.

Lumina has 73 employees across San Luis Obispo County, and approximately 20% of them have young or elementary-aged children at home. Most take advantage of flexible and hybrid schedules as well as generous paid time off, which includes additional hours for school-related activities. Employees can engage in on-the-job activities through the Fun Committee, Workplace Culture Hour and beyond. Pets are welcome in the office, where there is strong encouragement for selfcare and healthy work-life balance. CEO Jennifer (Jenny) Adams' motto is "You come first, then your family, then your job." While Lumina's mission is to put people first, Adams emphasizes that team members can't take care of others in their line of work—without taking care of themselves. It's no surprise that the agency offers on-site, drop-in child care for the parents it serves. Thank you, Lumina, for setting such a beautiful example in our community!



To learn more about the Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit, visit slofamilyfriendlywork.org. For information on the Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program, contact the SLO Chamber's Workforce Development Manager, Christina Lefevre Latner, at (805) 786-2762 or christina@slochamber.org. To learn more about early-childhood related initiatives, go to first5slo.org.