



2022 Family-Friendly Focus



The Family-Friendly Workplaces 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.

NOVEMBER HERO: The Pad Climbing

Helping people stay fit and healthy is The Pad's main mission— but this local climbing gym is also proving it has a firm grip on how to create a true community of support within corporate culture. What started out as the country's first nonprofit bouldering gym in a little storage unit eventually grew to 82 staff team members in 5 states and 2 gym locations— one in San Luis Obispo, CA and one in Henderson, NV. Though the company was steadily changing—one thing wasn't: its commitment to providing a fun, safe and empowering space for visitors of all abilities and ages, as well as its employees.

The facility offers passes, memberships, rock climbing instruction and youth programs, including a Nurture Program for children ages 2-5 and their parent(s) or caregivers. On a deeper level, it inspires people to push themselves, connect with others, and explore possibilities they didn't know existed— all while reaping physical and mental wellness benefits. Since founders Yishai Horowitz and Kristin Tara Horowitz are primarily outdoor climbers first, in their role as employer they've maintained a focus on work-life balance and a flexible expectation of schedules. The two partners champion employees who might need to take a month off for a grand adventure, or because of injury or a family need. Full-time staffers enjoy unlimited paid leave so long as their tasks are delegated and done, and Kristin says they make a public show of everyone taking it (paid leave) to ensure that those new to the culture understand it's not just lip service.

The Pad Climbing's family-friendly, kid-centric policies are informed by the Horowitzes' personal experiences. For example, it was a regular occurrence for Kristin to attend meetings with two breastfed infants in tow, which prompted strong supports and networking opportunities for other new moms and dads returning to work after extended absences. The business includes a suite of family-friendly policies on lactation accommodations, infants-at-work, work location/time flexibility, telecommuting options— plus other extras like a workplace wellness program and financial planning help. The Pad has even installed project management software through which all communications go, so everyone can set and stick to workplace boundaries— no emails or texts pinging at all hours and creating a false sense of urgency. According to Kristin, there are no issues finding great team members because The Pad is offering what people are looking for; it's a welcoming, responsive atmosphere where top-tier talent is often willing to take a little less money than they might have in a more traditional corporate setting.

Kristin additionally credits The Pad's resilience through 14 months of Pandemic closure with effective practices and policies that help staff manage life and work, and she encourages other businesses to trust how powerful their benefits packages are in attracting quality people. "We're just a little climbing gym chain, and we're pulling resumes from Fortune 500 employees and highly respected local firms. If you create a culture of care that's honest and practiced every day, your turnover goes way down, your internal trust goes way up, and everyone is happier. Happiness in your people = a happy, healthy company." That's a philosophy we can all celebrate!