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UPDATE: Getting paid for giving back

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Giving back, getting paid



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By Jamie Hersch - bio | email | Twitter | Facebook

WAUNAKEE (WKOW) -- A local company is working with its employees to get through the economic recession together.

Endres Manufacturing Company in Waunakee has had to cut back many of its employees' hours, but instead of laying off workers, it is paying employees to work for local nonprofit groups, instead.

Gene Button of Waunakee never imagined his job as a draftsman for Endres would lead him to paint the walls of a church he doesn't go to, in a town that isn't his.

"I'm not a member here. I don't even live in this community, and I've got a key to the church!" said Button, who has logged 172 hours painting most of United Methodist Church in Lodi.

When the recession hit Endres hard, the company first gave its workers a choice: 32 hours for everyone, or no work for some.

"We all decided to take a hit for the team," said Button.

Work continued to slow, so Endres realized it was its turn to take one for the team. Now, the company is paying most of its employees to work for a number of local nonprofits.

Endres says in this economy, it's willing to do whatever it can to keep each and every worker in a job, whatever that job may be.

"Profits are going to be down for the year and employees' overall wages won't be as high as in the past, but they still have a job, and job security is probably the most important thing in today's economy. We're all going to get through it and hopefully we'll come out stronger on the other side," said Sam Ballweg, Endres project manager and fourth-generation member of the family business.

Button says he's proud to work for a company that puts its employees ahead of its profits.

"It is a family. It's so cool. If I really got to the point where I needed help, they would do it. I haven't needed it yet, and hopefully not, but they would be there," said Button.

Nonprofits benefiting from the program include Camp Grey in Lake Delton and Habitat for Humanity in Dane County.

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