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PROFILES IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

By Jennifer Rose

Being paid to get to work

There's only one way to beat a free ride to work, and that is to be paid to get there.

Thanks to a new initiative, employees at Mountain Rose Herbs (MRH), Eugene, OR, are paid 12 cents per mile for every fellow employee they drive to work and 20 cents per mile every time they ride their bicycles instead. Designed to reduce the company's carbon footprint, the initiative was formally implemented in the summer of 2009.

"It took us about a year to work out the logistics, but the program has been an incredible success," explains Shawn Donnille, Vice President and Operations Manager at MRH.

According to Donnille, of 81 MRH's employees, four on average ride their bikes to work each day, and anywhere from 6 to 20 people participate in daily carpools. That, Donnille figures, is equivalent to taking 10-15 vehicles off the road every day.

Participation in the program is steadily rising. "Our numbers rise every week as we hire new staff," Donnille explains. "New people coming on board can't wait to sign up and begin benefitting from this



Photo courtesy Mountain Rose Herbs

great program."

Existing employees, too, show a growing level of enthusiasm about carpooling to work. As Donnille puts it, "More and more are loading up their cars to take advantage of the incentives we have to offer."

Although it is a new corporate social responsibility initiative, MRH's incentivized carpooling and biking program is by no means the company's only one. Currently, nearly one-fifth of MRH's employees benefit from the company's community service reimbursement program, which allows employees to be compensated for up to three days per year for their involvement in community-

related activities. MRH is also looking to install solar power to reduce its reliance on other, non-renewable sources of energy. Additionally, the company is planning a program to clean up the Willamette River Watershed near where MRH is located. As it is outlined now, the program will pay staff twice a year to plant native species, perform trail maintenance, and facilitate the river's clean-up.

"Our hope is that through these programs, MRH employees can work together and create conditions under which they, their communities, and our planet enjoy a great return."