



Family-Friendly Culture

The word “family” arises again and again at Oakshire. “You’ve got to treat people the way they need to be treated, and we try and make sure that everybody’s treated with respect and dignity,” Donna Garrett says. “It’s like a family.”

Packing Supervisor Juana Aguilera agrees. Juana is in charge of scheduling the packing workers and making sure the work gets done on time. “We’ve always been a tight community,” she says. “We organize baby showers when somebody’s pregnant. If somebody leaves, even if they’re going to a different company, we’ll have a good-bye party. We try to be a family because essentially we are a family, working together every day so everything’s on good terms. We gather in happy and sad times.” Juana’s (and Oakshire’s) simple secret for retaining good workers is “Treat everyone nicely.”

Packing room employees start work at 7:00 A.M. and stay until all the work is done, typically 6:00 P.M., six days a week. Day care facilities in the community keep roughly the same hours. Some working moms rely on family members for child care, but those who don’t are given leeway to drop kids off and pick them up. The same applies to the Forestville spawn plant, where the work force includes moms and dads. “We’re flexible with our employees,” notes Human Resources Manager Cristina (Cris) Castillo, who grew up as an “Oakshire kid.” Her mother, Trinidad (Trini) Herrera, works with Juana.

“I love seeing people who’ve been with us for many, many years,” Donna adds. “We have some good people out there who have stayed with us, stayed true.”

In a counterintuitive way, this stems from Gary’s unique approach to running a



family-owned business. “I’ve made a real point of telling everybody that we’re not a family company where the only way to advance is to be a family member,”

he says. That’s what he ran into in his pre-Oakshire career. “I want people who are professionals, where you advance on merit, and if you demonstrate the merit, you can go all the way to the top.” ■

ABOVE: Many packing room workers are longtime employees. Packing Supervisor Juana Aguilera, at far right, joined Oakshire in 1998.

INSET: HR Manager Cris Castillo and her mother, Trini Herrera. Trini started at Oakshire in 1998, and Cris worked part-time during high school and college. After graduation she was hired full-time.