

## Manchester Workplace-Flexibility Initiative Aims to Strengthen Families



UNH Cooperative Extension is playing a central role in educating employers and recognizing effective workplace flexibility practices through *When Work Works*, a national initiative focused locally in greater Manchester.

"The Manchester project is part of a family resource center founded by the Family Education Collaborative to strengthen families and individuals," says Sharon Cowen, the Extension Family and Consumer Resources educator who serves as project director. "The Collaborative includes Cooperative Extension, UNH-Manchester, the YWCA, and Child and Family Services."

According to Cowen, Manchester joins 29 other *When Work Works* community and statewide initiatives throughout the U.S. Malcolm Smith, Extension's family education and policy specialist, received the grant that funded the project.

### **Workplace flexibility important in stressful economic circumstances**

"A challenging economy, changing workforce demographics, and a dynamic and demanding workplace, have increased burdens on New Hampshire families and employers," says Cowen. "*When Work Works* encourages and recognizes effective workplace practices that help bridge the needs of working families and employers, promoting healthier individuals and families and a more productive workforce. The initiative provides national education, research, and resources," Cowen says.

"According to Ellen Galinsky, president of Families and Work Institute, a partner in the national initiative, 'Research consistently reveals that flexibility is linked to a return on investment. The perception of flexibility is changing from a perk...to a strategic tool for doing business,'" says Cowen.

### **Local companies and organizations win Sloan Award for workplace flexibility**

*When Work Works* sponsors the Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility, an annual award honoring organizations that score in the top 20 percent of a national employers' survey. An employee survey is included in the Awards process.

"Four Manchester area employers are winners of the 2009 Sloan Awards: Dynamic Network Services, Inc., Image 4, the YWCA, and Child and Family Services," says Cowen. "They'll be recognized locally and nationally for their accomplishments," she says, adding, "The Family Education Collaborative will present the Awards on September 22 at the Manchester YWCA.

"We've been working to get the message out about the advantages of workplace flexibility to employers and employees. We're thrilled to recognize these exemplary New Hampshire employers."

For more information about workplace flexibility, including research reports, business briefs, and other resources, please visit [When Work Works](#), or contact Sharon Cowen at 641-6060.