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ANNUAL D&I AWARD ATTRACTS, AWARDS SIGNIFICANT APPLICANTS

The Human Resource Association of the Midlands (HRAM) diversity and inclusion committee has announced this year's winners of their IDEAL Award honoring local organizations who exhibit commitment to diversity and inclusion efforts.

Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), Mutual of Omaha, and The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) were all honored at HRAM's chapter program on November 8th. Mutual of Omaha was also an IDEAL award winner last year.

HRAM's IDEAL Award winners are selected from an application process by a committee of five local human resource professionals.

The award recognizes organizations who demonstrate commitment across five dimensions – inclusion, diversity, equity, advocacy, and leadership – and is granted on three progressive levels to organizations of different sizes.

Level 1 Award: Thrive

This year's top tier award recognizes **BCBS**, whose efforts have established them as a leaders in implementing diversity and inclusion workplace policy.

“We are incredibly proud to be one of the many metro-area companies that are working hard to create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace,” said Jessica Warren-Teamer, director of diversity and inclusion for BCBS. “This work has been underway for many years and winning at this level demonstrates the significant progress we’ve made as a company.”

Warren-Teamer credits the elevation of DEI as an organizational priority and grassroots efforts for their win.

“We created a genuine sense of commitment to DEI and allowed it to permeate the company’s culture in a real way,” said Warren-Teamer.

Level 2 Award: Emerge

Mutual of Omaha earned the Emerge level award for their ongoing commitment to implementing existing diversity and inclusion policies.

Jana Egan, who works in talent acquisition with Mutual of Omaha feels their DEI efforts foster a culture of trust, allyship and belonging among teams.

“Ultimately, it’s our people who bring our strategy to life in their day-to-day roles,” said Egan.

Egan said that buy-in at Mutual of Omaha looks like 800 culture champions, nine employee resource groups (ERGs), and 300 book club participants.

Level 3 Award: Cultivate

UNO is recognized for excellence in their initial work to implement diversity and inclusion policy.

“UNO is both literally and figuratively the heart of Omaha,” said Steve Kerrigan, assistant vice chancellor of human resources at the university. “Being in the center of our city means our students, faculty, and staff must not only look like our city but also assume the mantle of being diversity and inclusion leaders both now and into the future.”

Leaning into the Future

Kerrigan feels it was less of a surprise to win than a sense of achievement. “When you plan and implement meaningful D&I plans, others will notice and appreciate your efforts!” he said.

For UNO, winning the IDEAL Award is just the first of many steps in their DEI pursuits.

“While it is a worthy validation of the multitude of efforts we have taken in D&I, we know this is truly a start and we must continue to attract different groups of people and voices that will enrich our Maverick campus,” said Kerrigan.

For all three organizations, winning the IDEAL award has reinforced that for them, their efforts are working. But it doesn’t mean they are stopping.

“This award reinforces our approach and shared commitment to this important work. While we’re grateful for this recognition, we know that there’s still much to be done,” said Egan.

HRAM is the premiere organization for human resource professionals in the Omaha metropolitan area and is the local affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). With over 1,000 members, HRAM is a super-mega chapter, one of the largest nationally. HRAM provides its members a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of human capital management. Through educational, developmental, and professional interactive forums, HRAM serves the needs of businesses locally.

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