



The SPARK

EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER FOR COOK PROPERTIES



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Sandra Gafford and Tina Close got into the holiday spirit for Cook's Office Holiday Luncheon



Artwork by Katie Simmons

A Message from Leadership

As we enter the new year, it's the perfect time to SPARK the flames of innovation within our incredible team. (You see what I did there!?) I believe that great ideas can come from anyone, anywhere, and at any time. It's this collaborative spirit that keeps us moving forward and continuously improving.

The next issue of The SPARK employee newsletter will mark the one-year anniversary of its debut, and so far we've featured some amazing employees and taken a deeper educational dive into some unique and interesting aspects of our business operations such as the meaning of curtailment and how we create value within our communities.

This year, I invite YOU to share any ideas you have for future newsletter content. Whether it's a special project your team is proud of, an upcoming event you'd like to share, a coworker who you believe deserves to be featured, or an area of the business that you'd like to know more about - I'm all ears. Share your ideas with me! Some of our best articles come from employee questions, recommendations, and suggestions!

Happy New Year everybody! Here's to a 2024 filled with collaboration and SHARED SUCCESS!

Amy Olds

Director of Marketing

Living Our Core Values

Core values aren't just fancy words on paper that we read once a year and forget about. The Cook SPARK is our foundation, allowing us to stay true to who we are even as we evolve and grow. These values guide our everyday behaviors and actions - bringing us together as a team and sharing what we stand for. SPARK is what makes us Cook Properties! Here's a recap of our core values and what they represent.

Shared Success

It's not just about individual victories; it's about the collective win. Imagine a sports team – when a player scores a goal, it's not just that player that's happy; the whole team and even the fans feed off of that success. Here at Cook, the individual success of each team member contributes to the whole team's success, along with our residents, owners, investors - and the communities we serve.

Progress over Perfection

It's okay if things aren't perfect right out of the gate. At Cook, we value making progress, learning from mistakes, and refining as we go. We understand that continuous improvement is more valuable than waiting for everything to be flawless.

Adapt and Innovate

Priorities can shift at a moment's notice in real estate and property management. Remaining flexible and creative in the face of change or challenges is very important for us. Deals can fall through, deliveries can be delayed, an investor request may come out of nowhere, or an unpredicted blizzard can roll through overnight. Lets find ways to be nimble, overcome obstacles, and take advantage of opportunities!

Radiate Kindness

When one person embodies kindness, it can inspire and influence others to do the same. Small acts of kindness, both through words and actions have a broader impact, contributing to a positive and supportive environment where we are all respected and valued. It's a simple and powerful way to strengthen relationships, build connections, and brighten the world around you.

Keep it Fun

Work can get stressful at times. If we approach situations with a positive mindset, the journey is more enjoyable, the challenges become more manageable, and we bond and grow together as a team.



SPARK



You can send a SPARK to a coworker for living our values! It's quick, easy, and can brighten someone's day! Check out how to send a SPARK on the next page.

How to Send a SPARK!

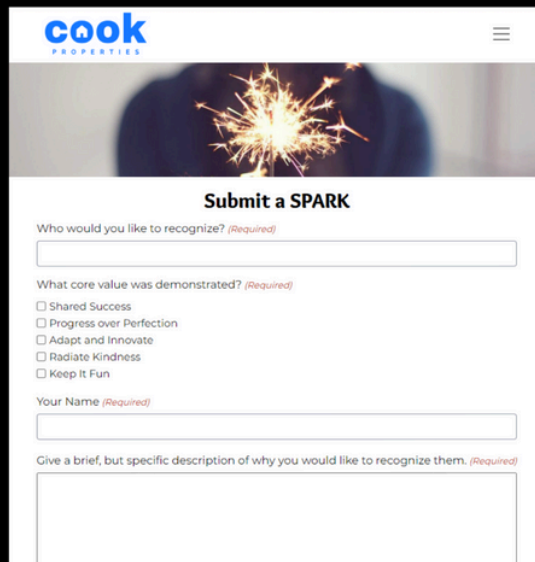
1

Go to: www.cookpropertiesny.com/spark

2

Fill out the form and submit!

All you need is the name of the person you'd like to recognize and a short description of why you want to send them a SPARK. Don't worry too much about getting the wording just right - Amy in Marketing will review it and jazz it up before sending to the recipient!



The screenshot shows the 'Submit a SPARK' form on the Cook Properties website. The form includes the following fields and options:

- Who would you like to recognize? *(Required)*
- What core value was demonstrated? *(Required)*
 - Shared Success
 - Progress over Perfection
 - Adapt and Innovate
 - Radiate Kindness
 - Keep It Fun
- Your Name *(Required)*
- Give a brief, but specific description of why you would like to recognize them. *(Required)*

You can submit on a computer or a smartphone!

APPRECIATE
YOU!

THANK
YOU!

AMAZING

WELL
DONE!

Excellent!

AWESOME!

YOU'RE
THE BEST!

Good
Work!



**TotalCare
EAP**
A division of ESI

We all face problems from time to time. Usually, we can handle them ourselves but sometimes it makes more sense to reach out for help. That's why Cook Properties provides you and your family with a confidential Employee Assistance Program or EAP, a benefit offering resources and solutions for the problems you encounter. Just as health insurance addresses your physical health, your EAP benefits help with your emotional and mental well-being.

Your EAP benefits also include much more than just help for problems – there are a host of benefits and opportunities to help you grow professionally, save money, improve your health, and enhance your personal life! Best of all, because Cook Properties covered the cost of services, there is absolutely no cost to you.

Benefits include an extensive online training library, employee coaching and a self-help center with thousands of personal and professional development resources and videos. There are actually so many resources that it's impossible to mention them all in this article!

We'll be highlighting different areas of the resources offered in future issues of the newsletter, starting with **Wellness and Physical Health** - after all, it's that time of the year when many of us are trying to get a healthier start to the new year!

MAXIMIZE YOUR EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Register at www.theEAP.com by clicking the Member Login button at the top of the webpage. Create a username and password and select "Highland Holdings dba Cook Properties" as your company to access your FREE resources!



Each of the health and wellness categories listed below have **hundreds of resources** available to you and your family for FREE including assessments, articles, videos, and tips!

- Allergies
- Alternative Medicine
- Autoimmune Diseases
- Brain Health
- COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic
- Cancer
- Children's Health
- Cold and Flu
- Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease
- Dental Health
- Diabetes
- Digestive Health
- Doc Talk
- Drugs and Medications
- Ear, Nose and Throat
- Eye Health
- First Aid and Safety
- Fitness and Nutrition
- Greener Living
- Healthy Aging

- Heart Health
- Illnesses
- Liver Disease
- Men's Health
- Migraines and Headaches
- Neurological Conditions
- Orthopedics
- Pregnancy and Fertility
- Recipes
- Respiratory Health
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Skin Health
- Sleep Health
- Smoking Cessation
- Stroke
- Surgeries and Procedures
- Travel Health Tips
- Urologic Health
- Viral Infections
- Women's Health



TEAM PLAYER

Extraordinaire!

It's hard to imagine Katie Inkin without her two loving pups in tow - but her five-year-old Bernadoodle sidekick Jackson was actually her very first dog ever! Jackson was one of the original "office dogs" here at Cook headquarters, and it wasn't long before mini Bernadoodle Oakley joined her family too and has grown up as a "Cook Canine" over the last two years. Katie and her husband Steve love spending outdoor time with their pups - walking, hiking, and playing in the snow.

Although she now spends her winters drying off doggy snow beards, it was warmth and sunshine that first called to Katie after high school - leading her to attend college in Florida. After graduating with a degree in Psychology, Katie accepted a job back in the Rochester area as Director of Programming at a group home for people with developmental disabilities and mental health conditions.

Katie's first job in real estate was as an on-site property manager for several mobile home parks in the area. When Cook acquired those properties, Katie was asked if she'd like to join Team Cook, and she's now been with us since September 2020! Soon after coming onboard she took on management of several additional properties in Ontario County.

Today, Katie serves as a District Property Manager, overseeing a portfolio of 2,100 home sites with the help of two associates. In this role, Katie focuses on her portfolio at a higher level working on capital improvement projects, strengthening relationships with the Attorney General, and managing our score with the Better Business Bureau. Additionally, Katie is very involved with the implementation of Metron (water meter monitoring) across our portfolio, worked with Katie Simmons to write the "Cook Book," a manual for the RPM Team, and played an integral role in developing the District Property Manager and Associate roles to bring a stronger structure to our property management team.

Something you may not know about Katie is that she loves to travel and has been to Africa, Japan, the Caribbean, and even studied abroad in France! Next she'd like to visit Ireland and England. Katie and her husband are big hockey fans and have a goal of seeing every NHL stadium. So far they've been to ten arenas and counting! Katie's "perfect" day off would be hanging out with the dogs, reading a crime fiction novel, eating at 110 Grill (gluten free!), with a nice glass of wine.

Our core value of "Shared Success" really resonates with Katie. She has been involved in so many different roles, flexing to fit and complete what's needed. "I'm glad to have been here during this period of growth - it's the coolest thing."



She's Got Your Back!

There's a lot Nickole DeSmith likes about working at Cook Properties - being out and about at different communities, the fact that every day is different, and how everyone is warm and welcoming - feeling more like a family than just coworkers. (Although both Nikki's husband JJ and brother Neven work at Cook too so this truly is a family affair!) But her favorite thing about working at Cook is the camaraderie and true appreciation team members have for each other.

"We all have each other's backs. Even when the job at hand isn't the most pleasant - like cleaning out a really nasty hoarder's home in Watertown; we had eight or nine of us working together to get it done and you could just see and feel everyone's appreciation and respect for each other."

Nikki joined Cook Properties as a traveling site manager in June 2022, and now is part of the Service Team completing fire-ups, working with Sales, and performing maintenance throughout the portfolio. It's very different from the clerical work she was involved with before and she's happy for the change!

Nikki and JJ have been married for 12 years. Their family includes two sons, a daughter, and three dogs! This February they will be closing on a brand new home which they are super excited about.

The DeSmith family loves working on demolition derby cars. Nikki and her kids often paint them together. And while she of course loves cheering on her husband and brother as they compete - one of Nikki's bucket list items is to compete in a derby herself! Another bucket list item for Nikki? Skydiving!

In her free time, Nikki loves trail walking, exploring abandoned buildings, and the adrenaline rush of visiting rumored haunted places! She is a big fan of crime and detective TV shows like Blue Bloods and The First 48. Her favorite restaurant is Ling Ling Chinese Buffet in Geneva and her favorite food is a spicy crab sushi roll!



FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

A kind smile *and a green thumb*



One might say Nicole Kleeh is a bit of a nature lover. Her home gardens are bursting at the seams with gorgeous flowers and greenery! Gardening is a hobby she picked up from her dad when she was a kid, and today she enjoys the sense of calm and relaxation that gardening brings to her life. And did you know? Nicole is the person who keeps the planters in front of Cook headquarters looking beautiful!

Nicole recently celebrated her five-year anniversary here at Cook. She got to know Jeff Cook when he owned an office building on Mt. Read in Greece where she worked at an appraisal office. When her boss retired, Jeff invited Nicole to come work at Cook.

Nicole has a degree in Office Technology from Monroe Community College. While she began as an Accounts Payable Associate here, she quickly progressed to Administrative Coordinator and Senior Staff Accountant. She handles all commercial property leases and administration - basically serving as the property manager for our commercial properties.

Last year, she worked on getting the second floor office availability at 90 Airpark all cleaned out and ready for tenants - coordinating furniture removal, painting, carpeting, and helping get the spaces rented. Right now, she's focused on getting some office suites on the third floor rented, along with the first floor suite and some spaces at Village Woods in Spencerport and Parkside Greens in Canandaigua. In her accounting role, Nicole approves all ACH and bill pays, cross-checking payment amounts and making sure the accounts associated with them are correct. She also signs all the checks! Whew!

Nicole was born and raised in Greece, NY where she lives with her family - just two minutes from the beach! Her and her husband Todd have two children, two dogs, two cats, two birds, and fish! The Kleehs are a big hunting and fishing family. They have a cabin in the Southern Tier, where they spend summer weekends and a lot of the hunting season. Eventually, they'd like to build a home on their five acres of land.

While Nicole admits she can seem a bit quiet until you get to know her, she loves being around people here at the office - and of course she loves all the dogs! Her perfect day off would be spent laying on the beach listening to country music - particularly "old" country. Her favorite new country artist is Morgan Wallen.

Gettin' the Job(s) Done at Heritage Acres

If you ask Dana Wallace to tell you a little bit about himself, he'll say he's "just a normal guy doin' his job," but don't let him fool you - he's got some interesting facts about himself to share! For starters, he's one of Cook's longest-standing employees, with eight years of service under his belt! Dana is the on-site manager for Heritage Acres in Utica. He had worked part-time for the park's previous owner, and came on full-time with us after Cook acquired the community in 2015. Heritage Acres is a large community with 141 pads. The park is over 90% resident-owned homes and rarely has availability.

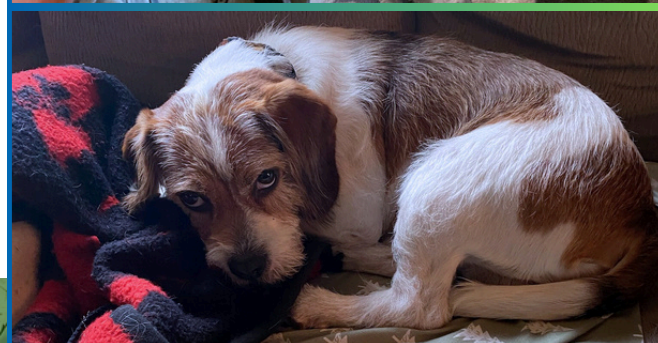
Dana lives right within the community and loves that he has absolutely no commute. Each day is different for Dana depending on what needs to be done within the park or what issues may arise. Plowing, sewer work, water lines, mowing, storm damage clean-up, general maintenance and repairs - you name it, Dana does it. He has a six-year-old Beagle Shih-Tzu mix named Junior who has been his snow plowing mascot lately, riding along with Dana in his truck.

Dana Wallace with his goddaughter, Erica

He regularly collaborates with Vanessa Rice who is the Regional Property Manager for Heritage Acres. Vanessa recently submitted a SPARK for Dana praising his positive attitude and helpful nature:

"DANA IS ALWAYS GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND, SNAKING SEWER LINES, TROUBLESHOOTING AND REPAIRING THE TRUCK AND EQUIPMENT, AND IS HAPPY TO HELP WITH WHATEVER IS NEEDED!"

Dana enjoys a huge array of outdoor activities including snowmobiling, downhill skiing, hunting, and fishing. When he's not "on-site" at Heritage Acres, he's truly "out of sight" at his cabin in the Adirondacks near Big Moose on a whopping 5,600 acres of land! When at the cabin, Dana's nearest neighbor is over 12 miles away, and he has to "climb a mountain" to get cell service to check in with the world every once in awhile!



SNOW PLOW SUPERHEROES

THANK YOU

Alex Bellinger
Billy Baird
Brian Rafanowicz
Chris Kephart
Cotie Bellinger
Dana Wallace
David Drake
David Nanni
Don Green
George Hill
Jack Rougeux
Jarret Allen
JJ DeSmith
Joe Morrison
John Asmus
John Dalberth
Jon Crane
Josh Ellis
Kyle Malone
Kyle Conners
Mike Dinehart
Mike Stephenson
Norm Avery
Paul Peters
Randy Mentor
Rich Brand
Scott Knight
Shawn Button
Stan Henry
Stewart Crocker
Summer Jones
Tim Torbitt

As winter blankets our surroundings in a serene white, a group of unsung heroes emerges, donned in layers and armed with powerful machines. These are not caped crusaders or comic book characters; they are our real-life snow plow superheroes!

In the dead of night or the early hours of the morning, our snow plow superheroes venture out into the storm. They face freezing temperatures, strong winds, and thick blankets of snow to ensure that our residents, emergency services, delivery personnel, and essential workers can safely get where they need to go.

In the battle against winter's icy grip, they tirelessly clear the way. Today, let's take a moment to express our gratitude to these Cook employees who make our community roads clear, safe, and accessible! Keep up the great work!

Alex Bellinger and Cotie Bellinger received this wonderful compliment from a resident at Northland Estates! in Watertown.



"I wanted to take a moment to express my appreciation for the excellent job with snow plowing this morning. I am grateful for the efforts the drivers made today to plow down Grove Street where there is ample space to pile snow without damaging lawns. Please express my appreciation to these professionals."



Who's Got Spark?

TO: KYLE CONNORS
FROM: SHANNON CORIDDI

Kyle is always willing to lend a hand wherever needed and continuously goes above and beyond for not only his parks, but the service team as well. Most recently we had an issue with a homeowner, who was not associated with the community, illegally dumping. Kyle was able to remove all of the trash and debris, which helped us with the Town of Batavia Code Enforcement. This example is only one of many that shows how dedicated and hardworking Kyle is. He is a key part of his communities running smoothly and our team appreciates everything he does. Keep up the great work, Kyle and thank you for being amazing!

TO: BRANDON COYLE, JACK GEISING, & RICK BROWN
FROM: DAVE NELSON

I'd like to recognize Brandon, Rick, and Jack for their great work on a rehab job in Cortland. This crew fixed up a house that was in rough shape and made it look like it was new again! They fixed holes in the walls, replaced flooring, and painted the entire inside of the house.

TO: DANA WALLACE
FROM: VANESSA RICE

Dana just celebrated his 8 year anniversary with Cook Properties and I couldn't be happier to have him on my team! No matter what the situation is he always has a positive attitude and a smile on his face. He is always going above and beyond, snaking sewer lines, troubleshooting and repairing the truck & equipment and is happy to help with whatever is needed!

Recognizing a coworker is easy with our online SPARK submission form!

www.cookpropertiesny.com/spark



JANUARY 2024

Employee Anniversaries

October through December

1 Year

Tina Spirito
Alex Bellinger
Claire Dieffenbach
Shane Gibeault
Kyle Malane
Steve Crocker

2 Years

Kyle Slyter
Scott Knight
Harlan Pudney
Cathy Donahower

3 Years

Richard Brand
Chris Kephart
John Asmus

4 Years

Randall Menter

8 Years

Dana Wallace

Recent Photo Dump!



Katie Inkin with Oakley and Jackson during Cook Spirit Week



Jeff Cook and Don Boylan at Village Woods, our new storage facility in Spencerport



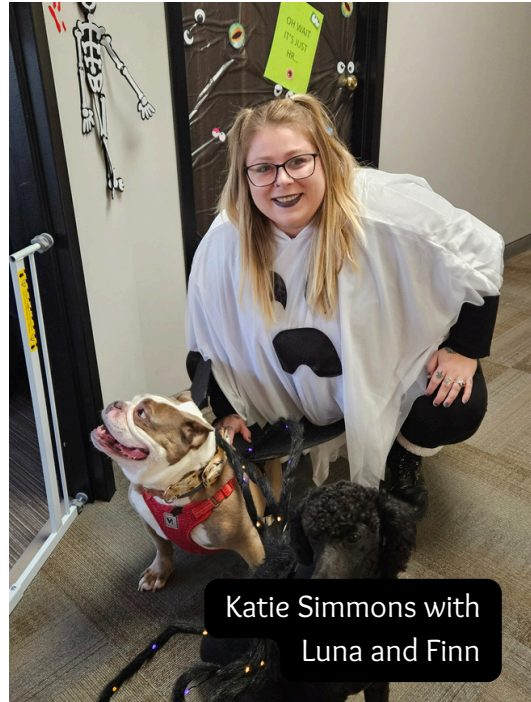
Thor and Daphne - they've already grown since this photo!



Lori Goldsmith unwraps her white elephant gift



Steve Wuest, Kelly Kinney, and Brian Ruggieri



Katie Simmons with Luna and Finn