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PITTSBURGH BUSINESSTIMES

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Pittsburgh firms get creative to help accountants relax before April 15

Pittsburgh Business Times - by [Erin Lawley](#)

There's a light at the end of the tax-season tunnel for Bruce McClintock's employees.

When the accounting industry's famous six-day, 50-plus-hour workweeks draw to a close April 15, workers at **McClintock & Associates** get every other Friday off until Labor Day.

"In this business, people assume that from Jan. 1 to April 15 you have no life," said McClintock, president of the Bridgeville-based firm.

The Fridays-off policy is meant to give people back some family time they may have missed by working those longer hours.

At firms with traditional hours throughout the year, the busy-season crunch is balanced by various activities and perks designed to keep stress levels low.

Downtown-based **Sisterson & Co. LLP** gave its employees "wellness kits" in February -- baskets packed with antacids, tissues, aspirin, first aid kits and hand sanitizer -- to make sure workers are prepared for the months ahead.

"It's tough this time of year because people have colds, and they're working harder and not sleeping as well as they should," said Cheryl Talerico, Sisterson's marketing manager.

Continuing its annual tradition, Downtown-based Horovitz, Rudoy & Roteman has been trying to make Saturday work fun with weekly themes -- such as twin day, where employees are paired up and asked to dress alike on that Saturday.

Alpern Rosenthal, also based Downtown, is offering sports-themed activities for employees this year, with events ranging from sports trivia contests to a tabletop hockey shoot-out to "stadium food" lunches of hot dogs, **Primanti Bros.** sandwiches and the like.

Catered meals are one of the mainstays of the busy season, with most firms bringing in several meals a week for employees.

New Castle-based **Carbis Walker LLP** brings in dinner and dessert for Wednesday night workers and has fresh fruit delivered twice a week.



Joe Wojcik

Kim Miller, a tax supervisor at Sisterson & Co. LLP, receives a chair massage from Jennifer Spence, a visiting massage therapist from Backrubs and Bodyworks.

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Chair massages are gaining popularity, as well. Sisterson treated its employees to massages last week and Edgewood-based **CrawfordEllenbogen LLC** brings in massage therapists twice a month.

Of course, as Joan Ellenbogen, a managing partner at CrawfordEllenbogen, points out, getting out of the office can be the most beneficial thing for busy accountants.

"We tell people to go take a walk or work from home," Ellenbogen said. "What we found is people who come in early and stay late have a decrease in productivity because they have no break."

Carbis Walker, which offers Fridays off from June through August, closes its offices during one weekend of the season, asking its employees not to work. "We call it the weekend of rest and recovery," said Carbis marketing director Maria Litrenta.

Malin Bergquist & Co. LLP gives its employees a \$250 incentive not to work during one weekend in March.

The office closes at 3 p.m. on a Friday, employees are asked not to call in or check e-mail and instead spend time with family and friends -- and the firm picks up the tab.

This year, employees expensed hotel rooms at ski resorts; visits to Hershey, Pa.; cabins in the woods; board games; and take-out food, said Mary Ann Fatheddin, chief talent officer at the firm.

"It's called the escape weekend," she said. "People came back so refreshed."

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