

IN THE NEWS**The Plain Dealer**

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COOL EMPLOYERS

“Home-grown” is one of the favorite descriptions Victoria Stallard has for GTS Communications, the company that she and her husband Jerry run.

GTS Communications, which is beginning its 10th year in business, is an inner-connect telecommunications firm specializing in custom business phone systems and fiber cabling for data, voice and audio-visual applications. The business will be moving in the spring from North Olmsted to larger facilities in Strongsville.

Keeping the aspect of home in the company has been vital to its success, Ms. Stallard says. She holds the title of vice president, and her husband is president. “I think one of the biggest things is, we have truly a family atmosphere. We have always had an open-door policy at all times. I don’t think there’s anything they can’t come to either Jerry or me with.

“The guys tell me I’m the type of person who likes to make things ‘fluffy and nice.’ I guess it kind of describes me. I’ve always had a motherly instinct, and I think I bring that in to work with me a little bit. We always treat them the way we would want to be treated if we were employed by somebody else.”

GTS Communications, last month, received a 2005 Weatherhead 100 honor, which recognizes more than 100 of the fastest growing companies in Northeast Ohio, based on revenue growth from 2000 to 2004. GTS ranked 24th in the upstart category, which measures sales performance of organizations that, in 2004, had 15 or fewer employees and/or less than \$1 million in net sales. Earlier last year, GTS earned the COSE Ten Under 10 award, which recognizes top-performing companies with 10 or fewer employees.

GTS now has 12 employees, and revenues for 2005 were up approximately 35 percent over the previous year. The company has had no voluntary employee turnover in its history. Ms. Stallard says it’s “a lot of the small things that add up to keeping them here.”

The Stallards host a summer outing at their house and take employees and their spouses out at Christmas. They give bonuses, and Christmas stockings for all are filled with candy, movie tickets and lottery tickets. The office is decorated for Valentine’s Day, and at Halloween there are a dozen pumpkins, a recognition that might have made the biggest impression on one employee’s son, who was delighted to find that “Daddy had his own pumpkin with his name on it.”

There are three other members of the family: the dogs that accompany the Stallards to work, and are received with open arms, literally, by the employees. “Boy talk about a stress-buster,” Ms. Stallard says.

The Stallards show faith in their workers to get the job done. “We don’t micro-manage them,” Stallard says. “When they’re out in the field, they’re pretty much their own boss. I trust them all.”

Business Telephone Systems, Sales and Service

11953 Prospect Road, Strongsville, Ohio 44149 **Phone:** 440-878-8866 **Toll Free:** 877-GTS-8866 **Fax:** 440-268-7734

www.gtscommunications.com