



Published by the Society for Human Resource Management

## LOOK IN THE MIRROR

The best benchmarks may be within your own organization

## WASTED MOTION?

360-degree reviews may cost more than they're worth

### Corporate Donations Blossom in Schools Near Ground Zero

One of the most innovative acts of company-sponsored generosity following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks is in bloom these days in schools close to Ground Zero. Thousands of plants were donated by nurseries in New York and Florida to help clear the air in six Manhattan schools.

The donation program - which would strike a chord with anyone who has sent plants to co-workers to express condolences or get-well wishes - began last fall when Eric Keil, who runs a wholesale greenhouse in the Long Island town of Huntington, got a call from a biology teacher at Stuyvesant High School. The school, a few blocks from the site of the World Trade Center, was taking in smoky odors from the debris removal and smoldering fires at the site. The teacher, mindful of federal research on the air-purifying properties of plants, contacted Keil to buy enough plants to put one in every room.

"That wouldn't even come close" to what the school needed, Keil decid-

ed. So, with Stuyvesant's approval, he called some suppliers and a growers association in Florida, where many smaller plants are produced, and asked for donations of plants. "I was overwhelmed," Keil says. "Everybody wanted to do something." The nursery owners felt that the contributions they could make would be particularly helpful for the students and teachers.

Keil rounded up not only the 1,000 plants he sought for Stuyvesant but many more that went to five other schools in the area when they reopened this past spring. Trucking companies have provided all the shipping at no cost, and a New York plant-maintenance company is tending the greenery.

Although plants are not perfect air purifiers, they have helped reduce carbon dioxide in schools that had to shut outside-air vents and rely on recirculated interior air. And plants placed on window sills have curtained off the sight of devastation nearby. Moreover, the plants have helped lift spirits for many students.

In an essay contest sponsored by Plants at Work, an industry organization that says the use of

plants in the workplace can help reduce stress and raise productivity, Stuyvesant 11th-grader Leah Rabinowitz told the donor companies how touched she was by their generosity. "The plants represent new lives that we have embarked on," she wrote. "They denote a sense of security that we all lost, in one way or another, on Sept. 11...They stand for a sense of safety, reminding us that life can still flourish.