

My name is Paul T. Nelson and I am owner and CEO of Waldameer Park, Inc. Waldameer opened in 1896 as an amusement park and added a water park to the complex. Today there are 3 generations of our family working at Waldameer.

I graduated in 1955 with a college degree in business from Michigan State, then served in the U.S. Army. At the completion of my tour in Germany, I came home and became manager of our family business (at 11 years old I started working at Waldameer, and am still a full-time employee at the age of 78). I have been active in our community and industry, being past president of the following organizations: Millcreek Township Chamber of Commerce, Erie County Tourist and Convention Bureau, Pennsylvania Amusement Park Association, and on the Board of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions several times.

The majority of family owned amusement parks in Pennsylvania and our nation have gone out of business in the last 10 to 20 years. Waldameer Park is one of the few successful family-owned amusement parks that continues to grow. We are definitely a small business, with only 18 full-time employees and approximately 400 seasonal employees, and the majority of those are high school and college students. We have continued to grow by having long term plans, sticking to our family goals, plus an excellent relationship with our bank.

We operate with a small, dedicated full-time staff and have good relationships with outside contractors who supplement our staff when we have major capital projects. For example, at one time we could buy a major new ride for \$25,000 and install it ourselves. Today, a major ride costs in the millions and we would not be able to install it without help from the manufacturer and experts that specialize in this type of construction.

Waldameer is one of the major engines of promoting our region as a recreational area and have spent millions of dollars advertising between Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

We know that health insurance is very expensive and felt that we should help our full-time employees with this cost. Many years ago we decided to pay 100% of the cost. About 10 years ago, to help control how our employees were using their health insurance and to help defray the cost increases, we decided that new full-time employees would pick up 20% of the cost and we would pay for 80%. For the old-timers we still pay 100%, as that is what I promised to do. Waldameer employees feel that this is a fair decision.

Our health insurance is handled by Health America and the family rate is \$12,587 annually and works downward for other classifications. What worries us is what the government is planning for part-time employees. We are a seasonal business that is only open 90 days. We worry about the state of the economy, but the weather is also a major factor in our annual success. The majority of our part-time employees are students, and many of them are already on their parents' health insurance policies. Insurance companies are not interested in part-time employees being added to our plan. A part-time employee could have an expensive procedure, then leave employment, sticking the insurance company with the bill. This increased cost would cause the insurance company to raise our rates.

The simple fact is that we cannot afford health insurance for 400 part-time employees, and Waldameer, one of the main engines of promoting the tourist industry in NW Pennsylvania, would be out of business, and no one would benefit from this situation.