

Oklahoma's shining examples: Companies feted for making Fortune list

by Dave Rhea

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Mina Kimes, Fortune journalist, addresses Fortune's Best Places to Work in Oklahoma Wednesday at the History Center. (Photo by Maike Sabolich)

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Chesapeake Room at the Oklahoma History Center was filled with some of the richest and most powerful people in the state.

At lunchtime Wednesday at a table near the entrance of the stage sat representatives of what *Fortune* magazine determined to be Oklahoma's most sought-after employers: Aubrey McClendon, Chesapeake Energy Corp. CEO and chairman of the board; Larry Nichols, executive chairman of Devon Energy Corp.; David Carpenter, president of American Fidelity Assurance Co.; and Mike Thornbrugh, QuikTrip Corp. spokesman.

The four organizations were being celebrated at the private function hosted by the state Department of Commerce and Tourism for making *Fortune's* "Top 100 Best Companies to Work For" list.

Also seated at the table were Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin, Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce and Tourism Dave Lopez and *Fortune* journalist Mina Kimes, the event's keynote speaker.

Fallin and Lopez made introductory speeches and said they foster a business-friendly atmosphere where these companies can thrive, and pointed to Oklahoma's heavy presence on the *Fortune* list and others as proof that their policies are successful.

Kimes applauded the generosity of all four Oklahoma companies, three of which are related to the lucrative petroleum-based energy industry that has propelled Oklahoma through the national recession.

Ironically, Kimes wrote the award-winning article "The End of Oil" in 2008. But there was certainly no end in sight on this day.

Kimes said perks that qualified companies for the list include generous compensation, funding for or facilitation of higher education, flexible schedules, and physical fitness incentives and facilities. Companies that are willing to invest in their employees are rewarded with happy, healthy workers, she said.

Using Devon's state-of-the-art workout facility called The Well as an example, she said that generosity regarding health and well-being is worth more than just a way to please employees.

"Obviously employees love this, but it is also smart business," Kimes said. "As corporate health care costs skyrocket, it's becoming evident that healthy employees are not only happy employees, but cheaper employees."

Chesapeake was ranked highest of the four Oklahoma companies at 18. Devon was next, at 28. American Fidelity scored third among the four at No. 47, and QuikTrip followed up at 66.