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2004
ivy awards

Villanova University Villanova, Penn.

By Margaret Sheridan, Senior Editor



To learn how foodservice at Villanova University ticks, don't ask Tim Dietzler. The Director of Dining Services ducks from the spotlight and yet his fingerprints are impossible to ignore.

Contributing to and raising the excellence of campus life is about more than flexible meal plans and innovative menus, says Dietzler. The people-first attitude aligns with Villanova's mission. Founded in 1842 by the Order of St. Augustine, the school fosters community service and volunteerism based on commitment to society. "If you pay fantastic attention to the ordinary, you get extraordinary results," says Dietzler. The mindset puts Villanova at the forefront of university dining programs, leading peers to vote it a 2004 Ivy Award.

When students asked the administration for a video store in the Connelly Center, dining services responded to their interest. It teamed with the Student Government Association (SGA) in 2003 to



secure a location, then wade through months of administration protocol. Reel Divine opened last October. "Tim made us look victorious," says Maureen Holland, president of SGA.

The logistics nightmare that Homecoming Weekend used to be is no more. Dining services worked with alumni, security and campus operations to ensure that


tailgaters now have ample space in parking lots, enough public restroom facilities and a one-day beer license to manage beverages and reduce rowdy behavior. Ready for this October's Homecoming Weekend is a new group that caters packages for alumni and guests, from picnic baskets to tents with black-tie service.

Such hospitality impresses alumni, says Gary Olsen (Class of 1974). "Last June during Alumni Weekend, an alumnus wanted scrapple but he didn't find it on the breakfast buffet. Somehow, mysteriously, it turned up the next day," says the assistant vice president of alumni affairs. Dietzler's focus on people never changes, says Olsen. "The last thing Tim can say is no."

The "sustaining starches" Olsen endured as a college student have evolved into culinary innovation and dining options. Fifty years ago, students, faculty and staff were served three squares a day in the campus monastery. Today, some 12,000 students, staff and faculty have three resident dining halls, a food court with seven brands, five retail operations and two convenience stores. Diners can select from 12 meal plans and 18 locations in which to use them.

Dietzler operates on a \$14 million budget and reports

The chapel in Corr Hall (above, l.) serves as a spiritual focus point for students, faculty and visitors. Hands-on sushi demonstration by dining services staff (above, r.) provides entertainment and education in response to students' request for something new.



VILLANOVA
UNIVERSITY

- **Enrollment:** 10,026
- **Private:** four year
- **Total annual revenue:** \$20.1 million
- **Annual budget:** \$14 million
- **Students on board plan:** 4,455
- **Residence Hall population:** 4,365

Villanova University

annual revenues of \$20.1 million. The budget allows foodservice to work as an enterprise with benchmarks in food, labor and supply costs. Food costs run 26%, and Dietzler's staff of 500 includes 265 full-timers.

Employees and colleagues both seek his advice. "Ask Tim one question and he comes back with a four-page document with footnotes," says Stuart Orefice, director of dining services for Princeton University in Princeton, N.J. "He's a detail guy."

Retail successes include Holy Grounds, a four-unit coffee brand developed in

Family Ties

"Villanova is part of the family," says Director of Dining Services Tim Dietzler (Class of 1982). His is the third generation of family to work at the school. His grandfather volunteered in Villanova's library upon retirement. His father was a comptroller for 32 years. Three of Dietzler's nine siblings are alumni.

An affinity for numbers explains his degree in accounting. But it's only part of his success. "The other is showing up at the right time," he says.

His career path began as a teen. Since high school and through college he matriculated from pot washer at a deli and waiting tables in a country club to manager-in-training in a national restaurant chain, then managing partner in a pizza franchise. A yearlong stint selling real estate convinced his calling was foodservice. He returned to Villanova in 1987.

Working in restaurants influenced the training initiatives and customer service focus he uses on campus. If a staff feels valued and challenged, they work and achieve as a team, he says. It rubs off on customers and visitors. "Whenever I visit the campus, it always looks like Tim and his staff are having fun," says Cam Schauf, director of auxiliary services, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

1997 with annual sales of \$500,000. When challenged to create a food outlet in the School of Commerce & Finance, he corralled 20 employees for a trip to Wall Street in New York City. Tours of the New York Stock Exchange were instrumental in designing The Exchange in Villanova's Bartley Hall. Even the menu boards are dead-ringers for the moving screens on the NYSE trading floor.

Part of Dietzler's approach to improvement and strategic planning is aligning the goals of dining services with the university's. "The key is being faithful to the bottom line," he says, "working to grow our net contribution to the university's General Education and Expense Fund."

The university's strategic plan—to develop an environment in which students, faculty and staff experience an intellectual and moral Christian perspective—underpins his decisions.

"When students approached us about serving Fair Trade coffee [which requires importers to meet certain labor and pricing standards], there was no debate. It was the right thing to do," he says. "Besides, there's no way a concept named Holy Grounds could be against socially responsible products."

Dining services lends support to campus programs that foster community service and volunteerism. It recently donated more than \$100,000 in food and services to various charities. Pitching in produces resonant effects within the department and throughout the campus, says Dietzler.



The Villanova dining services staff (above) provides catering (4.7% of annual sales) for tailgate parties and buffets as well as sit-down service by tuxedoed waiters. Special events offer opportunity to prepare edible centerpieces and intricate garnishes (top, r.) or popular pizzas with grilled vegetables, cheeses and herbs (top, l.).

"The majority of students that participate in these programs are on a meal plan. The meal missed by those students attending the event is donated to the charities," he explains.

Another gesture of hospitality is the Parents Eat for Free program. Students on meal plan may invite parents and family to dine on campus on the student's meal plan. "Considering the costs of tuition, room and board, parents love the feeling they're getting something back."

Villanova's sanitation program should be a national standard, says Cam Schauf, director of auxiliary services at Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pa. More than 100 employees are certified in a nationally recognized sanitation education program. Hourly staff get a \$500 increase in annual pay for passing it. Those with a perfect score earn a \$100 bonus.

2004

Ivy Awards

A spotlight shines on the newest inductees into R&I's Ivy Society, illuminating their accomplishments and shedding light on what it takes to execute continually at the highest levels of excellence.

Each day, thousands of times over, foodservice excellence plays out, creating for guests the wonderful sense that a restaurant experience can be so much more than just a meal. At times, it reveals itself in the smallest gestures—quiet touches and special flourishes barely noticeable except in their absence. Other times, it is so sweeping and complete that it defines every single aspect, from décor to service to food and finally to memories.

Either way, it is a proud and inescapable truth that the industry finds its strength, vitality and success by continually improving on what it does, creating and then meeting ever-higher standards of excellence and accomplishment.

Amid the operations that strive to reach those ideals, none are more determined or devoted than those who have been named by their colleagues and peers as winners of *Restaurants & Institutions'* Ivy Award. And each year as it has since 1971, R&I proudly announces these new Ivy Society members, recognizing, saluting, honoring and applauding them for their tireless vision, exacting standards and ultimately for being leaders and mavericks in an industry that routinely excels at the highest levels.

R&I is proud to name six operations to 2004's class of Ivy and honored to tell their stories on the pages that follow.

—Patricia B. Dailey, Editor-in-Chief



The White Barn Inn

