



Limited-Service, Unlimited Possibilities

Vanderbilt Campus Dining Awarded for Innovation

Olson Communications is proud to announce that Vanderbilt Campus Dining, a nonprofit, university-managed auxiliary service for Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, is the recipient of a 2012 Chefs of Tomorrow Award. Sharon Olson, founder and president of Chicago-based Olson Communications, presented the award to Chef Camp Howard, CEC, director of Vanderbilt Campus Dining, on November 6 at an annual dinner for foodservice media.

The Chefs of Tomorrow Award, which launched in 2008 as a grant program to assist the professional development of foodservice educators, also recognizes innovative foodservice programs nationwide that have the ability to captivate and inspire those they serve while setting an example for current and future culinarians everywhere.

According to Olson, Vanderbilt Campus Dining earned a 2012 award because of its passion for consistently providing excellent food at the highest levels of quality, value, convenience, and service.

"Subtle, yet unmistakable, reminders of where food comes from are everywhere on campus," Olson says. "The annual Farm to Fork dinners conducted by Vanderbilt are noteworthy, but there are noticeable reminders throughout the campus on a daily basis. In one foodservice operation, there is a video screen behind the serving area showing pictures of the farmers and the fields that are the source of meals served to students."

Additionally, Vanderbilt Campus Dining fosters the building of community by bringing people together in an innovative, creative, proactive, supportive, welcoming, and financially self-supporting way. "Nowhere is sense of community stronger than in the new Commons built for freshman students," Olson says. "There is no takeout from this facility, which encourages students to connect with each other over meals."

Vanderbilt Campus Dining serves 67,000 undergraduate students and approximately the same number of graduate students. Comprehensive meal plans embrace 19 locations that include meals in a retail environment, to-go meals in campus-run convenience stores and ease of choice through the use of Meal Money and Flex Meals. (A Taste of Nashville component allows select local restaurants to be part of the meal plan.)

"There is a sincere mindfulness about connection that distinguishes these operations," Olson says. "Areas of automation exist where they're important for speed of service, but in venues where there is a close connection between those who prepare and serve food and the students; there is a purposeful lack of automation to encourage understanding and connection."

The 11 trade editors attending this year's Chefs of Tomorrow dinner—who were in Nashville for the 2012 International Foodservice Editorial Council (IFEC) Conference—were treated to an indoor variation of the overwhelmingly popular al fresco Farm to Fork event that Vanderbilt Campus Dining executes for 300 students every September.

Delights of the evening prepared by Vanderbilt Campus Dining's Camp Howard, CEC, Bill Claypool, executive chef and assistant director, and Tom Allen, executive chef of Campus Catering, were served family-style. The menu included hors d'oeuvres of roasted-corn-soup shooters and mini brioche with barbecue pork belly; appetizers of truffled deviled local eggs and bruschetta with fig jam and Cambazola cheese. The main dishes included maple-braised beef spare ribs and roasted chicken with black garlic and braised baby leeks; sides of creamy polenta with spinach and two cheeses, and roasted Delvin Farm beets and turnips with braised mustard greens. The night ended with over-the-top desserts, ginger snap bread pudding at the table followed by do-it-yourself s'mores outdoors thanks to blazing fire pits.

Next year's Chefs of Tomorrow event for trade media awarding a 2013 recipient will be held in late October in Portland, Oregon.