

Hershey Helps Students Taste Their Future

“HERSHEY ENTERTAINMENT AND RESORTS SPONSORS A PROGRAM THAT TARGETS SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH AN INTEREST IN PURSUING A CAREER IN THE CULINARY FIELD.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE PREKOPA



IT TAKES ONE SWEET COMPANY TO MAKE AN INDUSTRY collaboration work!

Hershey Entertainment and Resorts is that company! Hershey Entertainment and Resorts is best known for its resort and entertainment entities: Hersheypark, Hotel Hershey, Hershey Lodge and the Giant Center, to name a few. As background, it is important to understand the philanthropic history of the company, Milton Hershey, and the town he built on chocolate.

In 1903, Milton Hershey (1857-1945) began construction on what was to become the world's largest chocolate manufacturing plant. With Milton Hershey's success came a profound sense of moral responsibility. He built a community park in 1907, which has since expanded to become Hersheypark—one of America's finest family theme parks.

Hershey's business success allowed him to practice extensive philanthropy. In 1909, he and his wife Catherine established a school for orphan boys, currently known as the Milton S. Hershey School. In 1918, Hershey endowed the school with his entire fortune. Today, the legacy and vision of Milton and Catherine Hershey lives on in the thousands of students, both boys and girls, and alumni of the school.

Reaching Out and Opening Doors

Hershey Entertainment and Resorts sponsors a program that targets secondary students who have an interest in pursuing a career in the culinary field. In keeping with its founder's legacy, the

company focuses on students who have the desire but may not have the means to pursue their dreams. The program, “A Taste of Your Future—One Sweet Culinary Experience,” also puts a razor-sharp edge on the associated skills needed to be successful in this field, such as teamwork, collaboration and leadership. The two-day program was held for the second year last fall, bringing more than 100 students and teachers to Hershey, Pennsylvania.

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The program is a partnership of numerous supporters, including Metro Tours, a student tour and travel operator that believes in helping students. Bud Geissler, vice president of Metro Tours, believes that by encouraging young people to follow their passion, they will have a much better chance of being successful employees or employers.

“What Hershey is doing here is so exciting, and we are happy to be playing our role in opening doors for young people,” exclaims Geissler.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRYAN HOOVER

▲ Second-year students and instructors experience a half-day, hands-on education session at Lebanon County Career and Technology Center.

When the students arrived, they were greeted at Hershey's Giant Center by Bill Simpson, Hershey's president and chief operating officer, as well as a panel of employees with expertise in various operational areas. This panel offered insight into what it takes to succeed and become a leader in the hospitality industry. Simpson would know; he has played an influential role in leading Hershey Entertainment and Resorts through its most successful years in the company's history.

The first day's program also included a culinary presentation by United States Navy Corporate Chef Michael Harrants; a demonstration on edible centerpieces hosted by Charlie Gipe, Hershey Entertainment and Resorts' executive chef; a demonstration on cleaning and preparing salmon by Joseph Mishler,

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Devon Seafood's executive chef; and concluded with a pastry arts demonstration by Chef Brian Peffley. Chef Peffley's program at Lebanon County Career and Technology Center is the nation's first secondary pastry arts program to receive the American Culinary Federation's (ACF) certification. After the first day's presentations, Alan Lee, a student at Carrick High School in Pittsburgh, talked about how the presenters reinforced his career aspirations.

"The questions that people asked the presenters today helped me a lot because I want to be a business manager/restaurant owner. The presenters discussed their experiences and educational background; their information helped me determine what I want to do with my future."

After a dinner at Giant Center (an entertainment and professional sports venue in Hershey), students boarded buses to visit Hershey's Chocolate World

attraction—Hershey’s visitor center and home to an interactive tour ride that educates guests about Hershey’s chocolate-making process. Students later spent the night at Hershey Lodge and Convention Center.

On the following Saturday morning, the students were divided into groups and the second-year students were bused to the kitchens at Lebanon County Career and Tech for a morning of hands-on activities, including prepar-

ing their own breakfast and lunch. The first-year students were treated to cooking demonstrations by Hershey Lodge Sous Chef Tom Moran, Executive Sous Chef Franklin Thompson, and Executive Chef Richard Dingle. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback from the culinary professionals. The demos reinforced the chefs’ commitment to service and quality, and gave them an opportunity to share the positive experiences they’ve had working in their profession. Chef Thompson shared his experience working at the Ritz Carlton.




PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE FRENCH


▲ Pastry Arts demonstration by
▲ Chef Brian Peffley, CEPC, CCE.

“The chefs I worked with took me under their wing. Just retaining the knowledge they gave me has helped me a lot in my career,” he said. “I always had a notepad in my pocket. If a chef takes time to show you something, take notes because it’s going to come up again.”

Participating teachers had the opportunity to meet with John Foster, president/CEO of NOCTI and the Whitener



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Group. They discussed ACF certification benefits, alignment to NOCTI technical assessments, and how to best demonstrate their students’ competence while improving their curriculum. Foster also conveyed a message to the students regarding the importance of demonstrating skills and of testing. He reinforced why students should care about doing their best work on a technical performance test.

Businesses Step in to Collaborate

“A Taste of Your Future” sponsors included Sysco of Central Pennsylvania, Buca di BEPPO Italian Restaurant, Golden Corral, Buffets Inc., Black Bear Fundraising, and Singer. An additional sponsor, NOCTI, is a national assessment, certification and professional development company that works in collaboration with the ACF (and numerous other certification bodies). NOCTI provides end of program technical testing to culinary program completers in CTE.

Event sponsors made it possible to provide each participant with a gift bag of culinary supplies to add to their toolboxes. Thanks to a collaboration of corporate leaders who realize the need to instill more in students than academic and technical skills, this effort will continue. It is an effort that not only emphasizes the importance of technical skills, but also emphasizes skills that help students advance: leadership, teamwork and cooperation. Best of all, these points of emphasis are woven right into topics that are of great interest to students. **■**

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