



Wilco Area Career Center Culinary Arts Program Newsletter February 2015

Our program was recently recognized as one of the 2014 Elite 50 hospitality school programs in the United States, which was compiled by Kentucky-based Sullivan University's National Center for Hospitality Studies. Wilco's culinary program had already been named to the university's top 100 lists in previous years.

The Elite 50 culinary arts programs were chosen from the 350 schools that had already been named Hospitality Programs of Distinction by Sullivan University.

Being named one of the 50 best was an accomplishment made possible by the hard work of our students. Culinary Arts students take part in various opportunities to practice what they learn, which include catering events and serving meals to students, faculty and guests at the school.



"Career Center Teaching Next Top Chefs"

The following appeared in an online article posted on Mysuburbanlife.com about the culinary program at Wilco Area Career Center. "Ever since I took food prep (at Lemont High school), which was last year, I found out that culinary was my passion" says Bobby Davis one of the students in the Culinary program at Wilco Area Career Center. The program lead by Deborah Bolger and Nicole Kinzer, teaches cooking to high school students on a professional level developing skills that will help them in the industry and as Chef Kinzer believes for advanced classes. Kinzer says that university determines the honor based on the quality of the students it receives from the programs. The class has won the Sullivan University Hospitality Reward two years in a row.

Students have opportunities to get involved in competitions and internships and have a regularly updated job interface to see if any are available and can earn College credits for JJC. They learn to work in teams in the kitchen and as Bobby says "Some of us didn't get along at first, we've learned to work together" and that the class "Gives you skills that the college will teach, but you [can] get a head start taking this class".



My SuburbanLife.com also released an article on talking to Bolingbrook High School junior Claudia Huerta. She already knows she wants to be a pastry chef. She started baking cakes and cupcakes at home two years ago and hopes to add cheesecakes and pies to her repertoire. "I was really interested in the program because they offer more skills here and the kitchen's bigger," she said. First-year students such as Huerta start with a sanitation course, followed by a basic cooking skills class. Huerta is part of a team that is coming up with a menu for a competition this spring. Fitting with her aspirations as a pastry chef, she is in charge of desserts. Huerta said her time with the culinary program each day is like a break from her other classes. At the same time, she feels like she is being well prepared for culinary school. "They teach you a lot of the basics that you are going to need," she said.



Seven Culinary Students take Top Honors at FCCLA

Several culinary students participated in the Regional Proficiency and STAR events competition in February offered by FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America). On February 6th, at the College of DuPage, five students competed in Fondant Cake Decorating for Occupational Students and 2 competed in Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation. Cake decorating involved demonstrating several piping techniques and decorating a cake in fondant. The Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation event had students creating a company, a website and presentation on their business.

Second Place ribbons were awarded to Hannah Eichelberger (Romeoville) and Alyssa Warren (Reed Custer) for Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation. A First Place ribbon along with special honors of Most Outstanding Performance and Product in Fondant Cake was awarded to Carolyn Lebica (Romeoville) for her *Ratatouille* movie themed cake. A first place ribbon was also awarded to Ryne Thacker (Plainfield East) for *The Fault in our Stars*, a second place ribbon was given to Taylor Toures (Plainfield East) for *Finding Nemo*, Heather Walsh (Plainfield East), and Merielle Marshall (Plainfield East) for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. These students will now be competing at the State level in Springfield on April 17th. Let's wish them luck.



Culinary Teacher Receives Grant from State Farm

What better way to go “green” than by growing a garden is one of the sustainability beliefs of Deborah Bolger, one of the instructors at Wilco. When children are actively involved in growing food, they will be more excited about preparing and eating it. With much needed emphasis on the lack of activity and unhealthy eating habits among youth, this will help to encourage consumption while incorporating science, math, nutrition and culinary skills. We need to focus on this generation of students; to instill healthy food and eating habits while simultaneously teaching responsibility and ownership, cooperation, and patience through exciting hands-on education.

State Farm Insurance Company contributed \$1200 for our Colorful Culinary Cuisine: From Garden to Table service learning program. This grant will help build life-long eating habits while improving nutritional knowledge for future generations. In our culinary program, we can provide healthier foods by incorporating vegetables into our food selections, many times without student's knowledge. We can also help establish patterns in food consumption by guiding students to make the right choices towards a healthier future by not only incorporating the foods into our curriculum but demonstrating the ease and cost savings of growing our own produce and herbs. The strategy of using a garden as a teaching tool benefits the student by learning many of the basic life skills while helping them prepare for challenges later in life such as responsibility, self-confidence, communication and the skills of observation. This State Farm grant, coupled with the purchase of a garden tower last year, will allow our program to focus more on the most important aspect of education, learning which will provide us with the opportunity to educate our students and hopefully allow them to achieve their goals and dreams. Bolger said she hopes to have fresh herbs available soon to use in the kitchen and would love to have a green house on the school property again. She is also looking into purchasing a rain barrel and other sustainable classroom items with the grant.



PROSTART COMPETITION TEAM

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to cook under pressure? Just ask our Prostart Competition team. We are very proud of our dedicated 2015 pro start students, Angelic Zamora a first year from Plainfield Central (alternate) Team manager, in charge of all paperwork. Josh Schreck a second year from Plainfield South (in charge of main entrée, cost control), Rob Michalowicz a second year from Plainfield

East (in charge of equipment and sides, costing), Claudia Huerta a first year from Bolingbrook H.S. (in charge of dessert, costing), Bobby Davis a first year from Lemont H.S. (In charge of appetizers, knife skills, menu design). All students on the competition team play a vital role and one cannot accomplish their dish without the other.

This year our 2015 Pro start team has chosen a Latin theme, and have work countless hours on menu development, menu pricing, recipes conversions and development. They have come in every Saturday to practice their knife cuts, chicken cuts, and made a full menu which includes an appetizer, entrée and dessert.

We are excited for the upcoming competition at the end of February which take place at McCormick place in Chicago. 14 other vocational culinary school will be competition with us to win a scholarship to a culinary school of their choice.

