

Hills woman aids in putting 'pizzazz' in lunchroom

The faculty lounge at Mercy College of Detroit is a midday haven — academia's equivalent of the executive dining room — where professors and administrators gather to compare notes, relax and eat lunch.

Until this January, service in the dining room was a self-serve buffet, perhaps lacking a bit of pizzazz.

But the situation is changing, thanks to Sharon Hirschman of Farmington Hills and Terry Lebedziewicz of Detroit.

The pair, both juniors in Mercy's food service management program, are working in the faculty lounge this semester as part of a new course in advanced food management techniques.

They are alternating roles as dining room and production managers.

The first thing they did was put some "oomp" in the daily service. Hot foods were served for guests on the buffet and hot beverages were brought to each table.

A fresh fruit bowl was placed besides cakes, cookies and pies to give calorie-conscious customers a dessert choice.

A fresh vegetable relish plate with a soufflé cup of dip became an immediate favorite.

"The faculty and staff members who frequent the lounge have only a short period in which to eat," says Mrs. Hirschman. "They want to relax and enjoy this break in their busy day. We try to make the experience as pleasant as possible for them. That's really what food is all about."

As the present production manager, Ms. Hirschman is learning that fast efficient service and attractively arranged foods are two important components of the restaurant business. She is seeing the lessons of the classroom and her textbooks work out in practice.

Earlier in the semester, the Farmington Hills resident served as dining room manager, greeting patrons as they entered the lounge. Later she visited their tables to offer seconds on coffee and listen to their comments.

One guest complaint — "the food isn't hot enough" — led to installation of a steam table to replace the chafing dishes. The chilly January day on which a new cabbage soup was served, three patrons asked for the recipe.

Neither student does any actual food preparation. That is the job of Mercy College's own food service department. But both Mary Kay LeBourdais, the director and David Michaels, food production and purchasing manager, do listen to their advice and suggestions.

"Having students experience supervision in the lounge has been beneficial to both our staff and the students," says Mrs. LeBourdais. "A closer rapport has developed with our clientele due to the student managers having daily contact with lounge guests. We hear daily what guests like and dislike and can customize our menus and services accordingly."

The idea of having food service majors supervise the management of the faculty lounge originated last year when students served ethnic foods at a special international luncheon.

"Why can't you do this everyday?"

was the question faculty members put to Polly Buchanan of Northville, food service instructor in home economics at Mercy.

"Why not, indeed?" she thought, and went to academic dean John McNary

with her idea of instituting a new course in advanced food management techniques. Its advantages over a co-op program is that students can obtain direct management experience while remaining under faculty supervision.

In addition, the small operation — the lounge has about 70 regular patrons — is well within the scope of the students' skills at this point.

Dressed in bright red blazer and dark skirt or slacks that are food service student manager's uniform, Ms. Hirschman is on the job every morning at 9 a.m. She consults with the cooks on

daily production, including portion control and food garnishes.

Then she and Ms. Lebedziewicz help write the next week's menus and complete plans for that day's meals.

Over lunch, they review the day's events and immediately make their written evaluations of food quality and guests' comments. Their duties usually conclude by 2 p.m.



Checking out a salad in the faculty lounge at Mercy College are (from left) Polly Buchanan of Northville and Sharon Hirschman of Farmington Hills.

Psych student authors work

A Northern Michigan University (NMU) student from Farmington Hills presented a paper to the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters Conference recently in Grand Rapids along with several other students and professors from NMU in Marquette.

Cynthia Haight co-authored the paper with three other NMU students entitled "Effects of Carriage Behavior and Attire on Male Helping Behavior."

"It's a matter of great pride that our students will actually be presenting papers which they helped author," said Dr. Robert Glem, academic vice president and provost at NMU.

"This reflects not only on the good leadership of our faculty, but also on the quality of education at Northern." Ms. Haight, a senior majoring in psychology, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Haight.

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