

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

'A Taste Of Everything'

Career Center
Class gives
students
taste of
what future
could hold



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Sifting
Senior Dave Gustafson sifts ingredients in preparation for making apple pies.



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Soup
Junior Mark Risinger dips a cup from the vegetable beef soup with handmade noodles.



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Working
With lunch over, the afternoon crew at the Warren County Career Center Food Service and Management class begin their preparations for the following day.

By **BRIAN FERRY**
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About 40 Warren County School District students are getting a literal taste of their futures.

One day last week, the tastes included vegetable beef soup, harvest lasagna, breadsticks, and lemon chiffon.

"The students get to sample everything they make," Food Production and Management Instructor Sylvia Larson said.

The 39 students in the Warren County Career Center course spend three periods each day in the program. Two days each week are in a classroom setting where students learn the theory behind their cooking.

"Two days is all theory," Larson said. "The other three are when we take theory and put it into practice."

The practice is extensive.

From apple pie to creme brulee, "there's nothing we do not make," Larson said. "We even do fast foods so that they have a taste of everything."

She even introduces ice sculpting. In addition to getting to use the top-of-the-line equipment at the Career Center, students learn safety and sanitation, hear from guest speakers, visit culinary schools, and prepare and serve the lunches at a local restaurant.

"I love to bring in speakers," Larson said. "I bring in executive chefs, people in hotel and restaurant management."

One of the presentations each year is made by officials from the state Department of Agriculture and focuses on safety and sanitation.

One of the key aspects of the program is a safety certification. "I get my students certified in Food Safety Management," Larson said. "If they pass the exam, they get a five-year certificate. We want to make sure we send them out with certification."

Larson's graduates are popular.



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Coffee?
Senior Rachel Johnson offers coffee to customers at the Hilltop Restaurant.

"I very seldom have a student that does not go to culinary school," she said. Some of her former students are working as chefs, pastry chefs, in hotel and restaurant management "all over the country, some in tremendous positions."

She expects the proposed hotel and conference center in downtown Warren to create chances for some of her students to come back home. "I know there are students who would love to come back," Larson said.

The Hilltop Restaurant is located in the Career Center and opened for the season last week. It is only open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. On Fridays and Mondays, the students are in the classroom and do not prepare food.

The restaurant can serve about 30 patrons a day. There is soup, one entree and a dessert each day.

Reservations for lunch must be made a full day in advance so the class knows how much food to prepare, and may be made by calling 726-1260.

Since 1990, the Hilltop has given students practice in a fancier setting. "We've been running it as a restaurant with a little bit more fine dining," Larson said. "This restaurant is where the students are able to show you what they've learned."

The class also serves dinner at certain school and district events. Making dinner is another good experience. "The reason I do evening dinners for the district is for them to have experience with product they would never see if limited to a lunch menu," Larson said.

The students in the program enjoy what they do, she said. That's an important part of the field. "It's hard work," she said. "You're hot, you're on your feet."

"We're looking for a person that is healthy, strong, committed and accountable," she said. "You have to have pride in what you do."



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Rolls
Sophomore Sarah Rice pulls fresh cinnamon rolls out of the oven.



Times Observer photos by Brian Ferry
Photo at left, Junior Andrew Shodi beats eggs to be used in puff pastries.

Photo at right, Servers (from left) seniors Hannah Curtis and Rachele Johnson, and juniors Chelsea Levesque and Jenny Brecht line up for a photo prior to serving the lunch crowd.



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Breadsticks
Junior Nathan Britton tosses the breadsticks to remove excess cheese and seasoning.



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Head chef
Senior Matt King serves up a portion of harvest lasagna.