

February 13, 2011
By Marge Kullerstrand

INSIGHT: Chefs Celebrate 15th Anniversary By Honoring Their Own



Courtesy of Bella Photography
ACF Junior Culinarian Dana Wichinski, ACF President Cheryl Molenda and ACF 2010 Chef of the Year Joseph Trama, CEC at the annual appreciation dinner reception, where the American Culinary Federation of Northwest Indiana honored its best.

A week from today, hundreds will enjoy the culinary delights of the American Culinary Federation Chefs of Northwest Indiana, in existence for only 15 years, as they donate their time to raise funds for Meals on Wheels at the 10th annual Dine with the Chefs event.

Meals on Wheels is only one of the many organizations that the ACF support. Among the organizations benefiting from their volunteer service are the March of Dimes, Nazareth Home, Hospice of the Calumet Area and the Northwest Indiana Adult Guardianship Services Inc..

Recently, ACF of Northwest Indiana held its own Chef of the Year Appreciation Dinner at Banquets of St. George in Schererville, hosted by Executive Chef Ruben Calvo and Chef de Cuisine Frank Kwiecien of H & R Catering.

Those assembled dined on a seven-course meal that began with hors d'oeuvres including bacon-wrapped plantain and stuffed mushrooms. Other courses included ginger carrot soup; a salad of mixed greens, goat cheese, dried figs and almonds in an edible parmesan bowl; and a fish course of grilled shrimp and pineapple kebob with blueberry caper sauce.

The entree consisted of chianti glazed grilled filet mignon accompanied by tourneed vegetables and fried leeks.

Dessert was a scrumptious red velvet tort with raspberry mousse and white chocolate ganache.

Chosen as Chef of the Year was Joseph Trama, executive chef at the Center for Visual & Performing Arts in Munster, which readers of The Times voted as having the No. 1

brunch in the area. A member of the American Culinary Federation since 1979, Chef Trama is also an instructor at Ivy Tech's East Chicago campus.

Also nominated for Chef of the Year were Calvo and Chef Terry Zych, hospitality program department chair at Ivy Tech in Michigan City.

Named 2010 ACF Jr. Culinarian of the Year was Dana Wichlinski, president of the Culinary Club at Ivy Tech's East Chicago campus, where she carries a 4.0 grade point average.

Wichlinski, Karen Musto and Maggie Wright were all awarded scholarships.

Fellow students Robert Christ and Kyle Fouch, who attends Ivy Tech's Gary campus, were other Jr. Culinarian nominees.

The ACF supported Fouch's attendance at the ACF culinary competition in Madison, Wisc., where he won a bronze medal for his fruit and vegetable carvings.

The ACF Board of Directors includes Chairman Jack Mix, Comforts Catering, St. John; President Cheryl Molenda, The Inn at Aberdeen, Valparaiso; Vice President Scott Farrell, Briar Ridge Country Club, Schererville; Treasurer Tim Merkel, Giovanni's Restaurant, Munster; Secretary Alice Pickford, Wells St. Beach Cafe, Gary; and Sgt.-at-arms Nico Luna, CEC.

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For more photos and previews of events, visit my blog at <http://www.my.nwi.com/insight>.

Denim and Diamonds

Leave it to Delta Theta Tau to make the 19th annual Winter Gala to benefit Opportunity Enterprises a little different.

The newly redesigned event for 2011 will feature elegant hors d'oeuvres from around the world, a cash bar, a silent auction, and music and dancing, as well as a new theme, "Denim and Diamonds." Dress is casual with an elegant twist - jeans are encouraged and diamonds are welcome.

The fundraiser will be from 6 to 11 p.m. March 11 at Harre Union at Valparaiso University.

Tickets are \$80 and may be purchased online at www.oppent.org or by contacting Chris Schneidt at (219) 464-9621, ext. 233 or christene.schneidt@oppent.org.