

Five Questions: Colin DeMers

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

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The Record



Colin DeMers is the managing partner of the Century House in Latham. The Cohoes native started a program at the restaurant where a meal is donated to the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York for every meal purchased.

Q: How did you decide to get into the culinary arts?

A: I was a waiter at the Century House when I was younger since my aunt and uncle ran it and founded it in 1949. That was how I became introduced to the hospitality field. Then my cousins were running the restaurant and had plans to build a hotel. Everything worked out well from there.

Q: What were the origins of the Century House's donated meal program?

A: Going back to the holiday season last year, many companies were canceling their holiday parties they would normally have at our facility and were donating a one-time gift to charity instead. But, since there were not as many parties here, we had to put people out of work. That weighed on me and I had an "aha" moment where people could still have a party, reward their employees, and not end up cutting jobs. I thought we could offer a program where we could donate a meal to the food bank for every meal purchased at our restaurant or during a party. Once a month, we go to sites and serve the meals as well. When we volunteer, we serve people who sleep on the streets, the mentally-ill, or seniors who are trying to stretch their food budget.

Q: How many meals have you donated?

A: More than 30,000 meals since June 1. We also have our customers sign what we call the Book of Giving which we will give to the food bank at the end of the year. The program has obviously affected us financially but it was something we planned for and it is a sustainable program.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: I like to kayak on the Mohawk and Hudson rivers. The restaurant is close to the Mohawk so I do a lot of kayaking there. I also like mountain biking.

Q: What's your favorite meal?

A: Osso buco, which is a braised veal shank with risotto.

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