



“Educator of Year” at Whittier Tech is culinary arts teacher who oversees student-run restaurant

HAVERHILL – Cathie Baines, a culinary arts teacher at Whittier Tech for 13 years, has been voted “Educator of the Year” by her colleagues.

She is not a big fan of the lime light, but was moved by the genuineness of fellow teachers.

“I’m one of those people that prefer to be working in the background and getting things done,”



she said. “But once it was announced and I saw how sincere everyone was that came by and congratulated me – that’s when I felt its true significance. It’s a great honor.”

With her four fellow culinary arts teachers, Ms. Baines oversees students who operate “The Poet’s Inn”, a 90-seat restaurant which serves breakfast and lunch to the public four days a week. To complement their studies and work experience, Ms. Baines also helps prepare all students in the program to take the tests necessary to earn ServSafe food and alcohol certifications. She also trains them to compete in SkillsUSA and Massachusetts Restaurant Association competitions, which has led to numerous college scholarships. This is all in

addition to teaching a culinary arts curriculum.

“Her ability to balance it all is unbelievable,” said Sue Josephs, a culinary arts teacher who has worked with Ms. Baines for 13 years. “She is so great with our students. She has a natural way of communicating information and creative ideas to them, and she stays very current with industry standards. She goes out and gets the information. I couldn’t imagine not sharing a brain with Cathie Baines. She inspires me to be a better teacher.”

Bill Yameen, another colleague in the program, agrees. “Cathie is a gifted teacher with a wealth of sympathy, kindness and generosity. Whittier Tech is fortunate to have a teacher of her caliber as part of our staff.”

Ms. Baines will receive a plaque and cash award at an end-of-year celebration at Whittier on June 22. The award has been presented annually by Whittier Regional Educational Association for 27 years.

Ms. Baines came to teach in the culinary arts program at Whittier after an impressive career in the restaurant and hospitality field. She was the general manager and restaurant owner at the Hampton House Hotel on Hampton Beach for 10 years. In total, she owned and operated businesses on Hampton Beach for more than 20 years.

She thought she would enjoy teaching because she liked the interaction with the high school and college students she trained as employees at her hotels and restaurants every summer. After earning her bachelor's degree in education, summa cum laude, from Norwich University, she became a member of the adjunct faculties in the hospitality programs at York (Maine) Community College and New Hampshire Technical College in Laconia, NH. "I put my two loves together -- culinary and hospitality, and teaching," she said.

Her students have certainly benefitted from that decision. Members of Whittier's Class of 2010 who studied with Ms. Baines will pursue their educations at New England Culinary Institute, the Culinary Institute of America, Le Cordon Bleu School and Johnson & Wales University, Northern Essex and North Shore Community Colleges.

"So many people question whether students at a technical high school have the opportunity to go on to college, but there's no question in any of our minds," she said. "Every student at Whittier Tech has the ability and the knowledge to go on to college."

Ms. Baines received her vocational license from UMass, Boston, and is now pursuing administrative licensure through leadership classes with the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators. At Whittier, she is the department head for the Service Cluster, which includes the cosmetology, marketing, health occupations, childcare and culinary arts departments. She is certified as a Pro Start instructor, a Servsafe Food and Alcohol instructor and is a facilitator and lead instructor for the American Culinary Federation Accreditation.

In addition, Ms. Baines is a board member on both the Massachusetts Restaurant Association Educational Foundation and the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. She also serves on the Peabody High School Advisory Board.

Back in 1997, she was pregnant with her daughter Jaycie, now 13, when she landed her job at Whittier. After her daughter's birth on Aug. 26, Ms. Baines took off only two weeks before reporting to Whittier to begin teaching high school.

"I was a zombie," she said, laughing at the memory. "I didn't sleep for two years between the new job, another daughter in middle school and the new baby." At school, she pushed a cart through the halls each day with her supplies, teaching the business side of culinary arts in three different class rooms.

Nonetheless, Ms. Baines said she has always known she was lucky to be able to work at Whittier.

"Whittier is a city within a city, and anything can be accomplished here," she said. "The success of the culinary arts department is due to the camaraderie and working conditions among the staff, the support from administration and the enthusiasm of the students."

She thanked her peers for the honor, and said, "All of my colleagues have helped me in some way or another in my 13 years here. Maybe it was just a smile when I was having a bad day that changed my whole attitude."

Ms. Baines is the mother of two daughters and lives in Newburyport. Her daughter Kimberly, 24, lives in New York City where she works as a physical therapist.