



It seems almost unbelievable that this is my last quarterly update as your SFM President. And not just because time flies (it seems like only yesterday that I typed my first quarterly update!)—because I now stand in awe of all that we have accomplished, and in just one year!

When I first penned my membership goals for 2012, I thought, “Wow, we’ve got a lot to do this year!” It was an aggressive plan, but I knew that with a strong team and the most passionate members in the industry, we could easily meet our goals.

So as we prepare to close our books on this fiscal year, I am pleased to say we are financially secure as an association. We transitioned to a new management company quickly and efficiently, with immediate results. I can’t thank the team at FSA enough. I truly believe we would not have been as successful as we were without their support! Our yearly events, from the National Conference to Critical Issues to our SFM Locals, have exceeded my plan both in attendance and in profit. Our membership numbers are above last year and our sponsorship revenue is well above our goal.

On stage at the National Conference in Philadelphia, the phrase “If we build it, they will come” became my mantra. We—the board of directors, our committee leaders and volunteers, and of course all of you, our members—did build it!

The Programs Committee, led by Bernadette Ventura, increased the number of entries on the SFM Body of Knowledge to provide additional resources for our members. The newly formed Webinar Committee, led by Ira Kaplan, did an amazing job developing our new Distinguished Leadership Webinar Series. In the past, we’ve had 25 to 50 people attend each webinar, approximately 200 people annually. Under this new format, our June webinar alone brought in more than 200 people!

The Marketing/Public Relations Committee, led by Holly Von Seggern, was very creative in crafting key messages and developing marketing pieces that grow membership and spread the word ... that SFM is the leader in the foodservice industry. From developing a new logo for SFM Local, to building a membership prospecting e-brochure and a brand new conference justification toolkit, each piece became a valuable tool to help promote our association.

The Membership Committee, led by Sandy Smith and Bill Adams, worked to increase awareness of SFM within the Client Liaison/Self Operator market, as well as the contract management segment. They worked on filling the pipeline for future growth, and we are grateful for all their hard work.

And lastly, the SFM Local committee hosted two all-new events: one in Philadelphia, led by Brad Marg, and the other in Washington, D.C., led by Sabrina Capannola. We also had two very successful events in Charlotte, led by Kathy Sanders and Genevieve Stona, and held “Solutions 4” events in Seattle and Chicago. These regional events are a great opportunity to expand our influence as an association by reaching members and non-members that may not be able to attend national conference.

I hope you have already registered for our 2012 national conference, **Conquering Myths, Defining Realities**, to be held in Las Vegas on September 11th – 13th. Damian Monticello, your Conference Planning Committee Chair, has planned a “can’t miss” event. This conference is the best opportunity to combine quality educational programming with outstanding networking with your industry peers. Conference registration numbers are very strong, so [register now while we are still offering the Early Bird registration rates!](#) For more information on the incredible lineup of speakers and sessions, [click here](#).

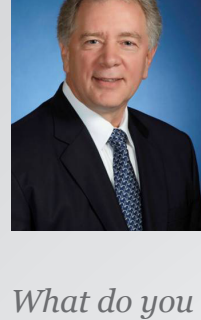
For those of you that are unable to attend the conference, I would like to thank each and every one of you for allowing me to serve as your President this past year. I was told by Carol Bracken-Tilley that it would be the most fulfilling thing I’d ever done, and I have to say it was that and more. It is so gratifying to receive notes from members discussing how much they learned at our events, or how the relationships they are forming will be lifelong friendships. As I pass the gavel to Mark Freeman, I am confident that he will take us to even greater heights in 2013. **Thank you all for supporting this wonderful association.**

Now please read on for our quarterly interviews with a variety of presidents from the foodservice industry!



Barbara Kane | President

CORPORATE INSIGHT: DOUGLAS WHITCOMB, FMP, PRESIDENT, WHITSONS CULINARY GROUP



Who or what had the biggest impact on your career?

That is an easy one. Hands down, my parents, Gina and Elmer, and their family values and work ethic, have had the most impact on my career. They taught me and my siblings about the value of hard work, integrity, honesty, passion, fairness, generosity, kindness and team work. These core values shaped me as a person and have helped guide me throughout my career. The lessons learned from my parents have given me the foundation to handle the transition of Whitsons Culinary Group from a small family restaurant operation to a \$150 million organization over the course of the last 33 years.

What do you see is the trend creating the most opportunity to our industry?

The trend creating the most opportunity in our industry is in the area of health and wellness; specifically, our customers’ desire to understand the nutritional benefits of the foods we serve and from where they are sourced. Whitsons has, over the last ten years, concentrated on nutrition awareness, sustainability and local sourcing, as well as featuring healthier products on our menus. Currently, we source 52% of our products locally and we’ve increased allergen-free product availability. We have also examined our menus at the ingredient level, removing HFCS, MSG, artificial colors and flavors, while increasing use of lean meat proteins and vegetable proteins, low fat dairy, fresh vegetables and fruits and whole grains.

What do you see is the trend creating the most challenge to our industry?

The major challenge that goes hand in hand with an increased awareness of nutrition is product sourcing. We have developed very stringent purchasing specifications for our products to support our health and wellness initiatives. In some cases, we have had challenges sourcing products that meet our requirements in the volumes we need. The silver lining is that we are in a position to use our purchasing power to affect positive change. For example, we worked with our ketchup and bread vendors to develop HFCS-free offerings that are now available to other clients in the industry. Another challenge we have had to work through is the shorter shelf life of preservative-free products, which requires us to increase the frequency of the purchase/delivery cycle for certain products. We have been able to meet our product sourcing challenges through the continuous cultivation of very strong partnerships with key product vendors.

Sustainability continues to be a main focus in the foodservice industry. What are some green initiatives at your company?

We consider our local purchasing policy to be a major “green” initiative. Local purchasing stimulates the local economy and supports family farms, cleaner environments with less fuel burned from local shipping and provides products that are fresher and healthier. As I said above, we source 52% of our products locally companywide. In the communities we serve, our initiatives include: recycling and waste management, recyclable and recycled disposables, composting and pulping programs, refillable coffee mugs, bulk condiments and energy maintenance systems. In our corporate offices, we have “Smart Lighting” and High Efficiency HVAC units and participate in a power shed program (we run on generator power during high-demand days). We also recycle paper and bottles, as well as oil for use in our biodiesel vehicle program. Recently, we eliminated bottled water and moved to a triple filtered drinking water system, among other initiatives.

Whitson’s is a family run business. What are the positives and negatives of keeping it “All in the Family”?

Working with six other brothers and one sister every day is both a blessing and a challenge. On the positive side, I have complete trust in my siblings. We can share with each other honestly, without reservation, and we work through differences in opinion with the company’s growth and well being in mind. Another positive is that we have fostered a family environment that carries through the entire organization. This is a huge benefit, particularly because the foodservice industry is a “people” business. There are, indeed, challenges inherent in working in a family business, but we have been able to work through them. One challenge is that, because we are siblings, it is easy to say what is on our minds, which can be somewhat uncensored at times. Another challenge is that we now have members of the third generation coming into the business and we want to provide them with the opportunity to earn their place in the company, while imparting a sense of humility and respect for the family members and other team members that have come before them and paved the way for the company’s future success.

Douglas Whitcomb, FMP | President | Whitsons Culinary Group

ASSOCIATION INSIGHT: BENSON LI, CCFP, PRESIDENT ASSOCIATION OF CORRECTIONAL FOOD SERVICE AFFILIATES



What are your goals for your Presidency?

The Association of Correctional Food Service Affiliates (ACFSA) was founded in 1969 by Al Richardson. As the 42nd President, my primary goal is working toward membership growth. The secondary goal is to maintain financial stability for the association. The ultimate objective is to provide value to our membership. To that end, through vigilant leadership and a change in management companies five years ago to Executive Management Associates (EMA), our membership and financial health have been steadily improving.

Additionally, ACFSA is committed to providing membership with training programs toward Correctional Food Service Certification. Two Certifications are available; The Correctional Food System Management (CFSM) and the Certified Correctional Professionals (CCFP). The goal is to increase the participation in management and enhance members’ professional development, as well as ensure our Correctional Food Service Professionals working in the Industry have the best possible training. This ensures that institutions that employ ACFSA Certified Professionals incorporate safe work practices in their kitchens and have access to the latest products and trends in the Industry.

What do you see as the hottest trend in the Correctional Food Service Industry?

The nutritional requirement for healthy Americans with lower sodium and sugar intake is the trend that we have to address and we have to accomplish that with limited budget and resources.

Correctional Food Service Professionals provide three meals a day to the inmate population. It is important to provide adequate daily nutrition and proper diets in order to maintain healthy inmate populations. To help us achieve these objectives, our Professional Partner Members are continuously working to come up with products that we can use for our menu selections to comply with the requirements.

With these requirements, menus must be approved by a registered dietician. We are seeing more dietitians in the Correctional Food Service Industry and count them among our membership. The dietitians in corrections have a network to share professional ideas and nutritional information among their practice group. This network is expanding.

What current challenges does the Correctional Food Service Industry face?

The religious diets are always a challenge for Correctional Food Service Professionals. Since the adoption of the Religious Land Use and Institutional Persons Act (RLUIPA), an inmate who has sincere beliefs of a certain religion is entitled to observe the religious diet. Because the inmates have this right, correctional professionals must provide the foods that are appropriate to those religious diets, such as Kosher, Halal, vegetarian diets, etc.

Since all levels of the government are operating with reduced budgets, food services operations are expected to do more with less. In the Correctional Food Service Industry, meals are provided to the inmates free of charge. Rising food costs require our operators to design menus that will meet budgetary demands as well as comply with nutritional guidelines and requirements. Regardless, we will never compromise food safety.

What is the one key take-away you have from your Presidency at ACFSA?

During my presidency, diversity of membership and growth will be the key take away. ACFSA has created a Region 5 which covers our members in Canada, and we have started the student membership to include students from Dietetic or Culinary Arts training in colleges and universities. There is still a long way to go, but I am proud of my contributions to membership during my term.

Benson Li, CCFP | Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department | President | Association of Correctional Food Service Affiliates

SFM INSIGHT: PAST PRESIDENT RUSS BENSON, FMP



What was your role/position during your Presidency (2005 – 2006) and what are you doing now?

Leading up to my Presidency, I was a senior member of a client liaison team for 10 years for a large credit card company. Since then, I have been primarily with Food for Thought Enterprises leading our contract foodservice division. We are based in Chicago.

Your favorite memory of SFM?

There are many memories – many of which can’t be printed! But certainly my favorite memory was kicking off the annual conference during my Presidency to a packed house of industry professionals – a humbling experience to say the least. And of course, there are many memories with all the friends I’ve made within the SFM family.

Looking back on your Presidency, is there anything you would have done differently?

My Presidency, like many others, had many challenges. At the time, we were seeing a significant shift in the role of the client liaison – our core member. We should have seen that coming and reacted a little quicker to retain and grow membership.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the B&I industry today?

As always, the labor market is the biggest challenge. I am very engaged with recruiting staff from my alma mater, Johnson & Wales, as well as local Chicago culinary and hospitality schools. I have seen success with bringing in new professionals and providing them with the education they need to grow within our company.

What advice do you have to future Presidents of SFM?

Future President’s should be adaptable to the current and ever changing business landscape. Always remember that SFM members (our Customers!) have evolving roles and need to rely on SFM to educate them and give them the tools to be successful in their jobs.

Russ Benson, FMP | Vice President, Hospitality Group | Food For Thought Enterprises

UPCOMING EVENTS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Thursday, September 11–13, 2012
Caesars Palace - Las Vegas

DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP SERIES WEBINAR IV

Tuesday, October 2, 2012