

A Taste of the Cake™

Volume Twenty

Spring 2007

Faces Of Excellence

What does Commitment to Excellence look like? Look no further than this newsletter, where we honor our 2006 Commitment to Excellence award recipients. Inside you'll get a chance to meet each of them and see how they bring excellence to our Company, staff and guests every day.



The Best Job In The Company

By Pat O'Neill-Guest Services Manager

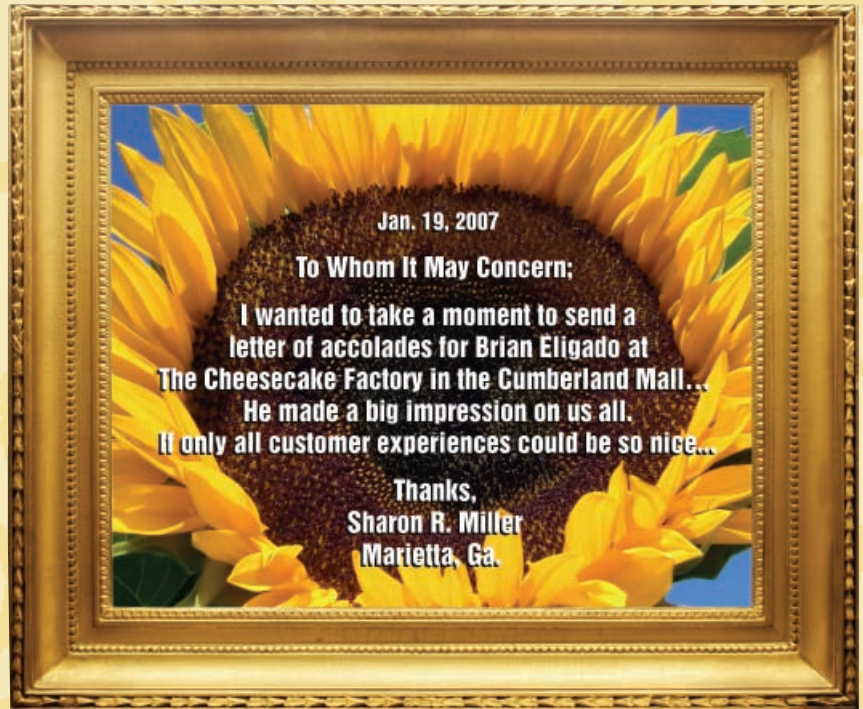
If you think that working in our corporate Guest Services Department means dealing with unhappy people all day, think again. In fact, our staff members may just have the best job in the Company.

In 2006, Guest Services heard from approximately 55,000 guests—and a whopping 51 percent of those guests contacted us because they love us! They praise the beauty of our restaurants, the quality of our food and most often, our staff and management.

This kind of loyalty does not come by accident. The reason that they love us is YOU. Below are just a few examples:

- Christina Edwards sent a letter and photo about the wonderful birthday celebration our Pittsburgh staff put together for her mother.
- Bryan Barker, a restaurant manager for another company who did not have a perfect first visit, gave us another try. His server was **Frank Burgos** in Dayton, Ohio. Bryan wrote, "If I could find staff like that, I don't think I would have a lot to worry about."
- Sharon Miller, a Cumberland guest wrote, "Eleven of my co-workers and myself came in for lunch, and **Brian Eligado** was our waiter. He was courteous, upbeat, polite and carried a permanent smile. The service that he gave was better than any I've received at \$50-plus-per-entree restaurants."

Sometimes you are heroes, but most often you are ordinary people providing extraordinary service. So the next time you visit the Corporate Center, stop by the Guest Services department and take a look at the display of letters from our guests who are PLEASEd—and see for yourself why we have the best job in the Company! An excerpt from one of the letters on display in the Corporate Center is shown above.



Committed To Opportunity & Development

By Wayne Jones and David Gordon-RVPs

What do the individuals in this photo have in common? All of them were once hourly staff members, and through their skills and talents, all of them have launched careers as managers at The Cheesecake Factory in Southern California!



AKOMs **Dave Garbowski** and **Scott Weaver**, and ADOs **Heather Berry**, **Erik Sturdivant** and **Scott Thomas**, recently gathered all of these individuals at the Corporate Center for a day of development. Through their excellent preparation and presentation skills, the day was a huge success. Great work by the So Cal ADO/AKOM teams! The most exciting aspect of this day was to see so many of our best and brightest leaders of the future assembled in one place. Of the 97 managers who had the opportunity to attend, 57 were present for the development workshop. We'd like to thank the other 40 who remained and kept our operations running smoothly. Our future here at The Cheesecake Factory is in good hands.

Faces Of Excellence

More Award Winners
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Paul Amendt - Server, The Cheesecake Factory, The Grove, Calif.

Paul has been a team player for more than 16 years and has been instrumental in guiding the newer servers through experiences such as new menu changes. After all, he has done 33 of them! This is no small feat, and Paul was trained by the best: former Executive VP **Linda Candiotti**. He also was instrumental in the first non-California opening of a Cheesecake Factory, in Washington State and designed the first opening trainer T-shirt.

Paul had worked his entire career in one restaurant (Marina del Rey) until he transferred to The Grove in March 2005. Those of us who have spent time on "The Rock" know that 15 years in the Marina is like 30 years at a less busy restaurant. Paul also has tutored some very special people in the Company, including **Peter D'Amelio, Rick Anderson, Gary Cottrell, Robert Faulkner, David Gordon, Frank Harris, Wayne Jones, Eric Kaplan, Erik Sturdivant** and **Scott Thomas**. Nice job, Paul!



Candelario Guevara - Kitchen Manager, The Cheesecake Factory, Las Vegas, Nev.

Although Candelario does not work directly with our guests, they are never out of his focus. Every day, he motivates his team, and his mere presence dictates that we will have great food quality while maintaining an intense focus of absolute guest satisfaction.

Candelario goes above and beyond to please guests with whatever special requests they may have. He can remember a retired recipe, such as Caesar Salad Pasta, and reproduce it for a guest who happens to love that dish. He is always there to answer questions about a recipe or ingredients, and he takes time to educate the staff so they can better serve our guests.

The best word to describe him: positive. The cooks who work with him have fun and smile and laugh, as if being crazy-busy is a walk in the park! The line cooks have enormous respect for Candelario. He is fun, professional and definitely the go-to manager.

Nathan Epple - Steward, The Cheesecake Factory, Chesterfield, Mo.

Nate is the kind of steward that you dream about. Whether it's his passion for correct product specifications with purveyors or his attention to detail for "like new" grocery-store-style organization, he never misses a beat. He is the kind of person who returns from a day off and immediately heads to a POS to dig into the possibilities of 86'd/out-of-stock items.

He holds himself personally accountable for any shortages that may affect the guests, and he finds a way to make sure they don't happen again.

The depth of knowledge Nate lends to day-to-day operations is immense and continues to grow. He mentors those around him and treats the entire operation as his workgroup. He spends extra time with the team to ensure that their impact inside the restaurant is aligned with his processes. If it's not the correct spec or is disorganized or unsystematic, he won't rest until the process is perfect.



Blanche Hartner - OST, The Cheesecake Factory, Edison, N.J.

When it comes to taking care of our guests, most people typically think of the staff on the floor. But at The Cheesecake Factory in Edison, Blanche takes exceptional care of the guests even before they step foot in the building.

Blanche has a huge presence with the staff members who take care of our guests. She has mentored many servers and bakers as they struggled to cope with a tough guest experience. Staff members often seek her out for advice on how to better enhance their guests' experience.

Blanche is Edison's very own "team mom." She has been a compassionate listener, a shoulder to cry on and the giver-of-advice to every staff member. She is genuine, honest, sympathetic and fair. Whether it's ensuring they have received their Shoes for Crews™ or keeping a supply of Band-Aids on hand, Blanche makes sure that everyone is taken care of.



Stacey Green - Baker/Cashier, The Cheesecake Factory, Dadeland, Fla.

In her 12 years of working as a Baker and Cashier at The Cheesecake Factory, Stacey has participated in 42 new restaurant openings. That means that 42 of our restaurants have been molded and influenced by Stacey's passion and dynamic personality. At her home store in Dadeland, Stacey has received countless perfect shopper scores. She also has a loyal following of guests, many of whom greet her with hugs and ask for her when placing to-go orders.

Stacey's energy and spirit are contagious. She is constantly helping others. Her nickname is "Sugar," due to the fact that she brings numerous baked goods from home for the staff. She is always in a training mindset, constantly giving support to new staff members while showing patience and caring. When other staff members have called out sick, she is the first to offer help. In a nutshell, she is always happy to help!



Faces Of Excellence



Jason Hicks - Finance Group, Corporate Center, Calabasas, Calif.

Jason may work behind the scenes in the Corporate Center Finance Department, but he is front and center when it comes to making a difference in our restaurants. He has tremendous knowledge of the operations and key performance metrics, and he uses his expertise to help our operations leadership team continue to manage the most productive restaurants in the industry.

After beginning his tenure as a contract employee in Human Resources, Jason has progressed into a keystone role within the planning function. He's constantly balancing the needs of both our senior executives here in Calabasas and the area directors and general managers in the field. Jason is known for his savvy, core-issue problem resolution to any and all fiscal issues and for his unmatched technical abilities. Above all, he realizes that by making the operators' jobs more effective and efficient, he will create a better dining experience for our guests.

Hector Armando Garcia Hernandez - Line Cook, The Cheesecake Factory, White Flint, Md.

A staff member for 15 years, Hector is a leader in the kitchen and in the entire restaurant. Team members feel comfortable going to him with questions about a recipe or a procedure. His knowledge is so deep that the managers are honored to have Hector participate in Food Reviews. If the recipe is not perfect, Hector insists on making the dish again, side-by-side, with the line cook and the front-of-house manager. He teaches with a method that encourages the staff to do it the right way.

Hector builds relationships with the other line cooks by helping and supporting them. He will often appear in a station right before the expediter calls for help; he consistently manages to be in the right place at the right time. Sometimes he helps out by restocking and by coaching the staff, as well. Hector has a "no problem" attitude that is contagious to the rest of the staff. He is a team player in every way.



James Jackson - Front Desk, The Cheesecake Factory, Atlanta, Ga.

Unwavering passion best describes the approach James brings to every shift. He is all eyes and ears when it comes to delivering phenomenal service, and he'll immediately notice if a guest is a little grumpy or impatient. He then springs into action with a solution, such as offering bread or a baby plate to a famished guest. James is also a master at seeing the entire floor and maximizing seating to reduce the wait time.

James keeps a constant eye on all of the servers on the floor, always looking for anyone who may need assistance. Not only will he alert management to possible situations, he often will be the one to help resolve them. This eye for detail also extends to the bakery, where James makes sure the cakes are coming out correctly and quickly. Whenever he is at the front desk, it's like having another manager on the floor.

Yanni Kehagiaras - Bartender, The Cheesecake Factory, San Francisco, Calif.

Yanni has been with the Company for five years, and his knowledge of the "bar culture" is amazing. He knows everything about the bar business and its history and enjoys sharing that knowledge with all of his guests. The guests can truly appreciate a delicious drink in the San Francisco bar because Yanni has trained all of the bartenders and makes all of the bases for every drink—with high standards and attention to detail. He refuses to serve anything that does not fit The Cheesecake Factory's quality standards.

Yanni has been there for every workgroup in the restaurant, and he consistently puts the needs of others before all else. He is the perfect example of a team player.



Jeff Nemet - Front-of-House Manager, The Cheesecake Factory, Perimeter, Atlanta, Ga.

Jeff came to us with the ability to teach, develop and mentor talent, and he has a complete understanding of "Service Mindedness." He also has the ability to win the hearts of guests every evening, and he has become friends with many of them. They ask for him at the desk and bring him gifts during the holidays.

Jeff has done wonderful things leading the bakery workgroup. He teaches his team members how to read the Item Trends Report and how to establish pars. He also helps them determine top 10 items and ways to serve the freshest cakes. Jeff is a strong believer in getting as many team members as possible involved in the decision-making. This has created incredible loyalty from the staff and has established a bakery team that rivals any in the Company. Jeff has done such a great job that he has since been promoted to the GM for Brandon, Fla.!



Arelis Osorio - Busser, The Cheesecake Factory, Orlando, Fla.

Since beginning her Cheesecake Factory career in 2000 at the Chestnut Hill restaurant, Arelis has never called in sick or worked a shift at half-speed. When she walks in the door, every person in the restaurant watches for her to set the pace. She has made the bussing position one of the most influential positions in our restaurant. Servers have commented that they will go so far as to switch stations just to be in her dining room.

Arelis is unwavering in her commitment to perfection. She responds to guests' needs with compassion and timeliness and always has a smile on her face. She also has forged the way for all workgroups to achieve improved work methods, a greater obligation to excellence and a better understanding of what their hard work can achieve for them. Her inspiration is felt restaurant-wide, and she truly embodies The Cheesecake Factory's commitment to "Do the Right Thing."



**Erin Pallaise -
Lead Trainer,
The Cheesecake Factory,
Cleveland, Ohio**

Erin is one of the best leaders we have at The Cheesecake Factory. She began by building a foundation of trust with her management team and peers, and she makes everyone feel like they are part of our Cheesecake family. This kind and caring attitude shines through her daily interactions.

Erin treats all guests as though they were members of her own family and works relentlessly at making their experience perfect. This includes celebrating special occasions, such as staff achievements and guest birthdays, engagements and anniversaries. By perfectly executing our systems on a daily basis—from the precise way to cut bread to the importance of pre-prepping a table—she affects each guest experience.

Dedicated to constantly improving The Cheesecake Factory in Cleveland, Erin brings a sense of ownership and personal commitment to her work and the people around her. Each guest who comes through the door is touched by her kindness.



**Lisa Rowe -
Expediter,
The Cheesecake Factory,
Cincinnati, Ohio**

Lisa wears many hats in our restaurant and initially was selected as part of our opening server team in 2004. Very early on, she exhibited high energy and a true dedication to making a positive difference with the guests and staff. These characteristics, coupled with her prior experience, made Lisa the obvious choice for Cincinnati's first expediter.

She distinguishes herself as a leader by ensuring that she and everyone around her are passionately committed to our Company's standards. Always the last line of defense, Lisa holds staff and managers accountable to make sure every dish leaves the kitchen a perfect 10.

When faced with moments of truth, without fail, Lisa chooses the difficult "right" versus the more comfortable "wrong." Whether it is communicating or coaching a food call with a line cook or being a safe haven for other staff members, everyone gravitates toward Lisa because of her uncompromising values and character.



**Vanessa Rodriguez -
Prep Cook,
The Cheesecake Factory,
Chandler, Ariz.**

Vanessa joined The Cheesecake Factory in 2001, learning all prep areas in the kitchen. With her strong leadership skills, she began to train other staff members. In 2004 she became part of the opening team and participated in many of our new restaurant openings. It didn't take long before she was in high demand.

She is unbelievably spirited and motivating in every aspect of her job as the Designated Trainer for the prep kitchen. Her "giddy up" attitude is unmatched at openings. Her energy to do the job right is contagious, and she is the heart, pulse and standard-bearer of prep kitchen operations.

Vanessa truly embodies what The Cheesecake Factory's mission, vision and values represent. She strives to do the right thing not because you tell her to, but because of her own personal standards. Her attention to detail, passion for excellence and get-it-done attitude are what make our Company great.



**Francisco Torres -
Dishwasher/Cleaner,
The Grand Lux Cafe,
Sawgrass Mills, Fla.**

It's hard to say whether it's Francisco's incredible speed and productivity as a dishwasher or his determination and heart that make him a leader in the realm of the guest experience. He does whatever it takes to ensure that the dish room supplies all areas of the restaurant with the tools they need to serve the guest.

Francisco has an inherent understanding of how his job affects everyone in the restaurant—from fellow staff members to the guests. He embodies all of our values in his words, actions and heart. In the midst of the busiest shift, Francisco can be seen smiling from ear to ear and motivating his dish team to dig in and get the job done.


How does he do it? "I was born happy," he explained. "I love my job and the people I work with. They are like my family, and I enjoy helping out however I can."



Angels In Burlington

By Amy Grebe-Manager and Lead Trainer, Burlington, Mass.

The staff members at The Cheesecake Factory in Burlington Mass., are always looking for ways to externalize their Commitment to Excellence—not only in their restaurant, but in their community as well. This past December, the team demonstrated that commitment by helping more than 75 local children in need enjoy a very special holiday season.



It all started when General Manager **Mike Winthrop** heard that the Salvation Army was looking for kind and generous people to sponsor children through its “Angel Tree” program, which helps low-income families have a brighter holiday. Mike knew that the Burlington staff would love to take part, and ADO **Mark Swauger** and Lead Trainer **Amy Grebe** got together and helped make it happen.

Through the program, 78 Burlington staff members each “adopted” a child and presented that child with a gift of their choice. The team in Burlington feels passionate about its values, and this was a great way to celebrate the true meaning of the holiday season and to embrace what The Cheesecake Factory is all about.

They may not have halos, but they're angels just the same! Burlington team members share holiday treasures with children from the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program this past December.



Meet Our Youngest GM

By John Kulacki-GM, GLC Aventura

As the youngest GM in Cheesecake Factory history at age 25, **Justin Murakami** began his career with the Company as a front desk staff member at the opening of the Irvine location. Very young and with little restaurant experience, but with a huge heart and drive, he quickly mastered the front desk, became a designated trainer and moved on to become one of the restaurant's best expeditors ever.



Justin moved on to Mission Viejo, where he stood out in many positions and was a role model for the rest of the staff. His natural leadership ability, commitment to the company and his strong knowledge of computers landed him a leadership role in the “Techno Tools” project rollout in 2000. He traveled for six months where he and his team installed ProHost and POSitouch® systems in many of our restaurants across the country.

In 2001, Justin helped open The Grand Lux Cafe concept at The Beverly Center. Two significant life changing events happened at that opening: He became a Manager and met his wife of six years, Antoinette. Since then, Justin has helped build the Grand Lux brand in Chicago, worked his way into senior management at the Grand Lux Las Vegas and was promoted to AGM in Dallas.

With the ink still damp on his AGM paperwork, Justin got the call in August 2006 to become the General Manager at The Beverly Center Grand Lux. Congratulations, Justin, on becoming our Company's youngest GM!

Rising To The Challenge

By Tonia Terrell-Lead Trainer and Mindy Tolle-Server, Louisville, Ky.

The “Passion for Excellence,” hospitality and great service of our GM **Bill Lockhart** and our EKM **Stephen Auer**, has become contagious in the Louisville restaurant. In September 2006, Bill issued a challenge for the entire staff: If we achieved an overall CTS score of 98 percent or higher for an entire month, he would dress in whites and work a shift as a server. Stephen stepped up as well, and said he would spend an entire shift bussing tables.

This challenge started the ball rolling for what became the most successful CTS quarter our restaurant had ever seen. When December rolled around, Bill and Stephen began to get nervous. The next thing we knew, we had done it. Not only did we reach the 98 percent goal, we had the highest CTS scores for the month in the entire company!

On Jan. 25, Bill and Stephen kept their word and worked an entire shift in their alternate roles. Server-DT **Erin Clephas** had been planning to run in a marathon to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and had asked Bill for a donation. So Bill contributed his entire day's tips—\$102—to this cause.

Several staff members and managers came in to dine in Bill's section. He also had received a letter from a local elementary school, asking if the restaurant could help reward four students who had excelled academically. At Bill's invitation, they dined in his section and the kids thought it was really cool that “the boss was waiting on them personally.” Meanwhile, Stephen worked a full busser shift, apron and all.

Words can't say how much we appreciate the dedication that our management team puts into the staff and our restaurant. Bill and Stephen inspired the staff with their dedication so much that now, AGM **Alonso Rodriguez** and Senior Manager **Stephen West** have put forth the same challenge for the next quarter. We're ready for it!



GM, Bill Lockhart, humble in his server whites, gracefully accepts defeat in his CTS bet with his staff. He and EKM, Stephen Auer, challenge all Cheesecake Factory and Grand Lux Cafe GMs and EKMs to do the same. CONSIDER THIS AN OFFICIAL CTS THROWDOWN!

Grand Lux 'Family' Man

By Michael Pereira-ADO

In May 1999, Alan Smith was faced with one of the ultimate challenges at The Cheesecake Factory. As Executive Kitchen Manager of the Grand Lux Venetian, Alan was charged with leading a staff of more than 450 people in opening the new restaurant, which featured 150 menu items no one had ever seen before.

He led his team to an extremely successful opening, and after seven years and more than \$150 million in sales, his passion for excellence burns as brightly as ever. This January, he celebrated his 16th anniversary with the Company. Although these facts are impressive, Alan's ability to care for the needs of the staff is by far his greatest strength. He is the embodiment of our PLEASE model.

Alan has created a sense of family in the restaurant through his relationships and his actions. In addition to hosting annual staff and family picnics and holiday parties, he brings in treats for his team on \$100,000 days and flowers for Mother's Day. One of the most moving examples of Alan's willingness to support his team happened this past

December, when a member of the restaurant's cleaning crew was killed while riding his bicycle home one morning. Alan and Senior Manager

Matt Timms took up a collection in the restaurant and worked with the Mexican consulate to have the young man's body returned to his family.

Alan's good deeds have had an incredible impact on retaining his staff members. Not surprisingly, the GLC Venetian ranked fifth in the Company in retention for 2006 (for all restaurants that were open the entire year). We salute Alan for his contributions and accomplishments. Here's to another 16 years!



Grand Lux Cafe Vegas EKM, Alan Smith goes 'Above and Beyond' by roasting a whole pig for his staff members at their Hawaiian-themed holiday party in December 2006. From left to right: Eddie Manukyan-KM, Oscar Martinez-KM, Santa Claus (Juan Cortez-KM) and Alan.

A Slam Dunk For DTs

By Deborah Movrich-Manager and Lead Trainer

Shortly after GM Curt Lommen arrived at the Wauwatosa, Wis., Cheesecake Factory, he began to see just how much his staff members "Do Whatever it Takes." That included sending 10 designated trainers to support the Milwaukee Cheesecake Factory opening on Nov. 2, 2006.

Curt decided to have a special DT outing at a Milwaukee Bucks basketball game in appreciation for all of the hard work his staff had shown for the opening. On Dec. 11, 2006, 40 DTs and managers spent an evening at the game, with Curt arranging for courtside seats while the Bucks warmed up. Photos were taken with retired Milwaukee basketball great, Jon McGlocklin and everyone had a great time watching the Bucks cruise to victory.

After the game, each staff member got the chance to shoot a free throw before taking a group photo at center court. "I had a great time," said DT Juan Ramirez. "It shows the Company really appreciates us."



Wauwatosa designated trainers and managers pose courtside with former Bucks guard Jon McGlocklin during their "thanks-for-the-great-work" DT outing.

Strawberry Shoes Forever

Inspired by our Fresh Strawberry Cheesecake, San Diego Manager Rachel Cohen designed and created these delightful shoes as a gift to CEO David Overton. The shoes were her way of saying, "Thank you for allowing me to be a part of the Cheesecake family and making it a great place to work!"

Just before the 2006 holidays, The Cheesecake Factory restaurants were added to the Hertz NeverLost® navigation system database. We were recently told that The Cheesecake Factory is one of the top five restaurants searched for in their system. Since Hertz is "the world's No. 1 rental car company" the GPS satellites must be very busy directing a lot of cars to our restaurants!



Bake Comments

Mail your comments and articles to:
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Macaroni & Cheese

A Taste of the Cake™

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