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Class planned for 'front line' Employees key for tourism

A hospitality seminar to educate "front line" employees on the importance of selling the area to tourists is scheduled for Wednesday.

It is being sponsored by the Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Sandy Business Association and is titled, "Hospitality '86: How to Make a Profit from Tourism."

"Front line employees can make a difference," said Steve Morris, executive director of the Greater Portland Convention and Visitors Association. GPCVA is expected to have a speaker at the seminar.

Morris said tourism generates about \$1.3 billion annually in the Portland metropolitan area, and provides about 30,000 jobs. Tourism generates about \$120 million annually in Clackamas County, and provides about 3,000 jobs.

Morris said Mount Hood and Clackamas County are important in selling Portland as a convention site.

The general election vote for a convention center in Portland should boost the area's economy, increasing sales in the metropolitan area by \$135 million, Morris said.

Morris said employees are an area's "ambassadors" and influence the quality of a visitor's stay. "A satisfied customer is the best salesman for Oregon," Morris said.

Keith Petrie, executive director of the Mount Hood Recreation Association, is among the speakers scheduled to make presentations at the seminar. He said waitresses, service station attendants and other front line employees are essential to the well being of the tourism industry.

"It's the people in the service industry who get asked the questions," Petrie said.

With that in mind, he plans to tell them about the opportunities for recreation locally. Those activities include trail bike riding, wind surfing and climbing. Skiing remains the top winter activity.

Some people will want to see Mount Hood from their cars, and therefore Petrie wants front line employees to know about the Mount Hood loop drive.

While many front line jobs pay minimum wage, Petrie pointed out that clever people will always find ways to get ahead. He cited as an example a ski instructor he knew in the Aleutian Mountain Range in Alaska who spoke Japanese. "He was probably as well paid as the general manager," Petrie said.

Petrie said the Mount Hood Recreation Association has found that much of its ski trade comes from the I-5 corridor leading to, and including, Seattle. They are putting together ski packages with airlines serving California, and hope additional flights from Portland to Tokyo will increase Japanese visits to Mount Hood.

Petrie said the language barrier is not as difficult to overcome as one would think. Last summer he observed Japanese youngsters learning to ride the Alpine Slide at Mirror Mountain. The Mirror Mountain employees were patient and courteous, Petrie said. "It seems to work out," Petrie said. "They were all having fun."

The Nov. 19 seminar is open to both employers and employees. One session will be held from 10 a.m. to noon, the other from 7 to 9 p.m. There is no charge. For registration or more information, call 668-4006.



Photo by Scott Newton

The ski season is here

The cross country ski season has already opened for Joe Morawski, left, and Bob Banks, both of Portland, who were at Timberline Lodge Saturday getting a feel for the new snow.

Morawski, Banks and "guide" Betsy Newcomb planned to set camp in the snow that night.

Oregon's top chef

Leif Benson never dreads going to work

by SCOTT NEWTON

A person does not normally drive to a ski resort for dinner.

Leif Eric Benson, certified executive chef at Timberline Lodge, is aware of that. And there is nothing more satisfying to him than to surprise a guest at the end of the day with a good meal.

They may come for the skiing, or to stay in the nearly 50-year-old alpine lodge, but it is the gourmet meal served at the 6,000-foot level of Mount Hood that Benson wants them to remember.

Benson doesn't like the word "gourmet." He feels it is pretentious. Whatever word one uses to describe the meals served in the Cascade Dining Room, one thing is clear: Benson has been successful in developing the restaurant.

He is the youngest president of the second-oldest chefs society in the United States, and he may be the youngest recipient of the group's chef of the year award.

The Chefs de Cuisine Society of Oregon is a chapter of the American Culinary Federation, which is affiliated with the World Association of Chefs Societies. Benson's rating as certified executive chef is recognized around

the globe.

John O'Neill, general manager at Timberline Lodge for two years, said the food served in the Cascade Dining Room may be their most important resource.

To Benson, it only makes sense that Timberline should have a world-class restaurant. One may dine in a lodge with unmatched stone and beam construction, a fire in the fireplace and, perhaps, a snowstorm out the window.

"It's a unique setting. The food should be unique," Benson said.

Benson said their focus is to serve regional cuisine with a continental flair. The chefs society has discussed the issue of leadership in the restaurant business. "We decided we have enough talent here in Oregon to be trendsetters," Benson said.

Not only does he believe there is the talent to handle that order, but also the natural resources. He buys his produce locally, and has nothing but praise for Oregon berries and lamb. The seafood is fresh, and the pinot wines are among the best in the world, he said.

Benson began working at Timberline in February 1979. He considers the Richard L.



Leif Eric Benson

Kohnstamm Corporation to be progressive. The company has continued to grow, improving the physical facility and increasing its scope.

For those reasons, among others, Benson has decided to stay at Timberline. He recently turned down an offer to manage a restaurant in St. John, the Virgin Islands. One benefit would have been an increase in salary.

Benson said there are certain

things he enjoys about working at Timberline. One of them — believe it or not — is the challenge of driving a winding, snow-covered road to work.

More importantly, he has been allowed to build a kitchen staff that is "innovative and creative."

He has a kitchen staff of about 20 people, and there are about 80 people in food service at the Lodge and the Wy'east Day Lodge. The kitchen staff includes about eight graduates of the Western Culinary Institute in Portland.

Benson encourages an atmosphere of experimentation. "It is a risk," he said, adding "We do regulate it." Experiments are not just thrust upon the public.

There have been some pleasant surprises, though. The chilled bisque of Chehalis cranberries with hazelnuts — served only once — has probably never been duplicated. Benson can picture someone trying to describe it to the maitre d' at another restaurant, and can imagine the maitre d's puzzled look.

A recipe is a guideline, he believes, not an exact set of instructions. "You cook with your taste buds, your senses, your vision."

At a baroque music festival, they designed a menu featuring French, German and Italian food, taking into account the mood of the music as well as the food of the era (the 17th century). James DePreist, conductor of the Oregon Symphony, gave a history of the music. Tom Anderson, food and beverage manager at Timberline, discussed the wine selection, and Benson told about the meal.

"I like those kinds of challenges. We're up here 6,000 feet in the snow; what can we do up here?"

They have also designed meals around wine selections for vintners in Oregon. Traditionally, one recommends a wine for a meal instead of the other way around.

One gets the impression Benson is prepared to take on just about any assignment. "There's not a day when I drive up here that I dread what I do. I'm still excited about my job."

Contract talks stall for teachers, board

Teachers and board members in the Sandy Elementary District are awaiting the outcome of a fact-finders report before resuming contract negotiations.

The report is due about the first of December. Teachers have been working since June 30 under the terms of last year's contract.

If the teachers or the board reject the fact-finders report, there is a possibility of a strike, according to Rex Hunsaker, superintendent. If both sides agree with the report, there will probably be a settlement.

Miriam Mann, president of the Sandy Elementary Teachers Association, said there are several steps to go through before teachers resort to a strike. After the fact-finders report is given, both sides have five days to accept or reject it. Then there is a 30-day cooling off period, during which time negotiators can go back to the bargaining table, Mann said.

The fact finder heard testimony from both sides on Nov. 3. He will issue a ruling on each issue, Hunsaker said.

Hunsaker said there are some disagreements over "contract language," but he feels if they can reach an agreement on the financial package — salaries and benefits — they will be able to reach a settlement.

Mann said she agreed with Hunsaker's assessment of the situation. Both Hunsaker and Mann said they would prefer not to discuss specifics of the negotiations until at least after the fact-finders report.

A first-year teacher in the Sandy Elementary District with a bachelor's degree earns \$15,974. The top of the salary schedule is \$28,914 for a teacher with 15 years of experience, a master's degree and 45 hours toward his doctorate.

Spence wins squeaker for City Council seat

Morton Spence, former newspaper publisher and a part-time instructor at Mt. Hood Community College, won a close City Council race over Mike Murray in the general election.

Spence received 406 votes to 399 for Murray. Richard Barton received 200 votes in that race.

Murray, a driver-engineer for the Boring Fire District, has been a member of the city of Sandy's budget committee for the past two years. Spence is currently president of the Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce.

Spence, who returned earlier this week from a League of Oregon Cities convention in Eugene — which he attended with other city councilors —

said a topic there was getting people involved in municipal government. That was one Spence's campaign themes.

"A lot of talented and competent people out there are willing to participate in city government," Spence said. "They would be willing to serve if they had a goal to accomplish and were invited."

Final election results

Unofficial final tabulations from the Clackamas County elections division show the Sandy High School levy passed 3,810 to 3,570. The unification measure failed 4,997 to 2,187.

Two die in auto accident

Two men from Aloha were killed east of Sandy Monday in a one-vehicle, alcohol-related accident, according to Clackamas County law enforcement officials. Both were dead at the scene.

Gary Allen Goodwin, 20, was the driver of the 1978 Volkswagen Rabbit. Brett E. Lords, 16, was the

passenger. They were west bound on Highway 26, just past Langensand Road, when the vehicle went off the road and hit a stump grinder machine at 40475 S.E. Highway 26.

The pavement was dry and they were wearing seat belts, according to the police report.

Chef learned the 'old school' way

Leif Eric Benson was born in Goteborg, Sweden. His father was also a chef, and cooked for the Swedish merchant marine. Of the many ports he visited, he liked the West Coast the best.

Benson's family moved to San Francisco where Benson became a U.S. citizen in the sixth grade. His parents now live in Seaside.

Benson, 33, has been working in the food industry for 20 years. He spent eight years in Mendocino County in California before taking the job at Timberline Lodge.

He considers himself trained in "the old school," and attempts to provide the same experience to

Western Culinary Institute graduates and other cooks at Timberline. Cooks rotate to different areas within the kitchen and are encouraged to experiment.

Benson estimates he has prepared over 500 different menu items during his tenure at Timberline Lodge.

In addition to cooking, a "certified executive chef" must have management skills, understand nutrition and stay within a budget. "You can't just be a good cook," he said. "That won't do it anymore."

If he has a specialty, it is Scan-

dinavian food. However, he feels regional foods have much to recommend them.

Benson's wife, Holly Mulcahey, is national operations director for Check-X-Change. They live in Alder Creek.

He is proud of the Chef de Cuisine Society of Oregon, which has hosted 27 consecutive Governor's Dinners. Most of the older chefs societies are on the East Coast, Benson said.

It was at the Governor's Dinner in October that Benson was presented with the chef of the year award.