

## WHY I LOVE WORKING FOR BMCDS

### Liz LeMay—1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner

I may not be the loudest or most memorable worker in the kitchen. But I am there – helping, prepping, serving and cleaning in probably the most visited place on campus. And I love that the dining hall is my place of work.

Haffner Dining Hall, particularly, has held a special place in my heart since my first visit to Bryn Mawr College. It is where my father and I had our complimentary lunch after a long, impressive tour. We sat raving over the variety, “mostly meatless” tastiness & locally grown apples. I remember that my father had turned to me, grinning, and said “This is the place. This is where you should go to college.” Now I work at Haffner and have for almost a year. The food my other college friends claimed was “only to impress prospective students”, I now help to make every week.

Working for Bryn Mawr College Dining Services was one of the best decisions I made my freshman year. As a new student it was great place to meet other Mawrters. A friendly full-time staff and great managers made the transition into a new job easy. All of these people were helpful & encouraging, patient enough to put up with every initial mistake. The dining hall became a place where I was made to feel that we were all equals and that I was an integral part in a process. I contributed.

Following my last class of the week is my favorite shift, Friday “salad prep”. Busy yet relaxing, I leave smelling of onions and hands stained red from peppers. I always feel accomplished and content.

Sometimes work feels too long. However, I know that I help to make diners happy no matter how grumpy they may be. I understand that class is tough, days are long and you really want grilled cheese immediately. I contribute to that wonderful satisfaction you can only get from a full belly. That same fulfillment that helps a college student’s brain function properly.

I couldn’t be prouder to bring guests to Bryn Mawr’s dining hall, whether they are other college friends or my grandparents during “Family Weekend”. I love to boast that I helped to make the meal they are enjoying.

The majority of my guest passes have been used by my closest friend from home. He once told me he believes the reason our dining halls are phenomenal is because the majority of the workers are students of the college who truly care. I know I care. I know that I want the place where I work to be a place I love to eat.

There is an additional, important subject you can't find listed on Bryn Mawr College’s course guide: Dining Services. Just as I would in a classroom, I have gained experience, learned many skills, participated and interacted with peers and teachers. As both a student and an employee, I love to work for Bryn Mawr College Dining Services.

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### Sarah Lovegren—2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner

It's 6:50 am on a Wednesday morning. For the majority of Wednesdays at 6:50 am, things are very peaceful; the first-years have their routine down pat, the supervisors each have their favorite morning tasks, there is no need for conversation because everyone is still waking up, things are calm. But this particular Wednesday morning at 6:50 am was different. As I arranged the breakfast bar with exactly three fat bars and four skinny bars, I heard a cry for help coming from the juice refrigerator.. and there it was, the sight that I least wanted to see. Red fruit punch was quickly forming a pool around my worker. Clearly, at 6:50 am, I was thrilled to start my day by mopping up what could easily be mistaken as a crime scene.

This situation sounds absolutely horrible and to be honest, even though I put on my happy face, it wasn't terribly fun to clean up either. Yet, the events that followed were the perfect example of why I love working for dining services. Even though only one person could be identified as the cause of the spill, everyone was ready to pitch in so no one had to feel embarrassed. No one was bitter, and no one had an attitude. While cleaning up the spill, we were all laughing and joking about what a hassle it was to clean up and how glad we were that we happened to put on sweatpants that morning rather than jeans (which would have made the hands-and-knees clean up far more uncomfortable). This experience was not one that turned me away from Bryn Mawr College Dining Services, rather the group experience made me love it all the more.

This example defines BMCDS for me: it is chill, but efficient. Or, to be more accurate, *we* are chill, but efficient. *We* don't allow the little things to stop us from performing our job well. *We* support each other when things feel hopeless.. in the dining hall, in academia, in life. *We* get each other. *We* truly are a community. *We* are a dedicated group of people who understand that dining services is not a job to take lightly. *We* know the value of our positions and can empathize with one another when our job is under-appreciated. *We* don't have to stick together, but we do, which speaks so highly to the community we have created.

*We* are BMCDS. The many, the proud, the backbone of Bryn Mawr. That is why I love working for Bryn Mawr College Dining Services.

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### Mine Serizawa—3<sup>rd</sup> Place Winner

To be a rising senior working at one of Bryn Mawr's dining halls is a status whose reception by the community at large may be flavored with mild censure or disbelief, at the very least—an incredulous “still?” silently interpolated somewhere within the phrase. I am a rising senior working—yes, still—at Haffner Dining Hall, where I've been employed since my very first week at college, having newly arrived in the country from Japan and dizzied still by the prospect of my first-ever job, first time ever sharing my room much less with someone not related to me by blood, and by the heat of late August.

It is somewhat expected that after an unavoidable initial training period and immersion in the pizza-and-soup aroma of our dining halls we clamber on up the ladder of success to employment at one of the libraries, at the gym, or in various offices on campus. But contrary to what this spatial logic of ‘working your way up’ might suggest (have I grown up and out of the friendships I have found there? —never), Haffner work is not grunt work. It is a work of patience, diligence, alertness, experience, respect, and as anyone on the four-hour closing shifts can attest to, one that is unexpectedly physically demanding. It means riding out the swells of noonday inactivity, as well as those rushes that arrive punctually at six pm; and when they do not arrive, or when they arrive earlier, to welcome the characteristic tug and flux of a dining hall.

I love this seasoning of constancy with unpredictability. I like the last-minute contingency plans (are we out of rice? What to put out instead? Will the kitchen crew arrive miraculously at the last minute with fresh, steaming pans?), and the solidarity shown to one unexpectedly overworked student by their co-workers. This aspect, what I crudely think of as ‘the human element’, is possible only on such a large and peculiarly attuned scale at the Bryn Mawr dining halls, where academics for once is not the common denominator separating out and holding students in their usual day-to-day factions. It is something more basic—the need for company, for food, for shared pleasure, suspension and peace from the outside. Yes—I still work at Haffner. And in various permutations: I work for Haffner. I work at Haffner for the student community. I have learned how Haffner works—how it performs at once the labor of technical operations from stockroom to kitchen to cold storage to freezer to dessert bar to checker's stand to recycling, and that of the family, the supplier, the facilitator, the site of celebration. And in this sense, too: it is successful; it is enduring; it works.