

Facilitator — February/March 2014



CRFP Spotlight

Maria Johnson

What other restaurant companies have you worked for prior to your current position?

My restaurant facilities experience started with Main Street and Main in 1994. At that time, Main Street was the largest franchisee for the TGIFriday's restaurants. They also owned other brands like Redfish and Bamboo Club. They were purchased by the Briad Group in 2006 and are now Briad Main Street Inc.

After spending so much time in restaurants, do you cook? If so, what is your best dish?

I love to cook. I do not have one dish that I can say is my best, but I have food sensitivities to gluten, milk and eggs, and I have had to change my eating habits over the years. I have found delicious gluten free vegan recipes. I know that does not sound appealing, but you would never know they did not have those ingredients once you taste my creations. I have had to learn how to be creative with different ingredients, so it comes out delicious.

What was your first car?

The first car I drove once I got my driver's license was my dad's Chevy pickup truck that had a camper on it—we lived on a farm. It was not cool to drive it to school and be seen in it. When I was able to afford to buy a car, I purchased an '88 Chevy Nova. My dad was a Chevy guy, and he wanted us to drive a Chevy car. I broke the cycle two years later and purchased

what I really wanted: a red Toyota two-door Celica. What is your all-time favorite movie?

There is not one movie that is my all-time favorite. I like several movies, but when it comes to girly movies, my favorite movies are "Beaches" and "Working Girl." I also like silly movies too like "Dumb and Dumber" and "Step Brothers." "I'm not going to call him Dad. Ever! Even if there's a fire."

What is the most challenging situation you've ever faced in a facility or on the job? How did you handle it?

I cannot think of a day that is not challenging as a facility professional. Water heaters and exhaust fans go down, and refrigeration temperatures not meeting code can happen anytime.

Every day is different, and you have to be ready for any disaster that can happen. I think that is why I love my job: the challenge of trying to solve a problem as fast as you can, with the least amount of interruption to the restaurant and at a reasonable cost.

If you weren't a restaurant facility professional, what you would be?

I love everything about fashion and would probably be doing something in that field. I love getting a great deal when I shop and putting outfits together. I have been told several times that I look fashionable even when I visit the stores in my jeans and work boots. Maybe I should start a facilities professional clothing line—just kidding.

What was your very first job?

My first job was a telemarketer. Yes, I was one of those annoying people who called during dinner to sell something. I was a telemarketer for three years.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Always go for the goals that you are scared to do.

To what would you attribute your success in achieving your CRFP?

My achievement of the CRFP is due to my 20 years of working as a restaurant facilities professional. My experience with achieving my CRFP is a little different than most because I was part of the item writing committee. It was a very difficult and time-consuming process. We were given a partner and several sections to focus on. We had weekly conference calls and a lot of discussions on what the questions and the answers should be. It was a great experience.

Would you recommend attaining a CRFP to other colleagues? Why?

Definitely. Attaining the CRFP will open your mind to what areas you need to focus on, and it gets you noticed for having achieved something that not all facilities professionals have done.

What has been the most significant change in the restaurant industry, and how has it affected your job?

There are so many changes that have happened over the years and happen often in the restaurant industry, so you have to stay on top of the changes. The most current we recently launched at our company is using facilities management software to create and track your service calls. Now we have a tool that will help us better support Operations.

What do you do for fun in your spare time?

What I enjoy the most is spending time with the people I love: my boyfriend and my family. I travel with them to different places or within our home state and check out the local tourist's attractions and fabulous food. Life is so short and spending time with your loved ones is so important, so you can cherish the times you spend together before we all leave this life.

What's the one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you?

I think the one thing most people would be surprised to learn about me is that I was born in Venezuela. My dad is from Portugal, and my mom is from Venezuela. We moved to the United States when I was 3 years old. I speak three languages: Spanish, Portuguese and English. Sometimes I do not speak them all correctly. That's what happens when you mesh three languages together in a household.