

CRFP Spotlight

Jack McNertney

What other restaurant companies have you worked for prior to your current position? I started in the business when I was 14. My uncle owned a restaurant in Pittsburgh, and I worked there through college. I did everything from being a busboy, dishwasher, short-order cook, to prepping salads and working in the bakery and deli. I joined Long John Silvers in 1976 and worked 18 years in operations and another eight years in facilities. Yum! bought LJS, and I worked in facilities, most recently as the Senior Director, before joining Darden five years ago as their Senior Director of Facilities.

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

My wife is a fabulous cook, so I don't have to do much; but I make excellent breakfasts. This dates back to my days at my uncle's restaurant, The Gazebo.

What was your first car?

A 1962 VW Beetle. It was on blocks as much as I drove it. It had Chevy rims, oversized tires, headers, flared fenders and a sunroof. It looked good but ran bad.

What is your all-time favorite movie?

"The Goonies." I watched this 20 times with my kids. They loved it, and it became one of my all-time favorites.

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

I had a restaurant with LJS in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. The site was built on an old landfill. The building was supported by concrete piers and stabilized, but the site around the building continued to sink. It started by simply adding two concrete steps to the rear landing. Before we were done, we had replaced all the plumbing lines, grease trap, underground electric, parking lot and more over a period of eight years.

If you weren't a restaurant facility professional, what would you be? I'd probably be in restaurant operations. I loved the action; just wasn't crazy about all the HR stuff.

What was your very first job? I had two: cutting lawns in the summer and a newspaper route. I did both for several years.

What is the best advice you have ever received? Stephen Covey posed the questions, "Is it in your circle of influence? Is it in your circle of concern?" Learn the difference and worry about what you can control. Too many of us spend time worrying about things we can't control. Instead, focus on areas where you can influence an outcome.

To what would you attribute your success in achieving your CRFP? It seemed like a good challenge, and I believed it might set the pace for our team and others to follow. Our organization strives to provide ongoing developmental opportunities, and this certainly meets that criteria.

Would you recommend attaining a CRFP to your colleagues? Why? Yes. It tests your knowledge, validates your strengths, identifies opportunities and provides a sense of accomplishment. Not many have achieved it, so why not be the next one?

What has been the most significant change in the restaurant industry, and how has it affected your job? Technology drives and expedites our decision-making process and allows us to maintain it via multiple tracking tools. It is the best solution we can provide for our facility managers and enables them to be better business partners for their customers.

What do you do for fun in your spare time? In my younger days and when my kids were young, we went hiking, camping, canoeing and backpacking. Now that they've grown and I've aged, I enjoy golfing, relaxing at the pool and woodworking.

What's the one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you? I was an Assistant Scoutmaster, have two sons who are Eagle Scouts and have canoed and portaged in excess of 300 miles of the Canadian and Maine wilderness. I probably have spent more than 300 nights camped under the stars.