

# Enriching Award for Café Operator

At Sammamish C, café operator Eurest wins kudos for providing career opportunities to people with developmental disabilities.

By Laurie Rowell

Helping your people develop can be its own reward. But a pat on the back is nice, too.

Eurest Dining Services and the Microsoft Sammamish C Café got just such an endorsement in June from Life Enrichment Options, an organization dedicated to helping people with developmental disabilities.

The group recognized Eurest with its Life Enrichment Options (LEO) award for commitment and advocacy in employing adults with developmental disabilities.

“Eurest demonstrated superior commitment to employees in furthering their career growth,” said Stephanie West, an employment consultant with Puget Sound Personnel (PSP), the company that nominated the café for the award. PSP supports people with developmental disabilities, finding them work at area companies, with three at the Sammamish C Café.

According to Mark Slater, Eurest operations manager, the company makes a special effort to have a diverse work force. “We offer them training and support through the company, develop them, and promote them through the ranks,” he said.

Gunnar Magley, one of the three supported employees at the Sammamish C Café, has worked with Eurest since 1998. “If he had his way, he wouldn’t take lunches or breaks because he is so dedicated to his job,” said West.

“I like helping people in the kitchen,” Magley said. “I help bring stuff up to the line if they’re too busy to get it out of the ovens, or vegetables out of the steamer.”

“I’d like to do prep in the kitchen, using a knife,” he said, adding that he had taken classes in knife use and was ready for the opportunity.



Denise Nedry, former unit manager, and Mark Slater, Eurest operations manager, accept the LEO award.

Like Magley, Nicole LeFever has used her job with Eurest to develop new skills and take on greater responsibility. She started work in June 2006, after graduating from the Issaquah Transition Program and completing the Culinary Arts Program at Mount Si High School. In the time she's been at the Sammamish C Café, she's gone from food prep to handling catering responsibilities, which West called "a huge honor."



Gunnar Magley, Pamela Howden, and Nicole LeFever are valued employees at the Sammamish C Café.

"I like doing the catering, delivering orders to different buildings," said LeFever, who wheels the catering carts to Sammamish C, D, and E. She aspires to be a cashier one day.

Her job has enabled LeFever to become more self-sufficient, including getting her own apartment.

"Before she was full time, Nicole was living at home with her family, and her goal was to live independently," said West. "It speaks to you that the

job goes beyond the scope of the day-to-day of function: It's integral to enhancing the overall quality of life and allowing individuals to be contributing members of society."

For Pamela Howden the opportunity to work was compelling enough to get her up before dawn each morning to catch three buses on the way to her part-time job. She leaves her home at 4:45 a.m. for her shift doing utility work: filling ice wells and wiping down surfaces as needed. "Eurest has been instrumental in giving her the opportunity to have a higher quality of life," West explained.

Gunnar, Nicole, and Pam work comfortably with others on the staff at the Sammamish C Café. "If they want to say something, they'll have their say," said Slater. "And the other employees respect them for that."