

MAKING THE Connection

TO
Career Technical Education

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WARREN WOODS TOWER SCHOOLS

Expansive culinary arts program promotes learning and community

By **Nina Olszweski**
WWT Senior

The Culinary Arts program offered at Warren Woods Tower High School (WWT) is thriving. Students may enroll in the Foods classes to gain personal life skills, enhance their career search, or prepare for their individual post-secondary pursuits. Career technical programs such as Culinary Arts provide students with opportunities to gain knowledge, skills, and experience. Students learn both in the classroom and in real-world and hands-on environments. Students apply their learned knowledge and skills to an actual work domain, while supporting the Titan Terrace, the student-run restaurant at WWT.

Because of the popularity of the Culinary Arts program, WWT is fortunate to have two full-time teachers: Ms. Suzanne Murray, who has taught within the district for six years, and Mr. Jon Grommons, who has been teaching in our district for the past two years. There are approximately 300 students enrolled in the Culinary Arts courses. Primarily, the student population is from WWT; however, the Southwest Macomb Technical Education Consortium (SMTEC) allows Fitzgerald High School students to participate in the program.

The courses offered in the Culinary Arts program include Foods I, Foods II, Foods III — Foodservice Management, and Foods IV — Baking & Pastry. Foods I can be taken as early as the student's first year. Instructor Ms. Murray enthusiastically adds, "The unique part about our program is that it is offered to freshman; thus, it gives the opportunity to potentially be in the program for four years. This is not the case in most culinary programs in Macomb County." Much of the program's curriculum is shaped by the day-to-day responsibilities that are required for the success of the Titan Terrace.

Foods I is an introductory course that covers employability skills and kitchen exposure. Lessons include cooking fundamentals, kitchen safety, vocabulary terms, and sanitation procedures. Students support the restaurant with basic food preparations, such as helping with large-scale produce prep, including utilizing learned knife skills with potatoes and carrots. The class is designed to teach students the culinary skills needed for a career in the food service industry and prepares them for further studies in Culinary Arts. The Foods I course serves as a bridge between life skills and the food industry.

Following the progression of the Culinary Arts program, second-year students may now enroll in the Foods II class. The second tier of the program takes on an



PHOTOS BY WWT SENIORS SOPHIA BARNETT AND JOSE RIOS

Using a Hobart 20-quart mixer seniors Antuan Marsh (left) and Alvin Amichia (right) use commercial kitchen equipment to prepare large quantities of cookie dough.

advanced approach to further educate students on the food service industry. The class is business-centered, where students are taught and are expected to apply different restaurant styles, menu creation, and marketing. Last year, students established an extension of the Titan Terrace, known as Titan Treats. Now, WWT students wait in a separate line for smaller treats such as cookies, brownies, and lemonade. The installation of Titan Treats considerably enhanced speed and efficiency in the kitchen, created more jobs, more workstations, and unique experiences for the Foods students.

Additionally, Foods II students construct a schedule of work time in the restaurant by rotating lunches and working in small groups at various stations of the running kitchen with the guidance of the Foods III students.

Upon successfully completing Foods I and II, students can continue onto Foods III, with the curriculum focusing on foodservice management and leadership, or Foods IV, focusing on baking and pastry.

Foods III provides students with an in-depth continuation of prior training and establishes the importance of leadership and management in the food service industry. Foods III students mentor the Foods I and II students through the process of opening and running the Titan Terrace. The culinary strengths, skills, and individual interests of each Foods III student are evaluated. This allows for increased effectiveness and organization in running the school's restaurant while working in an area the student is passionate about. Both mentee and mentor bene-

fit from the relationship as WWT Senior Talan Biernacki shares, "when I teach people, I learn as well. I learn how to help people. I was not very good at talking to people, but I can now." The strong and structured collaboration system between the Foods I, II, and III students forms a foundation for the program's success.

The fourth tier of the program is viewed as more of a standalone course in comparison to the other three and explores the specialization of Baking & Pastry. Students are provided the opportunity to demonstrate their creative expression while working with breads, desserts, and pastries. Chris Round, a WWT Senior, expressed excitement regarding creative expression, "we are decorating whatever we are baking. We get to decorate however we want; there are not a lot of restrictions. We put The Starry Night on a loaf of bread, it is so cool!" Further, classmates compete in tabletop creation, design, and taste competitions. There may be future external competitions, such as the Dorsey Baking competition and the ProStart competition. The Foods IV students also sold pre-made apple and pumpkin pies to staff and community members for their Thanksgiving feasts.

The Culinary Arts program contributes to the WWT community. In addition to running the Titan Terrace, the Foods classes cater to several school events and after-school activities, including Parent-Teacher Conferences, Open House, banquets, and Homecoming. Most inspiring is the sense of giving back. In finetuning their food service management, the upper-level Culinary Arts students evaluated leftover food and organized the



Senior Kayla Lamberger (left) and junior Jessica Rodgers (right) work together to prepare a star bread dessert recipe. Here the two add the cinnamon sugar filling to the second layer of their recipe.



WWT Culinary Arts Instructor Suzanne Murry demonstrates proper knife skills to senior Tess Emerick. The diced green peppers will be used in the Italian Pasta Salad, an item available in the Titan Terrace's pre-made salad bar.

production of family boxes to distribute to local families in need. As a result, WWT students continue to demonstrate a keen sense of belonging and foster social awareness and generosity.

The demand for many culinary career positions is growing at a higher rate in comparison to the national average. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job outlook from 2021-2031 for chefs and head cooks is projected to grow by 15%, while the demand for wait staff is expected to grow by 10%. During the same period, the expected national average job growth for all occupations is 5%. Instructor Mr. Grommons comments on the local de-

mand, "They're hiring everywhere, places are closed because they cannot staff."

In addition to personal life skills and culinary knowledge, the Culinary Arts program at WWT affords students character-building and opportunities to connect with the school body and the community. Mr. Grommons attributes much of the program's success to the school's atmosphere, "The school is unique. It has the biggest small-town vibe! The kids understand that this is a community." In addition, Warren Woods Tower appreciates the supportive relationships the Foods class members embody as they continue to collaborate, learn, and grow.

SOUTH MACOMB

Southwest Macomb Technical Education Consortium course offerings

SMTEC (Southwest Macomb Technical Education Consortium) participants, which include Center Line, Fitzgerald, Van Dyke, and Warren Woods Public schools, offers the following courses in career & technical pathways:

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BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, MARKETING & TECHNOLOGY: Accounting/Finance, Business Management, Computer Programming/AP Computer Science Principles, Marketing & Merchandising, Sports & Entertainment Marketing
ENGINEERING/MANUFACTURING

TURING AND INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY: Automotive Technology, Heavy Equipment Technology, Manufacturing Technology, Mechanical Drafting/CAD, Welding

HEALTH SCIENCES: Anatomy & Physiology, Dental Assistant, Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Medical Responder

(EMR) & Introduction to Health Careers, Medical Careers and Systems, Medical Assistant, Medical Terminology, Nursing Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, Physical Therapy Professional Aide

HUMAN SERVICES: Cosmetology, Culinary Services (Foods), Educational Careers, Firefighting, Law Enforcement, JROTC



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Mount Clemens Community Schools
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For more information about CTE, contact Shannon Williams at 586.228.3488 or swilliams@misd.net



Macomb Intermediate School District
44001 Garfield Road
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586.228.3300

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