SIMPLY ROOTED™
magazine

BE THE BEST PART OF SOMEONE’S DAY
page 4

ROOT RATINGS
page 8

FULLY ACCESSIBLE WEBSITES
page 16

SIMPLY REWARDED
page 25

A MAGAZINE FOR OUR WHITSONS FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Welcome to the winter issue of *Simply Rooted™*. I always look forward to reading our magazine. I believe it is a great communication device to share stories about our fellow team members, and witness our mission of enhancing life one meal at a time in action. However, what isn’t always visible in these stories are the values that drive our team members to take that extra step and make a difference in the lives of those we serve—our “why”.

**SO, WHAT IS OUR COLLECTIVE “WHY”?**

I believe it can be found in our own personal understanding of the important role we serve in the lives of our customers, and how we each express it. Maybe it is reflected in showing true empathy for a child whose only access to a healthy balanced meal is at school. Perhaps it is found in having patience with a student who is short on time or stressed about that big exam. It can be seen in the compassion for a resident in hospice care who needs 3 meals a day, and relies on us for so much more than just sustenance, or in the companionship with a senior who enjoys the personal interaction as much as the meals we provide. Or maybe it is found in simply knowing that our Tastefully Plated® meals provide relief in the form of convenient, healthy nourishment to someone coming home late after a long day at work.

No matter the customer we serve, our collective “why” originates from the deeper value our meals provide. And while our collective “why” is what brings us together, our individual “whys” are what help guide our actions. We must look beyond our collective “why” to each find our own “why”—the deeper motivation that drives us.

**WHAT IS MY “WHY”? FAMILY.**

I see my children in the students we serve at school. I see my mother in the seniors and my father in the residents we provide meals to every day. I see my wife in the consumer who counts on us for convenience and quality that she can trust. When we see ourselves and our family in our customers, we understand the value we can provide, and we get that chance every time we make or serve a meal.

**WHAT IS YOUR “WHY”?**

I would love for you to share it with me. Write me, email me or call me – whatever is easiest for you. I want to understand what drives you: what makes you want to make a difference. I want to understand the invisible values that stories don’t always capture.

All of our “whys” are all part of our collective history as a company. They represent the meaningful connections we have made between our fellow team members and with our customers, and should be celebrated. We need to honor these “whys” as the foundation of our culture because they reflect who we really are, where we've come from, and how we will all continue on our journey together.

I invite you to join me in helping to keep Whitsons focused on our “why”. Together, we have the power to truly make our company and our customer’s lives better each and every day.

_In good health,_

President and CEO
Whitsons Culinary Group ®
An everyday moment—facilitated by a caring team and one simple act of kindness—became one child’s dream come true. Food sensitivities and allergies are becoming more common than not. For some, they are mild and manageable, but for others, they literally can mean life or death. What’s a parent to do when their child just wants to feel normal during lunch at school?

It’s a dilemma the parents of a Wellesley student at Hunnewell Elementary School recently faced. Documented with 10 known food allergies, one young girl yearned to buy a regular lunch at school with her friends. Her father, always concerned for her safety, only sent lunch from home. Knowing how much it would mean to his daughter, he reached out to our Food Service Director, Matt Delaney, to inquire about lunches for students with multiple allergies. Although reassured that we could supply his daughter with a meal that would be safe and enjoyable, it took a few months of conversations and planning before the father was ready to give it a try.

This January, the young student got her wish when we prepared her a special, simple garden salad with plain chicken for lunch. Team member Sharyce DeChistoforo not only carefully plated her lunch, she also wrote the child’s name on a sticky note to clearly identify the lunch for the student. When the student arrived and saw her name on the first lunch she was ever able to buy at school, she was thrilled! She ate the lunch and smiled all day long.

She happily went home and told her dad all about her first lunch at school—and wanted to put the sticky note with her name on it in her scrapbook to remember the special day. Sharyce and her personal attention with the sticky note was certainly the best part of this child’s day, making it an even more special event for her. The student has since purchased her favorite school meal again (complete with her sticky note!), and continues to enjoy those special moments at lunch with her friends—just like she always wanted.
Here’s an all-too-familiar scenario about how quickly challenging “fires” can start on the job—but also, how equally fast they can be extinguished with the right team by your side.

When a recently hired cook quit due to unforeseen circumstances, our team at East Islip Schools was left high and dry, with no one to fill that position. Just when things seemed to go from bad to worse, in walked Jennifer Hennessey from a neighboring account at Amityville Schools to lend a helping hand. The stars were aligned that day for East Islip’s Food Service Director Kathleen Cavallo—even though her helper was an Administrative Assistant for Whitsons’ nutrition program at Amityville, Cavallo says Jennifer knew her way around that kitchen better than the cook that walked out!

“I could almost see the halo light around her head as she walked through the kitchen. I hope she knows how much I appreciated her help. On that fretful day, she certainly became the best part of my day,” recalls Cavallo. With some quick thinking on Kathleen’s part, and a great display of teamwork from Jennifer, the students enjoyed lunch as usual without missing a beat. What a shining example of how team members from different areas of the company come together like family to help each other out. Great teamwork!

TEAMWORK IN ACTION

HAVE A “BE THE BEST PART OF SOMEONE’S DAY” STORY TO SHARE? LET US SHARE YOUR STORY! SIMPLY SEND IT TO MARKETINGDEPARTMENT@WHITSONS.COM. YOU COULD BE FEATURED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE.
Each year, Whitsons partners with the SCO Family of Services to help make holidays a little bit easier for those less fortunate by coordinating a gift drive for the Bethany Houses, a transitional living program for teenage mothers in foster care with their children. While living in the Bethany residences, young mothers finish school and acquire skills that will allow them to become self-sufficient young women who can care for their children. This year's gift drive was an enormous success. Whitsons had over 40 gifts collected and dropped off at the Bethany Houses on December 18th by a few of our Whitsons team members. Our gifts supply the young mothers with basic needs, as well as presents of hope, to encourage them on their journeys.
GIFTS OF HOPE
THE WHITSONS TEAM DONATES TO SCO FAMILY OF SERVICES
Current trends show that sustainability and “green” issues are important to many Americans. As an essential component in the development of our food, our philosophy, and our team member interactions, Whitsons is taking the next step in our commitment to the ever-expanding impact of sustainability initiatives on our nutrition programs. We see the roots of our food intertwined with these important issues, and believe that working together with our school districts on these topics will not only enhance our program, but also the environmental and social impacts our food has on the communities we serve as well.

Whitsons is committed to providing wholesome, high-quality menus prepared fresh from clean, organic, non-GMO, and locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. This is all part of our Simply Rooted™ philosophy. Since these topics are connected in so many ways, it’s important for our organization to begin to evaluate where we stand. To that end, Whitsons will be implementing Root Ratings, a program designed to bring our Simply Rooted™ philosophy to life in day to day tasks and nurture our operations towards the next phase of growth. This is a plan of action to help all of our accounts align with our Simply Rooted vision.
THREE ROOT PHASES

Our innovative Root Ratings program allows each of our accounts to measure where they stand against our Simply Rooted philosophy, and where we can grow from a food perspective. By determining specific strengths, as well as where there is need for improvement, we can then design a plan of action to help all of our accounts align with our Simply Rooted vision.

SEED LEVEL

Let’s get growing! You’re doing okay, but you need to spend some time tending to your garden before you can progress to the next phase.

SPROUT LEVEL

You’re on your way. Just a little more nurturing and you’ll be sure to bloom. You occasionally go above and beyond the minimum requirements set forth by the NSLP. You currently offer some healthier options like: organics, vegetarian or healthier snacks, and you inform parents of your program highlights often, but there is room for growth as your nutrition education days are few and far between.

BLOOM LEVEL

You’re doing great, you’re at your peak! In addition to meeting the minimum requirements, you’re offering clean, organic, non-GMO and locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. You also encourage healthier choices and get students to try new things. You go above and beyond with every teaching opportunity and you host nutrition education days whenever possible. Plus, you’re communicating with parents, students and faculty on all levels.

Our goal is to bring as many locations as possible up to the “Bloom” level. Where do you stand? This is a journey that we are all on together. Let’s all strive to bloom. We’re rooting for you!
SIMPLY ROOTED™
Americans throw away $165 billion of food each year, which equates to about 35 million tons of food. For the general public, this amount of food waste can most likely be attributed to a lack of expiration awareness, improper storage and overestimated food needs. If we can reduce total food waste by 15%, this would be enough to feed more than 2 million Americans every year.

Whitsons recognizes the urgent food waste problem that plagues our world, and pledges to promote sustainable materials management. Our goal is also to help raise awareness about sustainability and generate experience and knowledge that can encourage and help other groups and individuals to act. As a U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champion, we have stepped up to do our part to help the nation reduce food waste by doing so in our day to day operations.

Whitsons has taken a number of steps to help minimize food waste, such as forecasting menu needs based on sales and real time customer input through ongoing surveys and regular food samplings. Wellness committee meetings also help us to gauge student preferences. While we cannot prevent students from throwing out their food once they exit the serving line, our system enables us to develop and serve items that students choose to eat, rather than throw out or pass by. Plus, we currently upcycle reusable food in various locations by donating to food pantries and utilizing share tables. We also provide reports to our clients, summarizing program progress, promotions and any important information pertaining to the nutrition program to address changes that need to be made to menus that we believe will positively impact participation and waste conservation.

In addition to reducing food waste, we are committed to utilizing recyclable material in operations where our clients have recycling programs, and we have sourced a variety of supplies that are made from recycled material. At our corporate location, we have eliminated the use of cardboard boxes where possible; instead, we use reusable crates to transport meals. Our recycling practices reduce overall waste and landfill usage, which ultimately helps the environment. We also use products that do not harm the environment, and many of our cleaning supplies and certain containers are biodegradable.
EVERYONE HELPING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE...

Whitsons’ team at Wellesley partnered with Bates Elementary School, Green Schools Wellesley and the EPA to enter into the EPA food recovery challenge. Their collective efforts created “recycle stations” for students to drain liquids from containers for recycling, “stacking stations” for sorting and stacking recyclable trays, bowls, plastic bottles and milk cartons, and new “share stations” for any whole usable leftovers. These stations are now operational at 5 of the 7 elementary schools in Wellesley Public Schools. Kudos to Matthew Delaney, Food Service Director, on his recycling, food recovery and districtwide waste reduction efforts. “I am happy to be a part of the effort here at Wellesley. I have been focused on helping to implement green solutions for the school district because it is important to me personally and for our environment,” said Delaney. Delaney was recently honored with the Outstanding Green Community Hero award for his vast sustainability efforts in Wellesley Public Schools’ cafeterias at the 2017 Green Difference Awards!
At Maynard Public Schools, Food Service Director Chris Piercey has received Board of Health approval to begin a share table program for the students at Maynard High and Middle Schools. In addition, any food remaining at the end of the day gets set aside, and at the end of the week this food gets donated to a local food pantry in town. They are hoping to expand this program to their elementary school in the near future. Maynard also composts their kitchen scraps for future use in their schools garden and plans to continue to develop these “green” programs further.

Food Service Director Linda St. Hilaire, of Sudbury Public Schools, is helping to reduce food waste by collecting food scraps for a local pig farm. This small effort actually raised awareness on the amount of food being discarded on a daily basis, and ultimately led to smarter planning of par levels and preparation of food for sale. Plus, they are a non-foam kitchen, meaning they use washable trays for lunch, and only bio-degradable paper trays during staffing shortages or equipment failures. All cardboard boxes are collected in a separate bin to be recycled. Cans are rinsed and also collected for recycling whenever possible. Routine staff training is an important piece in making sure the team at Sudbury continues to do their part in reducing food waste.

Whitsons continues to look for new ways to reduce food waste at our corporate and off site locations, and we encourage our team members to do the same. We can also work towards this goal in our own homes by simply being more aware of expiration dates, using all parts of produce, storing foods properly and planning meals ahead of time. If we all do our part to reduce food waste, we can work together to conserve the earth’s resources one meal at a time. □
WINNING BY LOSING

WHITSONS’ BIGGEST LOSER CHALLENGE

Inspired by a popular New Year’s resolution, the Whitsons Wellness Committee announced its launch of the first Whitsons’ Biggest Loser Challenge. Keeping a healthier lifestyle in mind, our version of the Biggest Loser Challenge has been designed to inspire and motivate team members to work together towards common health and wellness goals. Although the challenge primarily promotes weight loss through diet and exercise, it is also a team building activity aimed at bringing people together.

Whitsons’ Biggest Loser Challenge is open to all team members, offered completely free of charge, and is run by on-site Wellness Ambassador Volunteers. Each location has the opportunity to host their own “mini competition”. The competition is 7 weeks in duration and is based on total percentage of weight lost during the competition period. Weekly weigh-ins are encouraged to help keep participants on track, but only the first and last weigh-ins are required. All information collected is held confidential and participation is completely voluntary. Aside from the benefit of enhanced health and weight loss, competition winners at each location will be receiving exciting prizes.

Don’t worry, if your location missed this entry deadline, “stay tuned”, because Whitsons Wellness Committee will be announcing another competition start date soon. Are you ready for the challenge?
According to U.S. Census Bureau Reports, nearly 1 in 5 people have a disability in our country. Hearing, visual, cognitive, and motor disabilities impact an individual’s ability to use and interact with websites and the digital content that they are looking for.

As a result of these concerns, the Office for Civil Rights has prompted the American Disabilities Act (ADA) to require school websites to meet accessibility requirements that ensure that those with disabilities can also easily navigate the sites. Whitsons has been hard at work to ensure that all of our district web pages are in compliance with the ADA requirements.

We also understand how important it is for school district websites, and all external links, to be fully accessible and complaint. Therefore, we have made changes to all of our district sites.

- We have removed and/or replaced all links and PDFs to items that are not in compliance with the American Disability Act, unless they were created by a district.
- We have streamlined the content for all district sites to be in compliance.
- We will be asking for updated Meal Policy documents that are in compliance, where applicable.
- We will run monthly website audits to ensure our site stays compliant.

Website accessibility is more than just doing the right thing; it is now a legal requirement for any public school that receives federal funding. Public school websites are required to be ADA compliant through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Together, we are making sure that our websites are accessible to all students, parents, faculty, and the communities that we serve.
One new exciting innovation that Whitsons launched this year is the development of our brand new kiosk-style servery. Our kiosk servery solution has made bringing fresh and exciting menu features to students in the most challenging spaces, easy. Drawing children in, our branded kiosks offer a retail feel suited for any school environment, and can be set up virtually anywhere on school grounds to make dining options convenient for students—ultimately driving meal participation.

Under development for over a year, our kiosk design combines innovation with our most popular culinary concepts and efficiency, and can replace small grab-n-go areas or even full-service lines for the ultimate retail experience. Since our kiosk solution is completely customizable, we work with our clients to choose the perfect setup, including kiosk size, location, equipment, and even finishes. Our designs and fixtures also allow for both self and assisted service options, while our signage, lighting, packaging and professional food production generate exceptional food presentation. Every detail is accounted for to provide students with a fun “in school” lunch experience, ultimately keeping students on campus for meal time.

For districts that are interested in learning more, please contact your District Manager.
I SIMPLY ROOTED

Whitsons has partnered with InTEAM and Phoenixville Area School District in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania in creating a pre-ordering school lunch program. The program utilizes Choosi, a mobile app developed by InTEAM that allows students the opportunity to customize and pre-order grab and go meals, to minimize waiting and provide them with more time to eat their meals during their lunch period. The pre-ordering school lunch program is a first for students of the Phoenixville Area school district, which launched on December 8th at Phoenixville High School.

“I appreciate Whitsons working to improve the lunch experience for our students. I’m also very happy that the students can choose custom sandwiches and salads to be ready when they arrive. It’s just another way to make choosing healthy options easier for our students,” said Jean Szegedy, Business Office Specialist at Phoenixville Area School District.

Pre-ordering school lunch programs have shown great success in reducing food waste and keeping school lunch lines running more efficiently. According to John Koutras, District Manager for Whitsons Culinary Group, “Partnering with Choosi and bringing this innovative concept to school lunch is just one more example of Whitsons’ commitment to the PASD community. We are continuously searching for technological advancements and to improve our food service programs for the students’ benefit. Students will be able to move through the lines more quickly so they have more time eating a healthy meal instead of waiting to eat.”
WE CHOOSE CHOOSING WITH NEW CHOOSI MOBILE APP

what's your fooditude?
Lawrence High School is the first to go fully digital! With the help of Beth Drayer, Food Service Director, we have been able to display digital signs at each station in the high school cafe. Each sign displays what is being served right at that station live and does not need to be manually updated. The sleek look of these digital signs is complimented by a clutter free cafeteria. All their communications are displayed right on the digital signs. No need for wall frames, printed posters or daily menu signage! Plus, we keep things interesting by displaying fun facts, recipes and other custom information.
Whitsons continues to grow! We would like to extend a warm welcome to over 150 new team members who have joined the Whitsons family this past quarter. From school food service workers to culinary center operators, we look forward to getting to know the newest talents on our teams. Welcome aboard!
The Whitsons Family Foundation was created by the Whitcomb family and Whitsons Culinary Group to support Whitsons team members and their immediate families with temporary emergency financial assistance and/or grants for college education. All Whitsons team members in good standing, who have been employed for six months or longer, and who are regularly scheduled to work, are eligible to apply.

We are proud to announce that we have awarded a total of $347,788.98 in grants to team members and their families in need, since 2012.

NOW, WE NEED YOUR HELP!

In order to continue to help our team members and their families, we need donations. You can make a difference in the lives of those you work with each day, plus Whitsons matches 100% of all team member donations. To make your donation today, please ask your manager for a payroll form, or contact the Foundation for a copy at FamilyFoundation@Whitsons.com. Every little bit counts!

2018 FAMILY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Whitsons Family Foundation was also created to assist Whitsons team members and their immediate family members in fulfilling their need or desire for a higher education. Funds received may only be used to defray the cost of tuition, enrollment fees, books, supplies and equipment required for the course of study, and may only be awarded once per year.

NEED ASSISTANCE? SIMPLY ASK YOUR MANAGER FOR AN APPLICATION, OR CONTACT THE FOUNDATION AT FAMILYFOUNDATION@WHITSONS.COM.
SIMPLY ROOTED

NEW, IMPROVED, AND COMING YOUR WAY SOON!

Simply
Rewarded
Making a difference.
Whitsons believes that team member recognition is important. The Simply Rewarded program offers the opportunity to acknowledge our greatest asset - our team members. Simply Rewarded is a point based incentive program designed to encourage positive behavior and teamwork. Hourly team members will be awarded points based on successes and achievements that will be outlined in our official relaunch, and those points can then be redeemed for merchandise.

Earn personalized points, certificates, and redeem from thousands of brand name rewards! Watch for more details about our New Simply Rewarded program in early March...
If you have any questions or comments, please contact our editor, Jessica Falchek, Public Relations & Marketing Manager for Whitsons Culinary Group at Falchekj@whitsons.com.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list please go to www.whitsons.com/newsroom/news and click on the newsletters tab.