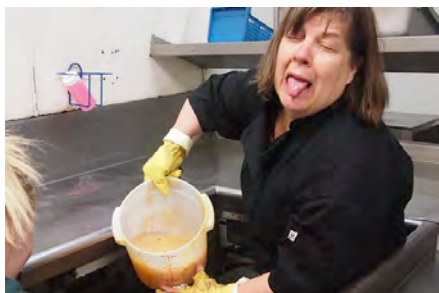


LIFE'S KITCHEN: A **BIG DIPPER**[®] CASE STUDY A THERMACO[®] Technology



How a culinary training program for at-risk youth keeps their focus on changing lives.

"You could tell when they were cleaning the grease trap because of the smell," Tammy Johnson, Life's Kitchen Executive Director said. "It was pretty horrible."



Program Director, Sue Olszewski emptying their old grease trap

Out of all the skills and chores these students had to endure, cleaning out the grease trap was probably the most dreaded chore in the kitchen. The smell made some students gag—becoming a barrier to their work and learning.

Students come to Life's Kitchen to learn the skills needed to find a job in a commercial kitchen. But the main purpose of Life's Kitchen is to help at-risk youth gain the confidence and competencies needed to rebuild their lives.

Life's Kitchen operates a café, offers commercial catering services, makes lunches for area schools, and provides meals for a homeless shelter. It operates out of a decades-old former hotel building. Much of the commercial kitchen equipment is of similar vintage, including, until recently, the grease trap.

In 2003, restaurateur Rory Farrow founded Life's Kitchen in Boise, ID. Her goal was to provide a more formal version of the mentoring she had been doing in her restaurants for the previous 25 years.

The nonprofit program works with at-risk youth, 16 to 20 years old, in a 16-week program. The students receive hands-on training in a fully operational commercial kitchen, plus GED preparation and other life skills training.

"They come to the program with lots of different stuff — foster care, probation, mental health issues, abuse issues, drug addiction," says Executive Director Tammy Johnson. "They're trying to find a new lease on life."

THE SOLUTION

When Thermaco heard about Life's Kitchen problem on Twitter, the company decided to donate a Big Dipper automatic grease interceptor to support such a great program.

Unlike Life's Kitchen's old grease trap, the Big Dipper has an automatic skimming wheel that removes the grease from the tank and stores it in a separate grease collector. This functionality eliminates the need to scoop grease out of the tank. The students now just empty the grease collector into the trash as needed. It's a quick and easy task; odors are minimal.

"We talk about it all the time," Johnson says. "They pull [the grease collector] off and they can tell when it's full. You don't get that smell in the kitchen."

Executive Chef Chris Bellomy marvels at the change.

"We can forget about [the grease interceptor] and at the end of the day we can empty this, and it's done," he said.

As a result, the kitchen functions more smoothly and students stay focused on learning practical skills needed in the restaurant industry.

"You can't learn it until you go in and do it," Bellomy says.

Not every student will make a career in the kitchen, but that's not the point. The program provides skills and experience that will provide employment and stability.

"No matter where you go, you'll probably be able to find a job if you have that skill and that knowledge," Johnson says.

Thanks to the Big Dipper, these students will no longer have to endure gag-inducing odors to get those skills.



Life's Kitchen student getting hands-on experience



Big Dipper, W-200-IS, installed at Life's Kitchen



Big Dipper W-200-IS

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and why it has become the choice of demanding facilities such as Avaya Stadium, Levi's Stadium, Capital One Center and others.

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