

Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • March 12, 2021

Career and technical education is all about adapting. That is why we used to offer High-Skills Stenography and now we offer Cybersecurity & Networking.



Adapting has been key for all of our program instructors and not just in how they teach students. Commercial Food Careers instructor Kevin Krebs said he had to retrain himself, too.

“How do I operate a restaurant now in times of COVID-19? Then how do I educate my kids in that realm, especially with seniors who were here for most of last year who had already started being trained in one method?”

Kevin, who has been teaching this program for 25 years, started by researching guidelines from the Ohio Restaurant Association and the Ohio Department of Health before school resumed in August.

The challenges he envisioned were many, along with some that were a surprise.

“I had to accept all those challenges and figure out how to make it work, which we do. That’s what we do in career tech. We don’t make excuses. We figure out how to get it done. That’s what business and industry does. Customer wants something. You figure out how to provide the customer what they want.”

Kevin said before the pandemic, it was common to have all of his students around a table cutting, chopping and preparing food.

“Now kids have to stay 6 feet apart plus get the job done. They have to wipe down and sanitize every single area as they move from one to another” to minimize contact.

“But this is a real-world situation and I’m using



LEFT: Kevin Krebs shows a student how to slice an onion.

BELOW LEFT: Staff members line up at the buffet in the Tecumseh Room.

it as an education tool. If your business is going to survive, you have to learn to adapt.”

Another adaptation was converting the popular salad bar offered to staff members from buffet style to a contact-free, to-go offering. That also brought challenges. Kevin said he spent a lot of time in the fall trying to find to-go containers and sandwich boxes, which were in demand in the restaurant industry.

When the guidelines changed recently, Kevin was able to resume the traditional buffet-style salad bar and his students were surprised by the preparation needed to run such an operation.

“A lot of what we’ve done this year has mostly been ready-to-eat foods. Now we’re introducing cooking and there’s a whole new realm of food safety there. It’s March; we normally start this in late August, early September.”

While the salad bar was prepped for Thursday, the students had to cook all of the hot food that morning. They made 11 meatloaves, 39 pork loins, gravy, mashed 30 pounds of potatoes and cooked two gallons of corn and green beans.

“As soon as the bell rang and they had aprons and hairnets on, they hit the floor,” Kevin said.



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