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LU Dining enters new phase

December 20, 2007 | Tara Maxwell

For Liberty Dining Services, it's all about balancing quantity with quality. In an ongoing effort to better serve the Liberty University community, Liberty Dining Services is in the midst of a \$5 million renovation.

The dining renovation, or more aptly titled "revolution," is dramatically changing the look of the Reber-Thomas Dining Hall, expanding the choices at the Founder's Food Court and providing the university's first full-service restaurant.

Reber-Thomas undergoes overhaul

Students spoke loud and clear about Reber-Thomas and Liberty Dining Services answered.

"For years students have been complaining about the atmosphere, the food – just everything about it. It was more of a mess hall or a cafeteria versus a student restaurant," said Elizabeth VanWingerden of Liberty Dining Services, a partnership of Sodexo Dining Services and Liberty University. "The plan behind [the renovation] was to give it more of an intimate feel. You can get together with a group of friends or sit with just your best friend. You can find a nook or cranny to study and relax."

Reber-Thomas was essentially gutted and rebuilt with an all-new more-colorful student-friendly interior including Wi-Fi, fresh paint, new flooring, a more inventive lighting scheme and an additional entrance. The most recent change to the facility is the expansion of seating. A new addition was built in the fall, providing room for roughly 200 more students.

Along with the upgrades to the building has come a change in the food served and the way it is served, with stations hosting certain food staples.

"We brought in a new executive chef in April who has really kind of overhauled what we do food wise," VanWingerden said.

Students have responded to the changes with positive feedback and have taken to spending more time at Reber-Thomas, even after the meal is over.

Campus North Food Court expands

Seven restaurants have been added to the Founder's Food Court, the most recent being a Chick-fil-A Express, which opened in September. During the eatery's grand opening, the university was presented with a \$5 million contribution from Sodexo, LU's food service provider.

According to VanWingerden, fresh, made-daily, hand-rolled sushi from Tsunami Sushi has been a big hit among students. Brisk sushi sales have prompted dining services to make the sushi available at other dining locations in addition to Campus North.

Cyclone Salads, Classics, Grill 155 and the campus' second Jazzman's and SubConnection round out the food and beverage options at Founder's.

East Campus makes room for Doc's Diner

Ground has already been broken at East Campus where a new restaurant, Doc's Diner, will be located.

Doc's will be a full-service 50's retro-themed restaurant with seating for between 150 and 200 with a private dining room for business meetings or parties. The diner, named in honor of Dr. Jerry Falwell, will feature memorabilia from Liberty and Thomas Road Baptist Church and many photos of Falwell through the years.

"We want it to be open to the public, to be unique to Lynchburg, but also accommodating to students' meal plans," VanWingerden said.

The diner is projected to be completed by the beginning of spring semester.

Liberty Dining Services has also launched a new Web site at www.libertydining.net.