

My Life

Small talk can mean big potatoes

Mundane though it may be, idle banter done properly can help you get ahead in life. » E2

+ INDYSTAR.COM/TRAVEL

Pacers coach Jim O'Brien has traveled a lot, but his favorite trip was a 1995 visit to Italy.

What's new

Hand-held shredder protects identity

Identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in America. If you want to protect your identity, then don't just throw credit-card offers, receipts, check stubs and other personal documents to the curb. Take the extra precaution of shredding your documents with a compact home shredder. Ziszor is a battery-operated hand-held appliance weighing less than 2 pounds. It shreds all used documents and catches the paper waste in a disposable bag. Ziszor is available online at www.ziszor.com for \$39.50.



Time to spring-clean your relationships

Maybe you've started spring-cleaning the dust bunnies out of your home, but what about your relationships?

"We all know someone who regularly gives us a sick feeling in the pit of our stomachs," says Christina Eckert, author of "Winning Against Wackos in Your Life" (Larstan Publishing, \$14.95).

Eckert has these tips for cleaning up your emotional closet:

- » Find some self-worth (wackos are bullies who try to make you feel smaller).
- » Learn to say no (don't let them take advantage of you).
- » Keep your personal life to yourself (set boundaries so they can't get in your business).
- » Learn to diffuse ugly scenes with a few words.
- » Be honest (if you have tried the kind approach to no avail, then confront them firmly).

Diet gives thumbs up to organic wine

On a diet? Go ahead and drink up. According to research from TheDailyGreen, pouring a glass of organic wine could be part of a healthy diet.

Wine helps rid your body of overprocessed, overpackaged substances, replaces the junk with whole foods, and causes you to fall in love with foods that are safe for you. Consider red wine over white; it has antioxidants that further aid good health.



Video game system helps stroke patients

A popular teen game system is now being endorsed by therapists to help rehabilitate patients.

According to an Associated Press article, The Nintendo Wii helps heal patients recovering from stroke, broken bones, surgery and even combat injuries. Repetitive stretching exercises can become tedious and painful, so the video game helps patients get involved mentally and work their body.

— Compiled by T.J. Banes



TOM KLUBENS / For The Star

THE JOY OF BAKING: Cindy Hawkins basks in the glow of a finished chocolate hazelnut mousse cake she's just made.

The sweet life

Woman gives up a career in health care to put on a chef's hat

By Julie Cope Saetre
Star correspondent

When Cindy Hawkins was a grad student studying leader services management in Texas, she once called home for instructions on how to make a baked potato. "My family to this day makes fun of me for that," she says, laughing. "You know, I don't cook at all."

She does, however, bake — with a passion that has led her to launch a business, leave her full-time health-care job and begin a course of intense study at an elite Chicago pastry school. Today, Hawkins owns

Circle City Sweets, a dessert-catering company; serves as the pastry chef at Buggs Temple Downtown; and attends Chicago's French Pastry School as a full-time student.

Unlike some career-switchers, Hawkins wasn't laboring in an unfulfilling routine. Her post-grad-school career path led her from Indy Parks to the alumni office at Butler University (her undergrad alma mater) to, most recently, Community Hospital East, where she directed volunteer services.

"It's funny that I am a career-changer," she muses, "because I have loved my jobs. I have been so fortunate in what I've done."

Still, outside the office, she had another love — baking. It took root, she says, in her youth, when she baked pies with her grandmother and created Holly Hobbie-shaped sugar cookies with her mom and sisters.

Likewise, she has an affinity for the restaurant industry. Her mother owned a deli, and Hawkins herself has worked in front-of-house posi-



HEATHER CHARLES / The Star

PRACTICING HER CRAFT: Hawkins works as pastry chef at Buggs Temple restaurant Downtown and operates Circle City Sweets, a dessert catering company. She also attends pastry school.

tions in several upscale area restaurants. She and her husband, Roger, a chef, met while both were employed at the same eatery.

So three years ago, when Roger had to work on New Year's Eve at Puck's restaurant, he suggested that Hawkins spend the evening assisting the pastry chef.

"I wasn't working at a restaurant at the time," she says. "So I thought, 'Well, that would be kind of fun.' And I had an amazing time."

Eleven-and-a-half hours later, the pastry chef asked, "When are you going to start working for me?"

For the next several months, Hawkins devoted Saturday mornings to whipping up base components for such goodies as crème brûlée and bread pudding. She stopped during the slow season, but the following fall, Puck's newly hired executive chef invited Hawkins to return, working under Pete Schmutte, the new pastry chef.

Schmutte welcomed the help — and was quickly impressed. "She

DON'T JUST DREAM; HAVE A PLAN OF ACTION

Following your dream sounds great, but to be successful, you need to support your hopes with solid planning. Here are a few steps taken by Cindy Hawkins as she transitions from health-care administrator to full-time baker.

Don't believe what you see on TV. Reality shows such as "The Next Food Network Star" and "Top Chef" glamorize the world of restaurants, but Hawkins knew otherwise from working in several. "She had experience in the restaurant industry, which is very important," says Pete Schmutte, who has worked with Hawkins at Puck's. "Everybody has a romanticized idea of what it would be like, but it's actually some grueling work and some hard hours."

Look for creative financing techniques. When Hawkins launched Circle City Sweets, she arranged to share space with Matt Mills of Mills Catering, swapping the results of her baking prowess for square footage. "My trade-out deal with him was . . . if I was making something and he needed some of it, too, I'd make more so he'd have some."

Expand your horizons. As she works through her six-month pastry program, Hawkins hasn't locked herself into a specialty. "There are so many things that I don't know about yet, but I'm really looking forward to (learning). In the past, I would have said I love working with cream and custard-based things. But now I'm looking forward to building cakes and looking forward to the different techniques I'll learn . . ."

» See Sweet, Page E8

