

NTU hires alumni as catering coordinator

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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They always come back.

Navajo Technical University has hired J.D. Kinlacheeny as the school's new catering coordinator, school officials announced this week. Kinlacheeny will oversee the school's outside and in-house catering requests from NTU's Food Services and Culinary Arts and Baking programs, Daniel Vandever, a spokesman for NTU, said.

Kinlacheeny has been working with NTU the past two years where he has run the "Healthy Cooking and Eating in Indian Country" initiative, which trains food preparation staff at Bureau of Indian schools on how to prepare and present Navajo foods in a healthy way. The experience is something that NTU culinary arts instructor Brian Tatsukawa said will benefit the institution in a myriad of ways.

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“His prior knowledge helps tremendously,” Tatsukawa said. “He’ll give us added value because we now have someone strictly dedicated to increasing business.”

Prior to taking the NTU job, Kinlacheeny was a student in NTU’s culinary arts program. In that program, he earned the distinctions of Certified Sous Chef with the American Culinary Federation in 2015.

Originally from Chilchinbito, Ariz., Kinlacheeny said he wants to establish his own catering style. “I want to mainly keep it old school,” he said. “I want to bring in old techniques in making new foods.”

In September, NTU catered to more than 400 people at a fundraiser benefit dinner at the Rehoboth Christian County Health Services, Vandever said.

Kinlacheeny said the array of NTU catering offerings is something that sets the institution apart from others. He said students in the program bring different ideas and approaches to the catering vocation.

Vandever said NTU tries to hire as many alumni from the school as possible to work in its various programs.

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