



NEWS RELEASE

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Melissa's Cafe Named Employer of the Year



Liberty's Career & Employment Network (CEN) named Melissa Davidson of Melissa's Café the 2011 Employer of the year. Melissa was presented the award at a special presentation held on Wednesday, November 2, 2011. From Left to Right: Bill Sikora, Director of Industrial Operations & Employment Services for Liberty Enterprises; Melissa Davidson of Melissa's Café and Employer of the Year recipient; Renee Behan, employee at Melissa's Café; Melissa Castro, individual in Liberty's CEN Supported Employment Program; and Sue Wiles, employee at Melissa's Café.

Liberty's Career & Employment Network (CEN) recently named Melissa's Café the 2011 Employer of the Year at their 19th annual awards luncheon. Melissa Davidson, founder and owner of Melissa's Cafe was presented the award at a special recognition on Wednesday, November 2 for her ongoing support and employment of people with disabilities.

Davidson's impressive culinary background includes, a degree from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York; an internship at Sea World in Aurora, Ohio; Head Chef at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort in Orlando, Florida and a Culinary Arts teacher at the New England Culinary Institute in Burlington, Vermont.

In recent years, Melissa returned to the area with her family to live in Canajoharie where she owned and operated Melissa's Café on Main Street across from the Beech Nut Plant. When Beech-Nut developed

plans for their new state-of-the art facility in the town of Florida, Melissa accepted the opportunity to run the concession for food services at the new plant. Staff at Liberty's CEN program had then contacted Melissa regarding employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities, and Melissa immediately jumped on board.

Marie Gavry, Assistant Manager for Supported Employment at Liberty Enterprises stated, "Melissa has employed six part-time workers through the CEN Program. She has been supportive and understanding of their individual needs and her patience in assisting them to overcome obstacle is amazing." At present, four individuals work at Melissa's Café within the new Beech-Nut facility where they assist with the daily operations of the concession area.

The Career & Employment Network is Liberty's supported employment division, providing a broad range of services, including job development, job preparation training, resume writing assistance, career exploration, job coaching, transportation and more. The organization works with over 60 local employers and provides supported employment programming to over 220 individuals. Working together, necessary jobs are filled, while individuals with disabilities are able to pursue their employment and personal goals.

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