

## Sugar Plum Answers the Quest for Skills

Annie Corprew loves her job. Since coming to work at Sugar Plum Bakery, Annie has learned how to do just about everything but bake. During her eight-hour workdays, she folds boxes, stamps bags, scoops cookies, prepares cake boards, cuts and curls ribbons, and even handles some administrative paperwork.

So it's hard to believe that before Annie came to Sugar Plum, like most disabled individuals she was considered unemployable.

Annie began working at the bakery six years ago thanks to SkillQuest Services, a community-based program founded in 1990 by the Virginia Beach Community Services Board. When Annie's case manager, Linda Bright, learned of the Sugar Plum opportunity through SkillQuest, Annie was eager to try it.

Directed by Colleen Zalewski, SkillQuest was established to offer person-centered support and services to the adult citizens of Virginia Beach with a primary diagnosis of mental retardation. Sugar Plum is one of three local organizations with which SkillQuest has contractual arrangements.

Cathy Hartman is the SkillQuest mental health/mental retardation clinician who supervises the program at the bakery. Eleven SkillQuest clients are currently working at the bakery either part time or full time, Cathy explains, performing tasks that range from greasing baking pans to traying cookies to decorating specialty cakes, depending on the client's abilities and interests.

Mental health/mental retardation assistant Sandy Bly, also of SkillQuest, spends her workday at Sugar Plum, scheduling and training the 11 SkillQuest clients. After coordinating with



One of the 11 SkillQuest clients who work at Sugar Plum, Annie Corprew has been with the bakery since 1996. Annie works full-time and, like the other clients, receives ongoing training through SkillQuest in important life skills.

the bakery staff to determine the day's workload and tasks required, Sandy offers at least two choices of work assignments to each client.

Even though they're two separate groups, the entire staff of Sugar Plum is one big family. "Our group is treated just like the other bakery employees," Cathy notes. Sandy adds: "Once you're working here, it's like one big organization."

### Ongoing Programs Raise Skill Levels

Along with performing bakery tasks, SkillQuest clients receive ongoing training during their shifts. For instance, every Tuesday, music educator Virginia Davis spends 30 minutes each with the morning and afternoon shifts, teaching them about singing, dancing, and musical instruments.

Other continuing training programs enable clients to learn helpful life skills such as how to tell time, appropriate

social interaction, how to follow two-step instructions, attention to task, and appropriate voice volume. A computer obtained through a grant has made possible additional training in safety survival words and signs, which helps these individuals function on their own in the community.

Because SkillQuest is state-certified, training in cultural diversity is also part of the curriculum. Every month, clients learn about a different country through reviewing recipes, movies, and youth books. In September, the country was Afghanistan.

When the bakery moves into its roomier new building next year, SkillQuest will be able to expand the training programs. One addition being considered is having SkillQuest art therapist Marion Bloomfield arrange for the rotating display of the clients' artwork. The new building will also allow for more SkillQuest clients to train and work at the bakery.

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Those additional clients will get plenty of guidance from Annie Corprew. "Whenever we have a new person," Cathy explains, "Annie helps train them. She goes out of her way to help the new people."

It's one of the many reasons Annie loves her job at Sugar Plum. "Everything I've learned," she adds, "has been from working at this bakery."

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## DEAR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



This is such an exciting time in the life of Sugar Plum. Not only is our new building under construction, as of press time nearly two dozen companies in Hampton Roads had committed to donating all or part of their materials and/or labor to the project. These "in-kind" gifts are so important to us because with each one, the money saved can go toward Sugar Plum's future, such as debt retirement, new equipment, or our newly established endowment fund.

Board member Terry Siviter chairs Sugar Plum's in-kind gift committee, and he's done a terrific job coordinating the building's needs with the general contractor, Jane Goldman of Commonwealth Construction. For example, he recently told me that all the concrete and asphalt paving for the project has been donated. "People are very generous," Terry said. "Sometimes all you have to do is ask."

With that in mind, if you know of a company that might consider an in-kind gift to Sugar Plum's new building, please call Terry at 652-9526. Basically, we need anything related to the construction of a commercial building, such as masonry, lumber, trusses, an elevator, HVAC equipment, aluminum storefront, metal doors, windows, carpeting, wall coverings, bakery equipment, and furnishings.

That's my first request of you. My second is, if you give to the United Way of South Hampton Roads this year, which I hope you do, please consider designating your gift to Sugar Plum Bakery. We don't have a designation number, so just write us in as Sugar Plum.

My third request is that if you see Nick Gomez around town, thank him for all his hard work to make our First Annual Sweet Soirée a tremendous success. We're all grateful to Nick and his volunteer team for organizing this Sugar Plum benefit, which was held September 13 at Fort Story Officers Club.

Without volunteers like Nick, along with the local companies donating their goods and services to our new building, Sugar Plum wouldn't be able to train and employ special individuals like Annie Corprew, featured in this issue's cover story. On behalf of Annie and all the other valuable Sugar Plum employees, thanks so much for helping.

Thad Nowak  
President,  
Sugar Plum Board of Directors

## Mission Statement

The mission of Sugar Plum, Inc. is to serve the needs of persons with developmental disabilities through employment, education, and training. Sugar Plum, Inc. will promote integration of mentally and physically disabled persons into society by helping them become independent and evolve into working, contributing members of our communities.

The organization strives to achieve this mission by:

- ✔ Operating a competitive retail bakery business;
- ✔ Providing supportive and rehabilitation services and training for persons who are severely disabled;
- ✔ Seeking community-based, competitive employment opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities;
- ✔ Advocating supported, competitive employment opportunities for disabled persons so that they can become financially self-supporting; and
- ✔ Increasing community awareness of the worth of persons with disabilities and of the importance of integrating them into our lives through education and example.

## Write Us In!

If you give to the United Way of South Hampton Roads this year, please consider designating your gift to Sugar Plum Bakery. Remember, you're a key ingredient in our recipe for success.

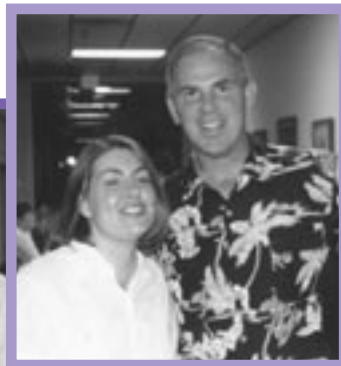
# Guests Swing at Sweet Soirée

The weather was perfect. The food was scrumptious. And the band was a blast from the past at the First Annual Sweet Soirée, a fundraising event for Sugar Plum, Inc. Held September 13 at the Fort Story Club, the gala drew nearly 200 people.

After guests dined on cocktail shrimp, crab balls, fresh fruits, veggies, and other delights, their attention turned to the entertainment. With the ocean as a backdrop, the festive, sequin-clad band Right On kicked off a retro evening of '70s disco and funk. And it didn't take

long for the club's outdoor deck to morph into a dance floor filled with appreciative dancers.

Special thanks to Sugar Plum volunteers and staff who worked hard to pull the benefit together and make it a sweet success!



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Donors as of September 13, 2002. Contribution total: \$1,147,483

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## Be a Sugar Plum Sweetheart

If you love Sugar Plum as a customer, imagine how you'll feel as a volunteer. There's no better way to have fun and help a great cause. If you can spare a little time each week, Sugar Plum currently needs volunteers to:

- Help us take part in the Holly Festival of Trees in November
- Provide general help during the holiday season, our busiest time of year

Also, Sugar Plum can put the following donations to very good use. We need:

- Craft items, such as markers and construction paper
- Paints and shellac for holiday ornaments
- Digital camera
- Cookie cutters
- Plastic spatulas
- 4-quart and 5-quart stainless steel bowls

*Help us reach the dream.*



*We're so close, but we still need your help. We only need \$52,517 to reach our Capital Campaign goal of \$1.2 million. Every little bit makes a difference, so whatever you can spare will bring our newest Sugar Plum vision closer to reality. We've even enclosed a return envelope for your convenience. Remember, you're the most important ingredient in the Sugar Plum recipe for success. Thank you for any support you can offer.*

## Board Member Spotlight: Tim Rivas

When Tim Rivas first considered joining the board of Sugar Plum, he thought about how he could help the bakery. After being on the board now for two years, he says the reverse has happened.

"My work with Sugar Plum has given me a new perspective," Tim says. "When I get a big hug from one of our clients, it means a lot to me. I really enjoy spending time there."

Originally from Richmond, Tim holds a degree in hotel and restaurant management from James Madison University. Today he's a partner in SegMark, a food sales agency that represents manufacturers that sell to restaurant distributors. His background in the foodservice industry has been an asset to bakery operations, enabling

Tim to serve as a consultant and sounding board for Sugar Plum's executive director, Patricia Rakes Clark. He is also a member of the board's new building committee.

Tim moved to Virginia Beach in 1983 and has been married to Angela for 17 years. They have two children, Zachary,

12, and Madison, 7. When he's not at SegMark or Sugar Plum, he can be found either on his boat, on the golf course, or on the baseball field where he is assistant coach for his son's Little League team.

With the bakery's new building being constructed behind the old one, Tim is excited about the "unveiling" of the new bakery when the old one is torn down. "It will be like a curtain going up on the future of Sugar Plum."



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*Sugar Plum Visions is published by the board of directors of Sugar Plum, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides an employment program for the developmentally disabled. If you have questions or comments, please call Patricia Rakes Clark, Executive Director, Sugar Plum Bakery, 1353 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23451, (757) 422-3913.*

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Here's an easy way to contribute to Sugar Plum's Capital Campaign—and get a tasty deal to boot! For \$5, you can buy a small sugar plum that will be posted on the wall with your name on it. In return, you get a coupon for 20% off your next purchase. Or, buy a large sugar plum for \$10, and get a coupon for 15% off all future purchases for one year. (No other discounts apply; not valid with wedding cakes.)

We're only \$52,517 from reaching our Campaign goal of \$1.2 million, so every contribution counts! Thanks in advance for being part of the Sugar Plum family.

