

JAY W. AND DORIS K. CHRISTOPHER CENTER DEDICATION
CATEGORY 45: BEST EVENT ON A SHOESTRING—NARROW TIME CONSTRAINTS
DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY

I. CONTACT INFORMATION

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II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

After careful stewardship and further cultivation, Jay W. and Doris K. Christopher informed the university in late December of their interest to give a \$2 million gift to establish and endow the new Nutrition Sciences Center at Dominican University. At the time of the gift, President Donna Carroll indicated that the university would like to host a dedication moment and that a mutually acceptable date could be set at the Christopher's convenience—a difficult feat given the busy schedules of two CEOs. In early April, the date of April 30 was set allowing staff a matter of weeks to envision and execute a special event.

The event itself was staged in the Shaffer Silveri Atrium of the university's newly opened \$38 million academic building, Parmer Hall. Remarks were offered by the president, the department chair, an alumna and a current student of the program. The department chair, with assistance from several current students, presented the Christopher family with personalized chef's jackets. An official ribbon cutting followed, after which President Donna Carroll presented gifts to Doris and Jay Christopher. The dean offered closing remarks and invited guests into the center for a reception that featured nutritional refreshments inspired by the work of Dominican University nutrition faculty and Doris Christopher's Pampered Chef cookbook.

III. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project involved the planning and coordination, in a short period of time, of a meaningful and distinctively Dominican dedication event to effectively steward the Christopher family.

In sum, the event accomplished the following:

- Appropriately stewarded and recognized center donors
- Cultivated additional building donors
- Acknowledged faculty, students and alumnae/i of the program
- Showcased the nutrition sciences curriculum
- Created excitement about the center throughout the university community
- Unveiled the center's name, newly installed on the atrium wall
- Celebrated the mission of the university

IV. INSTITUTIONAL AND ADVANCEMENT GOALS

As the largest capital project in the university's history, Parmer Hall and the Nutrition Sciences Center required an ambitious fundraising effort that involved a sophisticated, long-term strategy. The dedication, which came with less than one year remaining in the campaign, served both as a stewardship activity for donors who had already committed *and* as a cultivation activity for those who were still considering gifts.

Broader institutional goals included the opportunity to announce a significant gift from noteworthy donors and demonstrate the university's commitment to the liberal arts *and* sciences—particularly important as Parmer Hall primarily houses the sciences. The Christopher gift resulted from a carefully crafted donor stewardship and cultivation process. The Christophers had previously established an endowed chair for business ethics in the Brennan School of Business at Dominican University and were keenly interested in the university's new academic building, John C. and Carolyn J. Parmer Hall, given that their family business, the Pampered Chef, is the premier direct seller of high-quality kitchen tools. In early August 2007, Jay Christopher was given a sneak-peak tour of Parmer Hall prior to the building's dedication on August 30. Doris Christopher was the guest of honor at a luncheon hosted in November 2007 for nutrition sciences faculty from the University of Illinois, her alma mater, to showcase our new facility, faculty and innovative curriculum. These events, coupled with conversations with the university's president helped to bring the gift to fruition.

V. AUDIENCE

The Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, Dominican sisters and over 500 nutrition sciences alumnae/i in the Chicago area were invited to attend the event via invitations printed in-house and others via the university's electronic communications systems. The Nutrition Sciences Center has long sponsored The Recipe Box Café, a restaurant/laboratory experience in which students design menus, cook and serve meals for a nominal fee. Many of the university's neighbors and campus constituencies support the café and were invited to attend the dedication as well.

VI. STAFFING

The constituent relations team was composed of the executive director, the director of stewardship and special events, the director of alumnae/i programs, an administrative assistant, and a department assistant. The executive director was responsible for the thematic design of the event, the stewardship and special events director oversaw the event logistics, the alumni director coordinated the archival display of Pampered Chef items, and the support staff orchestrated a myriad of event details. Staff partnered closely with the Office of Marketing and Communications, the food service provider and caterer, Chartwells (the caterer) and the chair of the Department of Nutrition Sciences.

VII. PROGRAM BUDGET

The entire event cost just under \$4,000.00. Expenses included customized napkins; ingredients, labor and packaging for cookies to be given out as favors; food; ribbon and shears; chef's jackets; engraved Stebuen glass bowl; display banner and memory album.

VIII. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND CHALLENGES

Working under such narrow time constraints forced the team to use available resources in effective and efficient ways:

Thanks to prospect research, we had ample information on the Christophers and their business. We came to understand that Doris began her business in her basement—parallel to the start up location of the Rosary College home economics department in 1958. Doris sold her products using demonstrations she dubbed “Kitchen Shows.” We used this idea to personalize the event for the Christophers in the president’s remarks: the president welcomed guests to the Dominican University Kitchen Show and went on to demonstrate the components of a quality nutrition sciences major (strong faculty, amazing facility, innovative curriculum).

By culling the database, we identified alumnae/i with connections to the Pampered Chef. During the program, one alumna spoke to the quality of her Dominican education and her experience working for Doris Christopher at the Pampered Chef. In her remarks she expressed her gratitude to Mrs. Christopher for inspiring her to embark on her own entrepreneurial enterprise (with Doris’ approval). Another alumna served as unofficial event advisor providing us with Pampered Chef cookbooks from which we drew recipes for the reception, ordered Pampered Chef kitchen shears for the ribbon-cutting (at a discount to the university) and coached us through the ins and outs of a Pampered Chef Kitchen Show to help us customize the president’s remarks.

We also identified a young alumnus who went on to study at the French Pastry School in Chicago. We hired him for a nominal fee to bake cookies to serve as our event favors. Since Dominican was formerly known as Rosary College and the rose is a much-cherished symbol of the university, our alumnus designed the recipe from scratch and included rose water as a key ingredient. He hand-crafted the cookie cutter in the shape of the university’s shield and baked the cookies in the nutrition lab the day of the event. We packaged the cookies in ribbon-tied plastic bags, with a laminated card featuring the university’s shield as a base and a coordinating sticker closing the ribbon. The packaging was specially designed and produced for the event.

Over the time spent working with Mrs. Christopher’s staff to identify an event date, we built a solid relationship. When we asked if the Pampered Chef might be interested in loaning archival items for a display case to debut on the day of the dedication, they readily pointed us to the archivist who shared with us a treasure trove of items. We produced an oversized backdrop from an archival photo from the Pampered Chef’s files.

The week of the event, Mrs. Christopher’s staff forwarded her remarks to us for proofing and approval, and we were able to add some subtle nuances to her speech. We noted that the core of Mr. Christopher’s relationship with Dominican University rested in the fact that the River Forest native played pick-up softball games with the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa (the order of religious sisters who founded the university) on the Rosary College campus in his youth. We in turn built in a moment for the dean to present his and hers softball caps during the ceremony and noted that the sisters were ready for a re-match—it was a homerun!

The nutrition sciences department at Dominican University is chaired by Judy Beto ’73, PhD, a truly amazing alumna and faculty member, as well as a nationally recognized scholar and practitioner. A compelling advocate of the program, Judy spoke succinctly to the living legacy

that the Christopher's gift represents to the university and the field of nutrition. She also introduced Bobby Herich, a current student, who offered remarks comparing and contrasting his classroom environments and spoke glowingly of the state-of-the art facility in which he is now studying nutrition sciences.

Professor Beto was insistent that the reception menu reflect the nutrition sciences program. To demonstrate the department's values, we presented the five "super foods" put forth in a recent *Chicago Tribune Magazine* article authored by Professor Beto. Current students staffed each of the reception stations and discussed the accompanying health benefits of baby bananas, dried mangos, low-fat ricotta cheese, raw almonds and dark chocolate. Our food service contributed additional reception fare (using Pampered Chef recipes!) supporting the super food theme as well as a juice bar.

IX. DOCUMENTED RESULTS, MEASUREMENTS OF EFFECTIVENESS

Even with short notice for the event, more than 100 guests attended the ceremony and reception. Other positive results:

- 1.) Students and faculty interacted with trustees, alumnae/i and university friends in a festive celebration.
- 2.) The event and facility re-kindled interest in the university and program on the part of nutrition sciences alumnae/i.
- 3.) The Pampered Chef now has custom-framed photos of Parmer Hall and the ribbon-cutting ceremony commemorating the event in one of the corporation's conference rooms, thus establishing a co-branding opportunity.
- 4.) The Christopher family was genuinely touched by the event. Mr. Christopher photographed every inch of the center and took group photos of students, faculty and alumnae/i during the reception. We actually witnessed Mr. Christopher surreptitiously "pocket" a few of the customized cocktail napkins—we later learned from Mrs. Christopher that "he just loves that sort of thing!" Taking this as our cue, we created a Memory Album using Shutterfly to capture the event in a special way.