



## **The Proof Is In The Pudding . . . And The Entrée . . . And The Service.**

*By Pam McDonald*

“I must have mystery shopped 50 buildings before I was convinced Strategic Dining Services was the best choice to help me establish first-rate dining and hospitality services in my new assisted living building,” says Jake Baldus Grier, owner/developer of The [Charleston Senior Community](#) in Waldorf, Maryland.

“We identified our prospects as active seniors who might ordinarily look for independent living but, because of our price point, choose our amenity- and service-rich assisted living and memory care instead,” he points out.

“We knew we’d need to offer fine dining and exceptional customer service,” he says “and that’s what Strategic Dining Services has allowed us to implement. They bring so much extra to the table,” Jake says. [Strategic Dining Services](#) is an integrated, hospitality-based dining management company and Senior Housing Forum partner.

### **Charleston Senior Community**

Jake, who specializes in commercial real estate, renovated and refurbished a former hotel into upscale senior living about 45 minutes south of Washington, D.C. Opened in March of this year, the community has 175 apartments, a movie theater with 3 showings daily, a 24-hour concierge, chef-prepared meals, and 2 fresh dessert choices each day.

“Long before opening, we were pleased to have the guidance of RonnDa Peters, Vice President of Marketing and Sales; Jeff Kelly, Vice President of Operations; and other knowledgeable Strategic Dining staff,” Jake says. “Not only did they help us select and train our dining team, but they worked with all of our customer-facing employees.

“It makes a real difference to our residents and their families that we have a hospitality culture. Our wait staff, caregivers, receptionist, etc., never merely respond ‘Yeah,’ or ‘Yep,’ or ‘No problem,’ when asked for something. Instead they respond, ‘Absolutely! And, may I also bring you. . . .’”

### **Sales & Marketing Celebrations**

Strategic Dining understands that a focused and well-trained dining team can contribute to sales and marketing efforts, so they work with clients to maximize the effectiveness of their on-site marketing celebrations. They bring innovative suggestions and themes for presentations with a “wow” factor. Their ideas, planning and training enable clients to execute confident, professional events to rival any venue in their local area.

“With Strategic Dining’s help our resident events are exceptional as well,” Jake says. “Our residents and families love the regular cooking demonstrations we do, as well as the pizza-making class. In fact, we get our best attendance for chef-led activities.”

## Round Table Discussions

To further ensure resident satisfaction, The Charleston implemented the Strategic Dining practice of holding monthly roundtable discussions with residents to find out what they like and what they want.

“The coaching our kitchen team received from Strategic Dining also spurred us to ‘buy local’ from a nearby organic farm,” Jake explains. “We can add dishes to the menu that use fresh ingredients when they are most plentiful and least expensive.”



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