

# SAGE is SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

Deacon Nathan Beiersdorfer '95



**W**hen SAGE first came to the table, many at Moeller (including myself) raised an eyebrow. From time immemorial, the two kings of the high school cafeteria had been frozen food and fried food.

SAGE proposed to depose both.

The idea of fresh, scratch-made food prepared by chefs every day seemed too good to be true. The thought that this model could satisfy the appetites of nine hundred teenage boys seemed unrealistic. The thought that students would no longer pay as they went, but instead every student and staff member would eat unlimited lunch, seemed too much of a paradigm shift.

Yet as they complete their second year at the Moeller, SAGE has not only delivered on every promise, they are hitting their stride.

The one-two punch of Amy Stull (Food Service Director) and Phil Bailey (Executive Chef), along with a host of dedicated staff, have become a model of outstanding service to our students. Many families, for instance, have experiences of Amy personally calling them to discuss their son's dietary needs.

But more than that, the SAGE team made an effort to become a part of the family.

One of SAGE's first hurdles was to discover what the Moeller men would eat. Though they offer a salad bar, fresh soup, and sandwich bar daily, there are also two rotating mains that are geared toward the taste of our students. When asked about any unanimous favorite foods among Moeller students, Amy replied, "Anything cheesy, and all hot sauces. Surprisingly, they love curries, Cajun Alfredos and especially Buffalo chicken mac-and-cheese."

What don't they like? "Tuna casserole . . . I heard about it for months," laughed Amy. "They also won't eat any stews."

Fresh vegetables are also an important part of the SAGE model, and Moeller students have been major fans of SAGE's green beans, peas and brussels sprouts. "I can give parents any of our recipes if they'd like to try and get their sons to eat veggies at home," said Amy.

Among the other adjustments SAGE has made has been to move from plating all meals for the boys to allowing them to self-serve. "At first, they feasted on this. We worried they would eat us out of pantry, but the SAGE home office told us to be patient. And, sure enough, the boys evened out after a couple of weeks. Now, they get through the line faster and they waste less because they are taking only what they want," said Amy.

Beyond the lunch period, Amy and her team find ways to serve the community. For example, they work with the counseling dept to discover any students with food insecurities. "It's always helpful if we can provide a little extra for the weekend or a snow day." SAGE also works with the Last Mile, who picks up the food remaining after insecurities are addressed.

Another addition in their second year, SAGE is weighing and composting all food waste. "We are proud that we are a zero-waste kitchen," said Amy.

Amy is also a big fan of experimenting with food and getting Moeller guys to try things out of their comfort zone. An initiative called the Adventure Bite brings in interesting and different foods for festive days like Chinese New Year. She also has fun with holidays like Cinco de Mayo, the day when SAGE served seven thousand soft tacos at Moeller, "it's a day I won't soon forget," Amy reflected with a smile.

Asked about big ambitions for '24, Amy's eyes lit up. "We had an Eagle Scout, Owen Speed, make us three large raised beds in the courtyard. I hope to get our garden going this summer where I can grow herbs, tomatoes and peppers to start," she said. "And I'd also love to get a cooking club off the ground."

To the Moeller Family, SAGE has been a welcome regime change in the world of high school lunch service, making fresh and healthy food a reality for our students and faculty, and quickly becoming an indispensable part of the community.



## What are their faves?

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