Dr. Gary Praetzel Steps Aside
This spring, our International Sport Class – German Excursion afforded students an amazing opportunity to learn about European sport from a variety of experts who could speak from personal experience. Tourist activities and extracurricular experiences gave the students a glimpse into German culture, which instantly widened their world view and provided them an incredibly valuable perspective.
Dear alumni and friends:

Most of you will likely see this article after I have already retired from Niagara University. My official retirement date is Aug. 31, 2014, but my last day working at NU is July 31. Mike Gentile, associate dean of the college, associate professor of sport management, and director of the M.S. program in sport management, will serve as interim dean beginning Aug. 1, 2014.

A nationwide search was conducted to fill the dean’s position, but we were unable to hire the “right” person for the job; hence, the search will resume this summer with the goal of hiring someone to begin in January 2015 or summer 2015. We are appreciative of Professor Gentile serving in this role of interim dean for the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Even though I retired, I will still have a connection to Niagara University. In retirement, I will have the title of special assistant to the president and provost, meaning that, on occasion, I may be assisting the president and college, in some way, if requested.

The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management has achieved many distinctions. It is nationally ranked; it was the seventh program accredited in the country in hospitality and tourism; it offered the world’s first bachelor’s degree in tourism; it started its own international network of hospitality programs around the world; it developed innovative, customized international programs; it became the fourth hospitality and tourism program in the U.S. to achieve college status; but, most importantly, it always put its students first and foremost.

This is why we developed a practical industry applications focus in the college to complement the many academic distinctions that we achieved. By providing our students with superior work opportunities, superior international opportunities, superior industry-related student excursions, and superior industry-related events on campus, we developed a level of professionalism in our students unmatched on any campus in the country. How many students attend a reception in their honor at the Waldorf=Astoria with industry leaders and leading employers, or work events leading up to the Super Bowl?

This added marketability and professionalism truly comes together in the annual College of Hospitality and Tourism Management Career Fair. Relatively few hospitality, tourism, and sport programs have their own career fair, let alone one with 50 employers, of which 25 are national recruiters. Our students are hired by the best companies in the industry, period. We have had a 100 percent placement rate over the past 10 years, and no one comes close to beating that. But what really counts is the quality of the job placements – and no one, and I mean no one, beats the quality of the companies that hire our students.

My prayerful hope is that you – our industry partners, employers, donors, and alumni – continue your strong support of our students. It is through your time, talent, and treasure that we are able to provide our students with superior learning opportunities. You have changed lives by your generosity. I hope that you will continue your support of the college – and even kick it to a higher level – as we face so many challenges in this trying economic environment.

Thank you for helping our students and for being such special friends and partners of this program in changing student lives. Thank you, too, for all the special help and kindness that you have provided me personally since I first began as dean of this college in 1999. You have brought great joy to my heart, but even more so to our students.

In grateful appreciation.

Gary D. Praetzel, Ph.D.
Dean

The Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., NU president (left), and Dr. Timothy Downs, provost and chief academic officer (right), present Dr. Gary Praetzel with a gift in appreciation of his service to Niagara University.
Sport Management Students Teach Underserved Children to Swim and Skate

Last fall, Niagara University students enrolled in SPM 497 (Sport Based Youth Mentoring) organized a variety of outreach projects aimed at bringing sport and recreation opportunities to underserved children in Niagara Falls. As part of the class, students spent 30-35 hours volunteering in the community.

One of the service-learning programs that the students devised was a free learn-to-swim class for second and third graders that was held at the Kiernan Recreation Center. The NU students volunteered their time to serve as instructors and lifeguards for the entirety of the eight-week program. This was the second year it was offered.

“This program is extremely important, given that statistics show that children in this demographic drown at very high rates, and many cannot afford swimming lessons,” said Dr. Rachel Madsen, assistant professor of sport management and the service-learning liaison for the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Other projects included a weekly after-school recreation program at the Doris Jones Resource Center located in the Harry S. Jordan housing community on Highland Ave., and six ice skating sessions at NU’s Dwyer Arena.

Career Fair Offers Students Pre-Graduation Networking Opportunities

Close to 50 employers attended the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management’s annual Career Fair at Niagara University on Feb. 19. Companies ranging from Darien Lake Theme Park and Resorts to the world-famous Waldorf=Astoria Hotels & Resorts were on campus to discuss job opportunities with Niagara University students.

And students turned out in droves, funneling into the Castellani Art Museum to cash in on the college’s outstanding post-graduation job placement rate, which continuously hovers around 100 percent.

Shortly after the event kicked off at 1 p.m., job seekers were lined up outside the museum, anxious to take a turn to distribute their resumes to potential employers. Nearly half of the company representatives remained on campus after the two-hour allotment to conduct one-on-one interviews with students.

“This is nothing short of an unbelievable turnout of companies, especially given the state of the economy,” said Dr. Gary Praetzel, dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management. “Their attendance is indicative of the very high quality of our hospitality and tourism programs; these employers know that if they intend to hire an NU student, they will have to recruit them even before they graduate, in many cases.”

The event was co-hosted by Niagara University’s Office of Career Services.
NU Alumna Credits Undergraduate Training for Life-Saving Actions in Monroe County

By Michael Freedman

On May 5, 2013, Samantha Elliott, while working the overnight shift as a night auditor at the Renaissance Del Monte Lodge Hotel & Spa in Pittsford, N.Y., responded to the room of a guest who had suffered an apparent heart attack. Upon her arrival, she took immediate and lifesaving actions by performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, until she was relieved by responding personnel.

The guest was rushed to Strong Memorial Hospital for emergency surgery. Elliott was later told that the man was recovering well and was discharged from the hospital in about a week.

For her bravery, Elliott, a 2012 graduate of Niagara University, was presented with the Civilian Service Award during the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office’s Office’s 11th Annual Awards Luncheon on Sept. 26.

“Without your critical and competent response, the victim may have suffered irreversible harm or death if he had not received aid prior to the arrival of first responders,” remarked Patrick M. O’Flynn, Monroe County sheriff. “On behalf of the men and women of the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, I commend you for your quick action and demonstration of caring, which led to a life being saved.”

Elliott credits her ability to respond to the potentially grave situation she faced in Pittsford to CPR training she received as part of a class she took as an undergraduate at Niagara University.

“I wanted to take the time to thank you again for making everyone who takes your Advanced Hotel Operations course complete a CPR class before they can pass,” wrote Elliott in an email to Dr. William Frye, an associate professor in NU’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management. “It was because of you and your decision to involve this in your course that I was able to assist in saving someone’s life.

“I am sharing this with you because I hope you continue to have CPR a mandatory part of your course. I also hope that someday Niagara University and universities nationwide make this mandatory for all of their graduates. The class is only a few hours, but a few hours can save someone’s life. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Since 2007, Dr. Frye has made CPR/AED training a mandatory component of his courses in Advanced Hotel Operation (MHR 445) and Club Management (MHR 409). Dr. Frye coordinates training through a Rochester-based company, Shock for Life, which specializes in AEDs (automated external defibrillators), CPR, and first aid.

“The entire premise of this course requirement was that we, as hospitality owners and managers, have a responsibility to take care of our guests, especially in their time of need,” explained Dr. Frye, who also serves as the executive editor of The Rooms Chronicle and editor of the Electronic Journal of Hospitality Legal, Safety and Security Research. “From an ethical and moral point of view, it is unconscionable to take money from guests for providing hospitality services, yet not assist them when they need it the most.

“We must be able to foresee that, at some point in time, a guest in a hotel or a member in a private club will suffer sudden cardiac arrest or be unable to breathe. If we do not immediately respond, there is a high likelihood the guest/member will die or suffer irreversible brain damage due to lack of oxygen. It is very unlikely that paramedics can arrive in time to save the guest. Therefore, we must train our students to be prepared to take immediate lifesaving action until professional help can arrive. Samantha’s story serves as validation for this course requirement.”

Professor Completes Geotourism Book

Niagara University professor Jan van Harssel recently completed a two-year project as lead author on The National Geographic Learning’s Visual Geography of Travel and Tourism. The remarkable book, published by Cengage Learning, introduces readers to many aspects of world geography while exploring established and emerging tourist destinations worldwide, a concept called “geotourism.”

The book begins with an overview of geographic concepts and an introduction to the global tourism industry, including the perspective of both hosts and guests. World destinations are covered in 12 sections divided into 40 chapters, each presenting regional geographic information and physical, cultural, and touristic details specific to individual countries and locations. Each destination features flags, National Geographic maps, descriptive introduction, key facts and data, travel and cultural tips, and information on significant tourist destinations and attractions. Each section contains articles from National Geographic Magazine in the features “Insider Info,” “Through the Visitor’s Eyes,” “City Highlights,” and “Preserving the Future.” According to van Harssel, “The book’s contents reflect the latest trends and developments in world tourism.”

The 550-page book features a vibrant, full-color design with more than 240 maps and over 500 photographs and illustrations. Ideal for avid travelers and aspiring hospitality, travel, and tourism professionals, the book has earned praise as an engaging and informative guide to the world’s varied and appealing destinations and their cultures. The book is available in Niagara University’s campus store.
Niagara University 2014 Business Pitch Winners Announced

By Melissa Heidt

In a spirited competition featuring a record six finalists, Dining Clue was chosen as the winner of the College of Business Administration’s second annual Business Pitch Competition, held March 27, 2014.

Three esteemed Niagara alumni, Bud Crumlish, ’76, Karen Howard, ’84, and Rocco Surace, ’77, graciously gave their time to put the brave students through a more genteel version of the popular TV show Shark Tank. The groups held up well, making it a difficult decision for the judges.

The first-place winner, Dining Clue, is a customized restaurant reservation system that uses a specialized algorithm combining customer preferences and restaurant offerings to generate “pleasant surprises.” Part of the experience is the mystery preceding the customer notification and subsequent spontaneity. Verena Krewerth and Svenja Janorschke, international students studying in the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, came up with the hip, trendy concept.

Recovery Roller, an advanced muscle restoration device developed by a team of several student-athletes from the College of Business Administration, Micah Paulino, Kyle Hayes and Bob Reeves, garnered second place. The judges were particularly impressed with the fact that this product was already being used with success by several Division I athletes at Niagara.

Abintra, a one-stop service provider for small businesses, founded by College of Business Administration students Jon Anderson and Michaela Kowalick, won third prize. According to this team, they have already secured one paying customer and have several other good leads. The judges were most impressed with their choice to get out into the marketplace, which they felt would speed up the learning and market penetration curve.

Three other teams presented their excellent ideas for their new ventures. Jim Lumadue and Michaela Page from NUBottleBottle designed a revolutionary device to avoid wasting any product that comes in a plastic bottle. Katy Martin and Alison Napier developed Formally Yours, a retail store that will rent formal wear for girls and women. Brian Roth, Laura Robinson, Jason Cutler, and Elisha Teibel conceptualized Ground Up Coffee, an entertainment and gathering center to fill a void in the Niagara Falls social scene.

“This is yet another great example of our faculty and alumni coming together to provide our students with a true-life simulation of the business world. Our hope and belief is that the skills our students acquire through this experience will make them superior employees and entrepreneurs,” said Dr. Shawn Daly, dean of the College of Business Administration and sponsor of the competition.

The morning after the competition brought even more good news. Five Niagara teams were selected by another independent panel of judges to participate in the Western New York regional competition on April 11, 2014, at the University at Buffalo. They include Dining Clue, Recovery Roller, Abintra, NUBottleBottle, and GNG (Jack Duffy and Matt Stapleton).

According to professor John Hannon, an entrepreneurship expert in the region and organizer of the NU competition, “We are starting to tap into the entrepreneurial spirit and drive on our campus. Nearly half of the students in the College of Business are taking an entrepreneurship course now, and it won’t be long before our first big splash happens.”

International Tourism Association Awards NU Student, Names NU Professor President

Niagara University was well-represented at a conference held in Las Vegas for an international association of hospitality and tourism educators.

Eileen Roehrle, a student matriculating toward a dual degree from NU and the International University of Applied Sciences in Germany, received the Best Undergraduate Research Paper Award at the 2014 Korea America Hospitality and Tourism Educators Association Conference, held April 25-26.

Also during the conference, Dr. Chang Huh, an associate professor in NU’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, was elected to serve as president of the organization for a two-year term.

“This recognition speaks directly to the very high quality of the students and professors at Niagara University,” said Dr. Gary Praetzel, dean of NU’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management. “I commend Eileen and Dr. Huh for the excellent work they’ve done to receive such an honor from a well-respected international association.”

Roehrle, of Bad Honnaf, Germany, follows Niagara alumnae Isa Witte and Anika Loeffler in winning the Best Paper Award. Her paper was titled A Profile of Luxury Hotel Guests in Sustainable Green Services: A Posteriori Market Segment Approach.
Dr. Gary Praetzel steps aside

By Michael Freedman

Dr. Gary D. Praetzel, the man responsible for establishing Niagara University’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management and forging NU’s reputation as a worldwide leader in hospitality training, retired in May. He will continue serving the university as a special assistant to the president and provost, and will also remain a board member of Visit Buffalo Niagara, the Darwin Martin House, and the Niagara Experience Center.

“I join the Niagara community in congratulating Dr. Praetzel for his 35 years of outstanding service,” said the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M. “In my short time as president, I have come to deeply value the excellent work of Gary, as well as his abiding commitment to our mission. His name is synonymous with our College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, and his immense positive impact on this institution and thousands of current and former students is indisputable.

“Gary Praetzel’s career as dean of Niagara University’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management is the embodiment of Vincentian hospitality, utilizing university resources to impact the lives of students and the hospitality and tourism industry, as well as the lives of people living in poverty. I am delighted Gary will remain an active member of our university community.”

Dr. Praetzel has been affiliated with Niagara since 1978, when he was appointed to the faculty of the College of Business Administration as an economics professor. He was later named director of the MBA program and dean of the college, performing both roles simultaneously for eight years.

In August 1999, Dr. Praetzel was chosen to lead Niagara’s Institute of Travel, Hotel and Restaurant Administration. On Feb. 8, 2001, the institute became the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, only the fourth of its type in the country, with Dr. Praetzel assuming the title of dean.

Dr. Praetzel secured $1.5 million grants from two major foundations, plus millions of dollars in additional funding, helping to shape the college into a leading national and international program. The college achieved a national top-20 ranking, was a founding member of The Leading Hotel Schools of the World, and forged prestigious industry relationships, including a hospitality partnership agreement with Carlson.

Throughout his tenure at Niagara, Dr. Praetzel developed a knack for integrating practical learning experiences with classroom theory. Early on, it was a mentoring program that paired students with business leaders and, in 1999, the launch of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management Alumni Association.

The focus on practical industry applications continues today in the college, with innovative programs such as work-abroad experiences in five-star properties in Lake Como, Italy, and Cusco, Peru; a dual-degree exchange program in hospitality and tourism with the International University of Applied Sciences in Bad Honnef, Germany; the Alumni Advantage and mentorship programs; a cruise course with Norwegian Cruise Lines; an annual career fair; and the college’s signature event, a yearly convocation that honors prominent leaders in the hospitality and tourism industry from across the globe.

For his efforts in promoting international understanding and community service, Schiller International University awarded Dr. Praetzel an honorary doctoral degree. He was the commencement speaker at Schiller International University in December 1997 and at Concordia College in Bronxville, N.Y., in May 1994.

Dr. Praetzel is a recipient of Niagara University’s Vincentian Mission Award, the Outstanding Volunteer Award of Family and Children’s Service of Niagara, the Pathfinder’s Award for industry/education cooperation, and was listed as one of the most influential leaders in Western New York by Business First in January 2013 and again in February 2014.

He has served on numerous boards for organizations including Family and Children’s Service of Niagara, the Erie Niagara Regional Partnership, the Buffalo-Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Niagara Frontier Industry Education Council, the Niagara County Workforce Investment Board, The Leading Hotel Schools of the World, and the Buffalo Convention Center.

Under Dr. Praetzel’s direction, the college founded The Leading Hotel Schools of the World with Hotelschool The Hague in Holland and The Leading Hotels of the World. For nine years, he served on the Board of Regents of Concordia College and also served on the boards of the Community Leadership Development Program of Niagara County, and a national business school accreditation body. He also served on the Industry-Education Council of the American Hotel and Lodging Association.

Dr. Praetzel was appointed to the New York State Governor’s Tourism Advisory Council in 2006, served for many years on the board of directors of the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association, and chaired the Tourism Educator’s Council of the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association.

Dr. Praetzel attends, presents, and helps to organize a variety of sessions at professional conferences both domestically and abroad. He was an invited speaker at the third global conference sponsored by the International Institute of Peace through Tourism in Glasgow, Scotland. He has also published a broad range of articles dealing with ethics, higher education issues, curriculum, study abroad, economic policy, hospitality and tourism, and theology.
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center is joining forces with Niagara University to deliver an exciting new food service experience for hospital visitors, staff, students and volunteers.

The Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., D.Min, president of NU, and Joseph A. Ruffolo, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center’s president and CEO, announced that the university’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management is working with Memorial and Cannon Design to create a modern café bistro that will replace the hospital’s outdated cafeteria.

The yet-to-be-named bistro will be designed to improve workflow and enhance the customer experience while serving a variety of new menu choices in a comfortable, modern setting. The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management also will work with Memorial to introduce current best practices in customer service to the new facility.

“This new program will benefit our students by giving them hands-on opportunities to apply what they’ve learned in class to an operational facility that serves a tremendously diverse customer population,” said Father Maher. “In turn, Memorial will have an opportunity to take advantage of some of the latest research into food service and customer service best practices. This collaboration speaks to our Vincentian mission by supporting service-learning activities in which students reach out with compassion to serve people’s basic needs. This partnership embodies the eternal values of St. Vincent de Paul, combining the heart of a servant with a commitment to excellence in all that we do.”

“It’s no small point that the word hospital is squarely within the composition of the word hospitality. Therefore, the knowledge and expertise we will gain from Niagara’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management will be priceless,” Ruffolo said.

“The partnership with Niagara’s hospitality program is already paying dividends in the redesign of our retail food space, including reconfiguring the layout to provide a more efficient workflow and improve the customer experience. This will create a more attractive dining environment for employees and visitors alike,” he added.

Gary D. Praetzel, Ph.D, dean of Niagara’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, said that, in addition, the university will identify or develop a customer service curriculum and help train Memorial staff in that curriculum.
“Memorial Medical Center has truly transformed itself,” said Dr. Praetzel. “You see and feel the difference when you immediately enter the hospital. This is a cutting-edge community resource transforming the quality of life in this neighborhood and our entire region and we are proud to be contributing to the overall quality of the experience delivered by Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center.”

“Cannon Design is excited about this opportunity to work with Niagara University’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management to completely transform the food service and social experience at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. We believe hospital visitors, staff members and volunteers will be very pleased with the result,” said Michael A. Mistriner, principal, Cannon Design.

Niagara University and Memorial Medical Center also announced they will be collaborating on an effort that will focus on improving the patient experience.

Like all hospitals in the United States, Memorial is graded by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on their Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores. The scores, which are compiled from patient surveys, allow objective and meaningful comparisons of hospitals on topics that are important to consumers.

“The university will develop an incentive program for hospital staff to help them understand the importance of favorable HCAHPS scores, which can impact government payments, and work with Memorial to promote a better understanding of overall patient satisfaction with regular progress updates,” Dr. Praetzel said. “We will then train hospital personnel in current customer service best practices designed to help improve Memorial’s HCAHPS scores.”

Ruffolo said this type of input from non-healthcare professionals will bring a whole new dimension to the medical center’s understanding of the way patients perceive the quality of the care they receive.

“Niagara students and staff will look at patient satisfaction from the standpoint of the healthcare consumer. That perspective, combined with the expertise the university brings, will benefit our patients and their families in a very meaningful and positive way,” he said.

Ruffolo noted that the new initiatives will positively impact local workforce development by expanding internship opportunities in career areas that are important to a healthcare industry that is increasingly focused on patient and customer satisfaction.

“In addition to patient care, medical centers offer careers in care coordination, care management, social work, patient navigation, information technology and many other areas,” Ruffolo said. “We believe there will be a number of other opportunities to help Niagara University students prepare to enter the work force.”

Memorial Medical Center and Niagara University are longtime partners in community service efforts such as ReNU Niagara, the university’s partnership with community-based organizations to build residential and organizational capacity in Niagara Falls and surrounding areas, and its Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) initiative.

In addition, Niagara students volunteer and intern at Memorial each year to fulfill community service and academic requirements.

“This expansion of our relationship is a natural next step,” Ruffolo said. “Niagara University and Memorial Medical Center are mission driven, community-focused organizations that share the same service values and the same commitment to making our region a better place to live and work. We are excited about these initiatives and the positive impact they will make.”
Alumni Spotlight: D.J. Kiernan, ’02: Selling Luxury

By Lisa McMahon

D.J. Kiernan, ’02, is in the business of fulfilling champagne wishes and caviar dreams. For the past seven years, he has worked in the yachting industry, on both the wholesale and retail sides of the business, an opportunity that enabled him to live in some of the most glamorous locations in the world and socialize with captains of industry and royalty. Today, he’s using the knowledge he gained and the contacts he made to launch his own enterprise, Connect K3, a business development consultancy with a focus on wine and gourmet food.

D.J.’s interest in hospitality and tourism was ignited when he was a child taking familiarization tours with his mother, a Dallas-area travel agent. Early jobs selling caviar and fine foods and interning in product development and marketing with Adventure Tours, USA, solidified this desire. He began looking into four-year programs in travel and tourism and discovered what was then the Institute of Travel, Hotel and Restaurant Administration at Niagara University. It was a perfect fit for D.J.’s professional aspirations.

D.J.’s career got a jumpstart while he was still an undergraduate. Dr. Gary Praetzel, who was director of the institute at the time, introduced him to alumna Tamara (Jurkowski) Quilty, ’89, manager of corporate incentives for the Plano, Texas-based Dr Pepper/Seven Up, Inc. That introduction opened the door for D.J. to take on several internships with the company’s corporate incentives and meeting services department, during which he was given first-hand experience in every aspect of the department. When D.J. graduated, he was brought on as an independent contractor, working directly for the vice president.

In 2003, D.J. accepted the position of sales manager with the Broward County Convention Center and moved to Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The city is a major yachting center, and from the convention center’s waterfront location, D.J. could watch megayachts sail up and down the Intracoastal Waterway. After three years, he decided to pursue a career in yachting, and “spent six months talking (his) way into the industry.”

D.J.’s tenacity earned him the brand-new position of marketing specialist for Merle Wood & Associates and the opportunity to work for Wood himself, arguably one of the most successful yacht brokers in the world. He spent more than a year learning about the marketing side of the industry before moving on to create the charter division for Feadship, the leading builder of megayachts worldwide. As manager, D.J. served both the wholesale and retail sides of the division, and met some of the wealthiest individuals in the world. One of his most memorable experiences was hosting a familiarization trip for charter brokers on the 214-foot motoryacht “Trident.” D.J. occasionally lived on the boat while he...
conducted the tours in Italy, the south of France, and in the Bahamas. He even was able to take his parents on the yacht for a dinner prepared by a Michelin chef, one of the 15 crew members who worked and lived aboard full time.

“It was a special treat to be able to share that kind of experience with them,” he says. While D.J. relished his work with Feadship and the outstanding experiences it afforded him, he wanted to expand both his management experience and his knowledge of the charter industry. When Camper and Nicholsons, the global leader in luxury yachting activities, offered him the position of director of charter marketing for the United States, he readily accepted. In only six months, D.J. was promoted to worldwide director of charter marketing, overseeing offices in both the United States and Europe.

The work was exciting and fast-paced. D.J. lived in Monte Carlo for the better part of a year, and spent a few more months in the south of France. He even had the opportunity to enjoy dinner with a baron on the baron’s yacht. The two hit it off, and afterward, the baron sent D.J. an Alessi ballerina toothpick dispenser, identical to the one D.J. had admired while on the yacht.

“Of all the things I was ever given by my clients, I think that one was one of the most special because it represented the opportunity I got to have onboard his yacht and eat good food and taste good wine together and be able to relate to each other,” D.J. says. Eventually, the extensive time and travel required to oversee offices in multiple time zones took a toll on D.J., and, after about 18 months, he resigned, and was granted, a Fort Lauderdale-based position as a yacht charter broker.

It was what he considered to be his dream job, but he soon realized that it wasn’t what he expected, and that “threw me for a loop,” he says. So he resigned and took some time to reevaluate his career goals.

Entrepreneurship had always intrigued D.J., and with the connections he had made in the yachting industry, he was well positioned to launch a consultancy to assist companies in the luxury industry. He is already helping Eten Food Company expand its wine business into yacht provisioning, and he worked in his certified sommelier business partner to offer educational activities and wine tasting experiences. On their first deal, they worked with a client to create a vertical of Penfolds Grange in magnums. It’s a job that brings him back to the caviar business and draws on his experience as a study-abroad student in Switzerland, where he studied oenology and traveled extensively around Europe during the summer before his junior year.

It’s also an opportunity to practice the servant-leadership he learned while at Niagara.

“It all comes down to service to others,” D.J. says of the work he now does. “It just happens that I get to do it in a very luxurious circle.”

Save the date and join us for
Alumni Advantage!
When: Thursday evening, Oct. 9 and Friday, Oct. 10, 2014
Where: Niagara University
What: An interactive program to encourage sharing, networking and professional development between students and alumni
Schedule at a Glance:
Thursday evening: Welcome wine tasting
Friday: Half day of workshops, panel discussions and networking opportunities during which YOU do the presenting, followed by a networking luncheon.

Remember, no preparation on your part is required in order to participate. We will create an atmosphere in which you can share your experiences and advice with students to help prepare the next generation of hospitality executives!

For more information and to register:
Please visit www.niagara.edu/hospitality and click on “events.”

There is no charge to attend. Thursday evening wine tasting and breakfast and lunch on Friday are complimentary.

Questions? Please contact Katie (Finamore) DeCecco at kdececco@niagara.edu

Thank you for your support. See you in October!
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