

Kitchen Apprentice to Culinary Visionary: Chef Kevin Penn's Journey and Impact

Chef Kevin Penn began his culinary career in his hometown of Plymouth, MI, at the age of 14 as a stock boy, dishwasher, and deli helper at the Penniman Deli. Throughout high school, Kevin held several positions at local restaurants, ranging from barback to line cook, before accepting a position as a pantry cook at Meadowbrook Country Club in 1997. It was at Meadowbrook, under the mentorship of Chef Steve Schopen and Executive Sous Chef Paul Sulek, that Kevin was first exposed to fine dining and made the bold decision to go to culinary school.

Kevin attended Schoolcraft College from 1998-2000 and earned an A.A.S. degree in culinary arts. From 1997-2012, Kevin worked his way up at several high-end Detroit-area Country Clubs. In 2014, he made the leap to senior living with StoryPoint Group as Executive Chef at Independence Village of Brighton Valley in Brighton, MI, where he began overseeing the team of talented young culinarians. Later, Kevin opened SPG's first new development community, StoryPoint Saline, and helped to define the culinary standards and practices of the new StoryPoint identity. In an industry not immediately considered for their outstanding dining experiences, Kevin changed the narrative, challenging his organization and the entire senior living industry, to provide higher culinary standards and improved dining experiences for seniors — simply because it's what they deserve. During this time, he also earned the distinction of Certified Executive Chef and Certified Culinary Administrator from the American Culinary Federation.

In 2017, Kevin assumed the role of Regional Executive Chef overseeing six senior living communities, personally dedicating himself to the development of six young and qualified Executive Chefs and their teams. In 2018, he was promoted to Corporate Executive Chef where his influence and guidance only grew. Currently, as Vice President of Culinary, Kevin leads a team of three Regional Chefs and four Culinary Support Specialists. Collectively, they are mentors to over 500 talented chefs and cooks who are trusted with the dining experience of 11,000 residents at 120 communities across the nation.

As a leader in the organization, Kevin created the first StoryPoint Group culinary competition team. He developed and coached these young Chefs to be first time competitors, striving for excellence and improving their craft. In addition to his work at StoryPoint Group, Kevin currently serves on the advisory committee for both the Detroit Institute of Gastronomy Culinary Apprenticeship Program and the Culinary Institute of Michigan-Port Huron campus. Additionally, in July 2024, Chef Kevin was appointed by Chef Rene Marquis CEC, CCA, AAC as the chair of a new ACF national Senior Dining Segment task force dedicated to increasing ACF membership of Chefs working in the senior living industry and creating quality culinary educational materials and content to enhance the resident experience in residential senior living communities. Through these professional and personal endeavors, he works to be an active member of the culinary profession.

Kevin doesn't stop his community outreach by just devoting his time to the professional development of young StoryPoint Group culinarians or the culinarians outside the organization. He also volunteers with several charitable causes: including the Chef Tobin Looman Foundation, as the Chair of Fundraising Committee; Love for a Child, as a featured Chef at their 2023 *Eat, Drink, Love* fundraising event; and founder of the Spectrum Society, a social group for young adults on the autism spectrum.

As an avid culinary competitor since his days at Schoolcraft College, Kevin has earned dozens of medals in both category KC contemporary hot food and category F mystery basket events, including three gold medals. To no surprise of his colleagues or friends, Kevin is currently completing the apprentice judging

requirements in pursuit of a Level II Judge Certification to further pursue his passion for challenging, improving, and bettering himself, the young culinarians around him, and enhancing the professional Chef image.