BELMONT — The Food for Thought Café has become a hot spot for downtown culinary delights in Belmont, where students at Laconia Regional Community College have the opportunity to share their knowledge of classic and modern cuisine and serve it all in fine style.

One of the most comfortable and quaint rooms on the top floor of the Belmont Mill first began operations in 1999, when the college received a $1 million grant to build the facility for students of the hospitality management program. Over the years, they have evolved into a two-year culinary arts program with associate degrees and certification available in Culinary Arts, Restaurant Management, and Baking and Pastry.

“Our students take general education courses in math, sciences, and the humanities, and can get their associate degree and become certified in two areas of study in as little as three years if they work hard at it,” said program coordinator Patrick Hall.

Others, he said, prefer to take a bit longer to get all they can from the programs in their personal schedules at the same time.

Hall and Chef Instructor William Walsh work with a maximum of 10 students each semester to teach them about every aspect of the restaurant industry. Industry-oriented students start at Food for Thought, such as those students working in the World Cuisine dishes, as well as on the Casual Dining & Fine Dining concepts.

Laconia’s Culinary Arts Program was started to meet the demand for culinary and food service staff for local businesses.

“Every day, we prepare 450 different menu items from scratch each day, and no students ever get bored,” said Walsh.

This semester alone, the students will have the chance to prepare 11 different menu items from around the world. The most popular of the 11 is the one created by one of the students currently studying at Launettes, who said the choice to study at the local eatery was in part due to its culinary arts schools and chance to work with students in the industry. Dymond found he could get the same education at LRCC for half the price. Not only is the education in par with those college degrees, he said, but the experience is priceless.

“This is realistic: The café is our classroom, and we get to learn what we’ll be doing for the rest of our lives right here,” Walsh said.

Dymond said, “It’s a great place to eat, and we often see that people who have been here once come back and bring others with them from the first time.”

“Many of our students also work part-time,” Walsh added. “Their schedule is flexible, and we offer them many options in terms of work hours.”

“The students, like our instructors, are committed to giving back to the community,” Walsh said.

For more information, call (603) 823-8182 or visit www.porterpaving.com.

NORTHFIELD — Plans for the second annual Pet Expo, which will be held from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 21, at the Pines Community Center, are announced by Rotary Club President Donna Hall.

“Final preparations are underway for Pet Expo,” said Hall. “We have over 30 vendors ranging from veterinary services to pet sitting services.

“Hall said. “It would be boring something new every day,” so we’re always presenting new things to do each day, and no students ever get bored,” Walsh said.

“I’d like to work in a restaurant. The full experience of what it’s like to work in a restaurant. The students take turns working not just out back in the kitchen, but also as waitstaff, as well. They set tables, take orders, serve the meals and clean up every day.

“Farms are the Pet Expo, please contact March 31 or online at winterfarmersmarket.com.

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