



The Fire Inside

"TO IGNITE AND INSPIRE PASSION
IN EVERYTHING WE DO"

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WINTER 2005

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Seasons Greetings and Happy Holidays!

The Holiday season is upon us! This is a very exciting time of the year...the frequency of our regular guests increases and we get many people through our doors

for the very first time. We have already set new records for daily sales and lunch and dinner counts! We know we have a great concept but it is YOU who makes this happen!

We extend our gratitude to you for the contributions that you have and will continue to make to the Firebirds concept. Travel safely this holiday season and enjoy these special times

with your friends and family!

Seasons Greetings and Happy Holidays!



Burning You Up!

In this winter edition of *The Fire Inside*, we'd like to share how having passion everyday translates into making ordinary events, extraordinary.

Our first story comes out of Peoria, where Managing Partner, Jim Cone was on a trip to World Market. After visiting with the manager, who had never heard about Firebirds, Jim began to tell her about the restaurant and some of our specialty dishes. The next thing he knew, a gentleman overhearing this conversation piped up and said how much he loved Firebirds. Other customers waiting in line, now very intrigued, started asking Jim all sorts of questions and before he knew it, Jim was speling (just like in his server days) all about our incredible Double Black Diamond Martini, Lobster Queso, BLT Salad, Wood-Grilled Steaks and on and



Jim Cone with Grassroots on the Go!

on. Without missing a beat, Jim ran out to his car and handed out \$10 gift cards to everybody in line, some of whom came in for dinner that very evening! What a great example of literally having *The Fire Inside*.

As the leaves were falling, grassroots were growing as many of the restaurants hosted local events. Firebirds Charlotte was rockin' and rolling once again as the three time sponsor of the Providence Spring Elementary Fall Family Night Dinner. On Thursday, October 27th, 934 families enjoyed Firebirds Mixed Greens Salad, Aspen Sirloin, Parmesan mashed Yukon Gold potatoes, Chicken Fingers, Macaroni and Cheese, Fresh Fruit and fun!

The event raised \$5,820 for the school, making Firebirds their largest corporate and individual sponsor.



AJ Miklos, Mike Yerys, Tyler Fray & Chuck Hall at the PSE Event

On October 21st,

Firebirds Memphis held an outdoor event for a local charity between the restaurant and the Hummer Dealership. Included were a moonwalk for children, door prizes and giveaways. It was a great day and a great way for Firebirds to give back to the community.

Other grassroots events this fall included Firebirds Tucson's participation in Cirque de Encantada with Lobster Spinach Queso as the star.



Jose Sandoval, Ed Ramirez, John Carrell, Taryn Sardis and Mari Riley at Cirque de Encantada

Firebirds Raleigh II catered the VIP Pre-

Opening event of the REI Sporting Goods store, welcoming guests with Coconut

Shrimp and Lobster Queso.

Chandler was all Hollywood glam hosting 2 hot events...the first was at a



Erin Eichorst, Jason Bray, Rita Bielecki, & Jim Cone

local Mercedes Benz dealership where they unveiled the new R Class Hybrid, and the second was at the grand opening of a new medical spa.

Something is always going on and that's the way we like it. Moving ahead, look for even more grassroots marketing where the results will be profound. With *The Fire Inside*, nothing can stop us!



Hospitality Mentality - by Steve Kislow

What have you done lately to make someone's day? Team Arizona has begun snapping pictures of their regular guests, giving us the opportunity to learn their names and for them to learn ours. Also, guests are excited to go to our website and see their pictures in the newsletter!

We have the opportunity to create a dynamic, fun and memorable dining experience for every

guest that walks through our doors. We choose whether this is going to happen or not. We choose our attitude!

Chuck and Teddie Eley are like part of the family at our Peoria restaurant. Jim keeps six packs of Caffeine Free



Teddie & Chuck

Diet Coke on hand for Teddie...why? Quite simply, because that is what she likes. On my first day in the

Peoria restaurant I had the opportunity to spend some time with the Eleys and they made it evident that they are RAVING FANS.

Gayle and Bobby Ray from Chandler, AZ have been coming to Firebirds since the opening and it is



Gayle & Bobby



their ONLY choice on Friday nights. As a matter of fact, table 51 is their designated table! The Rays joined the team in celebrating Rita's 26th

birthday and helped play a little practical joke. That's FISH!...involve your guests!

Who are some of your favorite guests? We would like to meet them!



Hot Off The Grill - by Steve Sturm

Cooking Notes:

We all want the most flavorful steak cooked to our preference. Here are a few tips to season and grill your steaks to perfection! Distinct Flavor...don't skimp on the seasoning! Each side of the steak should be coated with seasoning so that when the steak cooks, the seasoning seeps in, creating flavor in

every bite. Grilling Master...cook with the coals, not the flames! When cooking on a grill, wait until the coals are hot and the flames have subsided before adding the meat. Remember, flames char the meat!



Product Notes:

We have just completed our dessert renovations! Once again, our new desserts set us apart from every other restaurant chain. We now have 5 desserts and they all have the same "homerun" appeal as our Crème Brulee Cheesecake. With the desserts being



made for us, but using our recipes, we will continue to manage labor and remove complications from the kitchen.

We are now focused on the holiday season and I wanted to remind everyone that this is a great time of year to make new friends. Many of our guests will be visiting us for the first time. We have the

opportunity to turn them into regular guests with our outstanding food and service. We will all be working very hard during the holidays and I want to thank you all for your hard work with the improvements we have made, and for all the continued improvements we will make in the future.



"What Makes Us Want To Be the Best We Can Be?"

Mark Eason
COO
Firebirds
International

Underdog Mentality - by Mark Eason

By the time this article prints we will be well into our gift card and check average contests. I wonder who will win??

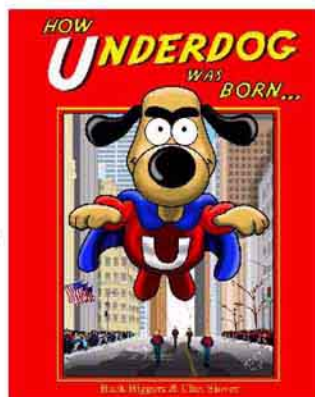
We have also had some action brewing with regards to the hours over labor guidelines...In their quest for the "Perfect Mile," Richmond has set a new record for 40 days in a row without going over the labor guidelines. Richmond is the first restaurant to make it one whole period without going over...congrats! No one has ever gone two whole periods! Will anyone ever do it?

What makes us want to be the best we can be? Is it competition? Is it your boss? Is it a rule or a suggestion? Or, is it what you're made of? Is it a thought process that you are trying to be the best you can be... and then get better after that?

No one can really make us do something we don't want to do, but if there is any hint of competitiveness in you, you do not want to finish last. You want to win. So, you try each and every day to be

successful, whether you're trying to build sales or manage your expenses. You watch, you try new ideas, and you emulate the ones that are doing a good job, and remember to share best practices.

Wendy Kay is this issue's selection for go-getter. She has been a true leader as it pertained to lowering Phoenix's linen cost. As a result, they made their linen budget for the first time! No one made her do it, no one



even asked her to do it. She just did it!

What gets your blood flowing? What is your hot button??



“We Have Great Momentum Company Wide and a Desire To Improve...”

Rob Kendall
President
Firebirds
International

Rounding Out the Year - By Rob Kendall

We just had one of our best periods of 2005!!

We have just concluded a series of Operations Review Meetings over the course of 120 days and have met with about 99% of our “supervisory” staff. We have shared the vision of the company, where we are and where we need to be from an operations and financial perspective. With that comprehension we will all be able to accomplish our strategies and goals.

In the meetings, we had FUN, shared ideas and best practices, learned and came to the understanding that each person is accountable for his/her performance. We have great momentum company wide and a desire to improve upon that.

A goal was to complete implementation of our major initiatives be-

fore Thanksgiving so that we can laser beam focus on operations. There is a long list of what has been implemented so we can maximize our operations and financial objectives. We'd love to have a lot of fun, create a memorable dining experience, set a bunch of records and make a bunch of money (so we can continue our growth).

Here is a list of all those initiatives that you should be familiar with (again – things provided for you to exceed the guest expectations):

- New Wine Lists
- New Wine / Beer Panel for the martini book
- New Dessert Panel
- Holiday Gift Card Foyer Sign
- Holiday Gift Card Check Presenter
- Holiday Gift Card Table Tent
- Christmas Drink Table Tent

- New Feature Cards
- New Feature Card Backs with Holiday Cheesecakes To Go
- Holiday Gift Card Sales Contest

The holiday season is upon us, so let's work together as a team, deliver a consistent, high quality and valuable product coupled with our “Red Carpet Commitment” so that Firebirds is “top of the mind” for guests when choosing for lunch or dinner.

Have a safe and prosperous holiday season!!



Anniversaries

This past fall we celebrated four anniversaries...Richmond celebrated their two year anniversary on September 4th, honoring 17 two year and 26 one year employees. Managing Partner, Stephen Kislow, who was just recently promoted to



The Firebirds Richmond Anniversary crew!

Market Partner, came up with the idea of having the employees nominate their choice for best overall one year and two year employee. William Barnes, Jr. took the one year title, winning a \$100 shopping spree to Short Pump Town Center. Two year veteran Angela Ross won two tickets to see Bruce Springsteen, “The Boss,” in concert! The kicker was that the tickets were Steve Kislow’s. He had graciously donated them thinking he would be out of town. In the end, he would have been able to go, but got more out of making some-

body's day. What a guy!

On September 29th Firebirds Peoria celebrated their two year anni-



Phoenix 1 and 2 year veterans!

versary with 15 two year and 16 one year employees. Two year grand prize winner Liz Davis won a \$100 Best Buy gift certificate and a \$25 dinner certificate to Famous Dave's. One year grand prize winner Deanna Brodeur was awarded with a one hour massage and a \$25 gift certificate to PF Chang's.

DJ Mariello and Team honored 15 one year and 17 two year employees on October 25th for the two year anniversary of Firebirds Memphis. Megan Woods, one year winner, won a \$50 gift card

to Firebirds and Tina Rutherford, two year winner, won a \$100 gift card to Firebirds.

On October 25th Firebirds Chandler celebrated their one year anniversary with 45 one year employees. Wow! Jason Alvillar won a \$100 gift card to Best Buy, and the group enjoyed burritos (donated by US Foods) and reminisced about the past year working as a team.



Chandler 1 and 2 year employees!

In December, Charlotte will celebrate five years on the 6th and Tucson will celebrate two years on the 8th. Congratulations and thanks to all of our tenured employees!

Happy Anniversary!

The Operations "Review" - by Gerald Pulsinelli

Firebirds is a team of people dedicated to providing an elevated dining experience like no other. Excellent service, high quality, and unique menu items are the cornerstone on which the concept was conceived.

With that being said, all 10 restaurants have rolled out our new menu and progressive wine list...with much acclaim from our guests.

The last two periods of the year we will focus strictly on execution inside the four walls of the restaurants. We must be committed to running 28 Great

Lunch Shifts and 28 Great Dinner Shifts! The difference between good and great is in the details. It begins with our People: we must properly select and train our staff. We must be committed to ensure they have the tools to



Candace Jensen (Memphis) and Mike Thomas (Raleigh) are all smiles at Ops!

do their jobs successfully. Operations: the team must be relentless and uncompromising on our standards concerning food and service. Weekly follow up on our Systems in Place will allow us to measure where

we stand and what areas of opportunity we must focus on to strive for continual improvement.



The 28 Great Lunch Shifts and 28 Great Dinner Shifts begin with proper deployment of hours, having the sales building mindset, setting clear goals and expectations when it comes to ordering/receiving product, being uncompromising on our recipe adherence in the prep room, performing FOH/BOH line checks, having upbeat and energetic Preshift meetings in the FOH/BOH, having Aces in Place during each shift, performing proper line execution, having style of service in place,



ORM Attendees Soaring High!

proper window and floor management, 100% Guest visits (Hospitality Mentality, Red Carpet Commitment), flow through at the front door, and huddling up between lunch and dinner to make any necessary adjustments for the upcoming shift.

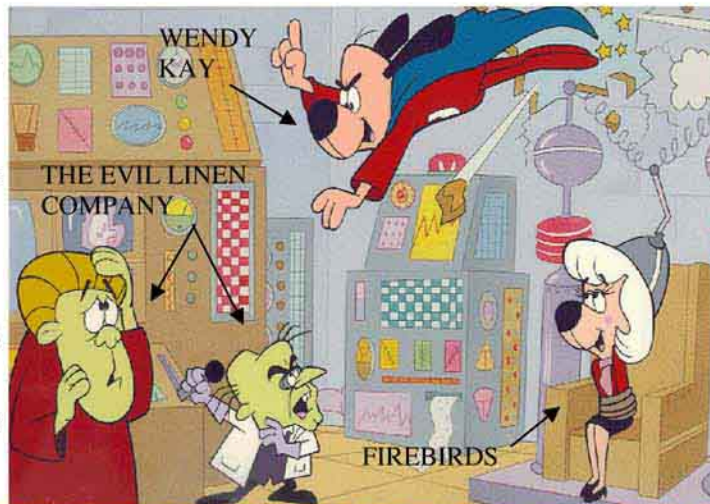
Thank you everyone for your commitment to providing 28 Great Lunch Shifts and 28 Great Dinner Shifts!

Go Getter - by Mark Eason

Congratulations go out to Wendy Kay, this issue's go-getter! Wendy is the bar manager in Peoria, AZ. It was a tough decision with all of the improvement we see in the restaurants, but Wendy stood out this time with not one, but two areas of impact.

She first set out to lower the restaurant's linen costs and never wavered until it was accomplished. She poured through invoice after invoice from her linen company, scrutinizing each one to see if they were correct and within the contract. She found many mistakes

and issues and called a meeting with the manager of the company. After their meeting, credits were issued and ultimately their linen targets were met for the first time.



The second thing Wendy did to catch our attention was to duplicate the wine tasting seminar she participated in at the Operations Review Meeting in Raleigh. I just happened to be in Peoria the night of her wine tasting class and she duplicated the process down to the last detail. It was very impressive. Wendy will receive a copy of "The Go Getter" signed by the executive team, and she will also receive some accessories for her iPod.

Thanks Wendy for setting the pace!



A Stellar Quote...

"Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization."—Taylor Faulkner

In response to Mark Eason's million dollar question at the Period 1 | 2005 Operations Review Meeting in Raleigh, NC..... "What does EBITDA stand for?" When called upon, Taylor was the first person to respond with the correct answer. Mark has been asking the infamous question since August 2005.



Obituaries

With a heavy heart, we regret to inform you that the Management Team of Firebirds Richmond has met their fate. They attempted the impossible, never tried before quest of hitting the labor guidelines 28 days in a row. And, as it was declared to them from the beginning, success would only mean fatality. The team is survived by three key hourly's, Jon Grigeman, John Utley, and Cory Carden. Flowers were sent and services were held at the restaurant on November 17, 2005, the day of the tragedy.



What It Takes - by Charles Blankenship

With the end of the year rapidly approaching, the Firebirds Team has a lot to be excited about. We have caught FISH!, started to unlock the Keys to Management

Success and embraced the "hospitality mentality" – all while focusing on the red ball.



Corks were poppin' at the last two Operations Review Meetings as we celebrated the promotions of Rita



Bielecki and Steve Kislow with a champagne toast. Steve is taking his "cult of hospitality" tour to Arizona as the Market Partner.

Steve brings a combination of tenacity, competitiveness, creativity and operational expertise to lead Team Arizona. Stevo leaves the Richmond restaurant in the very capable hands of Kevin Drought and Team Richmond.



Charles & Steve

Rita has also found her new cheese in Arizona. Rita has taken over the Chandler Firebirds as

Managing Partner. Rita has left a lasting impression on all ten Firebirds she has opened. Now she takes her energy, commitment and passion to Chandler. Expect great things!

Rita is another perfect example of the career path available at Firebirds. Rita joins a special fraternity of MPs that started with Firebirds as hourly employees. Currently 30% of the Firebirds Managing Partners started as hourly employees – Who will be next?



Gerald & Rita

In addition, we have four Managers in Training. Darral Van Goethem is training in Phoenix and will join Team Chandler very soon. Manuel Cordray is training in Charlotte and will be a big part of the new North Charlotte location opening in March. Michael Yerys and Taylor Faulkner are the most recent "Promote From Within" managers. Michael has been doing his BOH training in Charlotte and will finish up his FOH training before the end of the year. Taylor will also be settling into a Management position after spending the last two years on the road opening restaurants and helping out from coast to coast. Welcome one and all!



What's Shakin' - by Tyler Fray



There is potential everywhere. In every place that we look and in everything that we do, there is potential. Isn't it exciting!

We have successfully rolled out our newly formatted menu in all ten restaurants. The cleaner, sharper look, the newly highlighted items, the "romanced" copy and the Firebirds brand page are all designed to better market ourselves and communicate with our guests within the four walls of the restaurant.

Outside the four walls, we have direct mail campaigns rolled out in Memphis, Omaha and Birmingham. The message of this particular "testimonial" piece is to show that Firebirds is a great value and offers a variety of menu items. It encourages guests to think of Firebirds as their "Aspen Lodge Getaway," where the atmosphere is casual and they can

feel comfortable. It invites them to view Firebirds as their "regular place." The piece itself offers guests \$10 off their visit. As an added bounce back, every time a direct mail piece gets redeemed, we hand the guest a "Firebirds Regular" piece that includes a \$10 gift card so that they will come see us again. The response has been extremely positive and we look forward to rolling this out in other markets after the New Year.

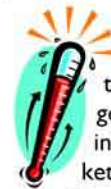


The first weekend after the drop, Omaha broke a Friday sales record and Memphis saw their highest grossing Saturday in over six months! The day after Birmingham's direct mail piece dropped, they celebrated an all day sales record!

We have just begun to scratch the surface with our grassroots marketing efforts. Congratulations to the eight restaurants who have secured Event Coordinators and to those managers who are out and about in their community, making connections and building "The Buzz" about Firebirds. Special recognition goes to the



following new recruits: Ryan Dompier, Chandler; Shana Collins, Raleigh; Amber Albrighton, Birmingham and Dawn Berry, Raleigh II. Event Coordinators have also been using the "Firebirds Regular" piece as part of their grassroots tactics.



As we head into the holiday season, we have the potential to break our Gift Card sales goals in every restaurant. New initiatives this year include marketing whole pies for the holidays with our Crème Brulee and Pumpkin Cheesecakes, as well as promoting new Holiday Cocktails. Keep in mind that the greater the gift card sales are now, the more redemptions and traffic we can expect in the New Year!

As 2006 approaches, so does the potential for great things to come. The web site is under construction along with a new dessert/drink piece. Email marketing will become a highly leveraged tool, fresh ads for existing and new markets will be revealed, and two new restaurants will open...and that only brings us to spring! As always, there are so many things to look forward to. I hope you are enjoying the moments along the way.

Happy Holidays!



Be the first to find the holiday location! Note: The bell could bell and you will win a prize! Email me at mcollins@firebirdsrestaurants.com with the be any size! Best of luck and have a wonderful holiday season! —Marie Collins

