

Foodservice East

THE BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS PUBLICATION FOR THE \$80 BILLION NORTHEAST FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY

BOSTON AREA MANAGEMENT SERVICES FIRM MOVES TO TAKE "GOING GREEN" TO A NEW LEVEL FOR CLIENTS

NEWTON, MA – "Greening" is on the increase this year with many operators seeking to embrace more ecologically friendly initiatives, and one suburban foodservice management company is in the forefront of that shift.

Unidine Corporation was the exclusive catering and concessions provider for last Fall's Greenbuild conference of the US Green Building Council.

The company provided meals for an estimated 25,000 attendees daily featuring organic and locally grown foods, incorporating sustainable and ecofriendly food preparation and disposal. All packaging, paper products, signage and cutlery were made

from natural, biodegradable materials. Leftover foods were donated to local food pantries with waste sent to local farms for use as feed. Cooking oils were recycled as biofuels.

The company now looks back on the event as a trial run for its launching its own "green product" for healthcare and business clients.

That program, still in the final development stages, offers a comprehensive initiative that is intended to "take green to a new level," Unidine says.

Individual clients, says Director of Culinary Systems and Services Paul Booras, who calls himself Unidine's "green nut," will be able to customize the program.

"We wanted to differentiate who we are," he explains, noting that going green can be "daunting" for businesses and healthcare organizations.

A commitment to sourcing locally is a first step



Simply from a purchasing perspective, Booras points out, "it can be very big, difficult and complicated." Unidine teaches managers to "get out to the local food community and know it. Part of making a 'scratch' kitchen affordable involves buying from local farms."

The new program involves implementing a "mindset change" that entails a commitment to the process. "You can't just flip a switch to green."

From management down, staff has to be educated in a process Booras compares to "learning a new language. It requires everybody to be excited about it."

For clients in multi-tenant buildings, the challenge includes getting everyone on board with efforts for composting and recycling.

"Sometimes people want to jump into it but then realize it's more than they thought and quit. We are devising a program that can be customized."

Absorbing the expense of change can be a challenge, he says, adding: "In every challenge, there is opportunity."

Operators today, and in particular, community hospitals, are focusing on their core role of serving their communities as budgets get "rebuilt" to reflect realities such as higher co-pays, less foot traffic, and other factors that could lead to the loss of five percent off topline income. "Many," says Booras, "are being prudent and want a bit of a piggy bank coming into an uncertain environment."

As they "weather the storm," he predicts, "discretionary income will go into programs that move the industry forward."

"You can't just flip a switch to green..."

