

MultiEthnic Entrepreneurs find success in Hoosier State

After catering Hillary Clinton's 50th birthday party and serving the president numerous times, George Pesek settled down to open several restaurants in Culver, Ind. Pesek established the Corndance Café and Marmont Grill as a place for people to sit back, relax, have fun and eat away from the bustle of the city.

Pesek, originally from the Czech Republic, has become more than just a chef - he is a businessman. He chose Indiana because he feels it is an underserved community, full of people who need more cultural experiences.

"I believe we brought culture that was not seen in Culver," Pesek said. "We made our mark."

While Pesek provided culture for an Indiana town, America presented a cultural experience for Richard Miller, owner of Fineline Printing Group in Indianapolis.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Miller came to the U.S. with his family as a junior in high school and began living in New York. Miller spoke no English and had to learn to adapt quickly to the new environment.

Upon arrival, Miller noticed the economic prosperity of the country right away.

"So, you come from a country like Argentina, and have a \$100 when you arrive," Miller said. "You walk outside the airport, and everyone is rich in America. Everyone is driving Chevy's, but you know that in your country (Argentina) only

the president has one. It's easy to see that America is a land of massive opportunity.”

Without a high school diploma, Miller began working different jobs including a sales representative for Nabisco Brands for 11 years. Still, he aspired to open a business of his own.

In April of 1981, he founded Fineline Printing in Indianapolis. He developed his business through dedication and hard work.

“I enjoyed meeting people and cold calling,” he said. “I knocked on a million doors, and it grew little by little.”

The company now has more than 75 employees and serves clients such as Honda Motors, Eli Lilly and the Indy Racing League.

Miller advises minorities interested in starting a business to begin with a unique concept.

“Your idea has to be a little different these days. Multiethnic communities must understand that there is a need for them. And if there is a need, learn where to locate that need so that you have the most chance of making it.”

Miller also states that the stereotypes that hinder Hispanics today are changing.

“The stereotype that being Hispanic means you own a restaurant, paint houses or trim bushes is changing, I think,” Miller said. “More and more people identify that Hispanics are in higher positions.”

Pesek believes interaction with the community can break down stereotypes that affect multiethnic communities. After encountering some

resistance from the members of the community, his restaurant is now largely frequented by customers who come from other cities for a taste of the unique cuisine. Pesek encourages multiethnic Hoosiers to not give up on their goals despite adversity.

“The foreigner has to make the effort to get to know the people of the community,” Pesek said. “Usually then, the people of the community are very warm.”

Pesek suggests that more cultural celebrations, exchanges and ethnic educational opportunities could help all Hoosiers in understanding different culture. However, he encourages individual effort by engaging in the community and meeting as many people as possible. He also suggests showing others your intentions, giving back to the community and getting involved in general. Pesek believes that by being a positive example each person can make a difference.

Speakers such as Pesek and Miller will share their stories at the Indiana Multiethnic Conference, initiated by Gov. Mitch Daniels. The Indiana MultiEthnic Conference’s objective is to educate Indiana leaders of their role in making the state a more welcoming place for diverse ethnic groups. The conference also serves to highlight the positive roles that multiethnic communities serve in fostering social and economic growth through foreign investment.

The conference will take place on Tuesday April 22, 2008 at the Sheraton Hotel at Keystone at the Crossing. The cost is \$60 and registration information, media resources, conference background and committee biographies are available online at www.indianamultiethnic.org.