

# Restaurant Heart of the House Award

## NOMINEES 2022

THIS AWARD RECOGNIZES CHEFS, SOUS CHEFS, OR LINE COOKS WHO APPLY CREATIVITY AND INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES TO THEIR EXPLORATION OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL CUISINE TO THE DELIGHT OF GUESTS. IT RECOGNIZES EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE AND EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE BY AN EMPLOYEE IN A NON-MANAGEMENT POSITION WHO DOES NOT HAVE REGULAR CUSTOMER CONTACT.

### **ELMER FERNANDEZ** CORPORATE TRAINER, METRO DINER

Elmer is a great leader and a hospitality master! I have had the pleasure of working with him at Metro Diner and Scotty's Brewhouse, and my admiration for him has not wavered. His dedication to quality is unmatched. Being that we have an open kitchen at Metro Diner, Elmer's smiling face is the first thing our guest see upon entering. If that is not enough, Elmer works at another restaurant besides Metro Diner and that employer also finds that he is incredible. During the pandemic, Elmer was in constant contact with management and was the first one to be called back.

### **ANDRE JONES** LEAD LINE COOK, CONNER'S (INDIANAPOLIS MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN)

Andre Jones began his culinary career humbly at Steak and Shake where he was a line cook for seven years. It was during this time that Andre started to become passionate about cooking and decided to enroll in Culinary school. After enrolling and getting through his first year, Andre decided that he wanted to begin getting higher end culinary experience, so he applied at Conner's Kitchen and Bar, and was hired as a line cook.

Although Andre has only been in position here at Conner's for nine months, he has quickly become an institution in the kitchen. His positive attitude, upbeat persona, thirst for knowledge and ability to learn on the fly has been contagious with the rest of the team, and even though he is still relatively new the staff loves working alongside him. Andre is a self-starter, and when there is down time is always seen helping others on their stations or lending a hand to the prep cooks.

Most important, his quality and skills have improved drastically over his time at Conner's. He is meticulous, takes critique to heart and truly cares about the guest experience. As a longtime leader, I can always tell if a cook who is preparing a plate of food is passionate about their craft by the way they make the dish, plate the dish and put the dish in the window. I can say with confidence that Andre is one of the most passionate cooks I have worked with, and he is very deserving of the Stars of the Industry Award.

### **ISAMU KANAI** LINE COOK, KIZUKI RAMEN & IZAKAYA

Isamu Kanai has been working as a line cook at Kizuki Ramen since 2019. He started working in a noodle restaurant in Japan when he was 15 years old as he wanted to help his family in financial needs. He moved to the United States at the age of 20 to pursue his studies. He is very passionate about Japanese cuisine and has helped Kizuki achieve greater success in tremendous ways.

Earlier this year, he came up with a genius idea of using a mesh filter in our soup pots so that we can just lift up the bones in the filter to discard instead of slowly scooping and sieving through all the soup that usually takes 2 hours of work. We ordered custom made stainless steel mesh filters to fit our 80 &

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## NOMINEES 2022 (CONTINUED)

### **ISAMU KANAI** (CONTINUED)

100 quarts stock pots and now, it only takes 30 mins or less to yield all the soups!

Isamu also suggested for Kizuki to start selling Japanese Curry and came up with the recipe that is simple and delicious. We launched our new item, Japanese Curry in June 2022 and to date, we have sold almost 1000 bowls of curry don totaling about \$10,000 in sales.

Isamu is a cook who always keep himself busy. When he doesn't have a food ticket to work on, he will be doing prep work, helping other cooks, and detail cleaning such as scrubbing the bottom of each pots and pans. He is also a funny guy, joking and dancing in the kitchen, making the tedious work and hot environment in the kitchen more relaxing for everyone. He works great with the rest of the team although most of them are half his age or younger, and served as a great role model for the younger generation. Everyone in the restaurant respect and love him.

As a former sushi chef with 26 years of kitchen experience, his knife skills are very impressive, and he has been a valuable asset to our restaurant as he teaches the rest of the staff on proper way to use a knife and mandolin, cutting skills, sharpening knives technique, as well as safety precaution in the kitchen.

Therefore, I highly recommend Isamu for this award for his excellent service to the industry.

### **WILLIAM LEE** KITCHEN UTILITY/DISHWASHER, HOLIDAY INN INDIANAPOLIS AIRPORT

It is our privilege to write this letter recommending William Lee for the "Stars Awards". William joined our Holiday Inn family in April of this year, and since day one he has been a "star" of the team. William goes above and beyond, not only professionally but personally as well. When it comes to William's co-workers he will do whatever he can to help. William has helped his fellow teammates with changing brakes for a single mom, and helping flush a transmission etc.

William is part of our kitchen crew with an eagerness to learn more restaurant positions. He has helped with breakfast, lunch, dinner, and banquets. He helps put our truck deliveries away, bussing tables, and is the forerunner when it comes to BOH cleanliness.

William is legally deaf, and yet we have all found a way to communicate with him. When a co-workers is talking with William, he is very patient, teaching the staff member to slow down so they can better communicate. His smile and over exaggerated wave brightens up a room when he walks in. He will always acknowledge himself when his is passing bye.

William is a go getter, you can wave for him to come over to help you with something, and he's grabbing things he think he might need along the way. William has stepped up going above and beyond the calls of his duties. He is always there to help.

"A great story about William :) One day in September 2022. We had a massive water leak in the banquet halls unbeknownst to William because of him being deaf, he has been mopping the employee hallway behind the banquet rooms, now I am sure that he was wondering where the extra water was coming from, but not giving in William just kept mopping. When the leak was found in the ball rooms the water was pouring from the ceiling and any other hole that it found. William jump into ready mode and started to grab towels and continued to mope getting up what every water that flowed from underneath the doors. That is William in a nut shell ready to jump in when he is needed."

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## NOMINEES 2022 (CONTINUED)

### **MARCUS MANGUS** CULINARY SUPERVISOR, HIGH VELOCITY (JW MARRIOTT)

Marcus has been with White Lodging for one year. He started with us as a line cook and was promoted within 6 months to a kitchen supervisor. Marcus has been outstanding and a great asset to our team. He comes in everyday with a positive attitude and eager to learn something new.

Marcus has not been in a leadership role previously. He has quickly grasped his new position and responsibilities. Marcus has been nominated for Best of the Best here at our hotel. Recently he has been aiding the chefs with recipes and specials. He has been learning how to manage our food cost, purchases, and labor. He has proven that he is capable of leading his team. Marcus is able to communicate to his team well and helps keep the kitchen calm during peak business. He shows genuine care to his staff by assisting them on the line when they need help, he's patient by showing his team how to properly execute dishes, upholds quality and consistency by properly executing our dishes and upholding standards in the kitchen.

We truly enjoy working with Marcus. I look forward to his continued hard work and great work ethic. I truly believe a positive attitude goes a long way. A positive attitude tells me they are eager to learn, trainable, and works well with others. All good traits for becoming a good leader. Marcus has these traits and he will continue to become successful throughout his career.

### **NESTOR SOLIS** HOH SUPERVISOR, ST ELMO STEAK HOUSE

Nestor Solis has been working in the food hospitality industry for nearly 30 years. He started his career at Palomino Downtown Indy and worked there for 14 years. He moved up in the kitchen extremely quickly because of his hard work ethic. He got promoted to Line supervisor within the first 5 years of working there. One of his many roles was training all new line cooks. In 2005 Nester made the move just down the street to St. Elmo Steak House and hit the ground running. He started his new journey as a sauté cook and quickly worked his way through all the positions and soon was a master of all in the heart of house. For the past 3 years, Nestor has been one of the main grill cooks, one of the most difficult positions at St. Elmo Steak House, cooking well over 1,000 steaks a week to perfection. Nestor has recently been promoted to line supervisor. His consistency and work ethic are contagious, and others want to be like him. In his 17 years at St. Elmo, Nestor has become a true leader in the HOH, an ambassador of St. Elmo and a true inspiration to all our new hires.

Nestor has been married 20 years. He and his wife have 3 lovely children. Daughters that are 17 and 13 and a 6-year-old son.