

Chef dreams of only food



Staff photo by Larry McDevitt

Stephanie Goldenberg stands inside Kildare's Irish Pub on Gay Street in West Chester. She was the only Chester County cook to participate in Philly Cooks competition.

Kildare's head cook brought her love of food to local fund-raiser for AIDS assistance organization

By JILL NAWROCKI
Staff Writer

WEST CHESTER — For Stephanie Goldberg, corporate chef at Kildare's Irish Pub in the borough, it's all about the food.

Goldberg, who helped close the former Restaurant and The Bar and open Kildare's in its place, participated in the Philly Cooks charity event Wednesday night.

The benefit, sponsored by major Philadelphia businesses, hosted some 50 chefs from the city and surrounding suburbs. It was open to the public and raised money for MANNA, an organization that delivers food to patients with AIDS and HIV. Nearly 1,000 tickets were sold.

Kildare's, the only restaurant from Chester County to participate, donated all its ingredients and materials for the charity event. Goldberg said she was attracted to the benefit because proceeds from ticket sales would go directly to MANNA, an organization she said she has a strong connection to.

"I have a friend who was dying from the disease," she said. "And it's such a positive organization. They cook for people when they can no longer make food for themselves."

About 1,000 people attended the event, where chefs prepared signature appetizers, entrees and desserts from their respective restaurants. Goldberg and her staff adapted one of Kildare's dinner favorites, the goat cheese mixed-green salad, for the event.

"It was a lot of fun and the turnout was

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—STEPHANIE GOLDBERG,
corporate chef, Kildare's Irish Pub

great, which means more money for MANNA," Goldberg said. "We tested a lot of food from different chefs and I saw a lot of people I've known from other places."

Eight years ago, Goldberg decided to abandon her undergraduate studies in clinical psychology to pursue a career in the culinary arts.

"I've always wanted to be a chef and I've always loved food," Goldberg said. "I remember growing up, watching Julia Child. I loved watching her hands. I have always loved chef's hands."

Her own hands are now scarred and worn, blistered battle wounds from hours spent behind the line in kitchens across the state and across the country.

"It's weird when people call me chef now," she said. "Because I'm still looking, checking for that teacher behind me."

Goldberg, 28, was born in New York City but grew up in Montgomery County. Food, she said, was a part of her family and always a passion and point of intrigue for her.

"My mom and my grandmother are really good cooks," she said. "My grandmother made these incredible pies. They were unbelievable. You have to love it, really love it, or else you get bored."

After a 21-month course at the Culinary Institute of America in New Hyde

Park, N.Y. and an externship at the New Orleans Marriot, Goldberg cooked at some of the most exclusive restaurants in Philadelphia before settling in Chester County.

Goldberg, who has been at her current location on Gay Street since last January, heard about the position from her chiropractor, a mutual friend of Kildare's owner. She said he knew about the pub's need and her extensive background in food production.

She is a cook, not a baker, because in her kitchen measurements are not an exact science. As a chef, she can alter and change flavors according to the ingredients. However, she said, minor mistakes could sometimes result in major mishaps.

"I love to create," she said. "You learn all of these things in school about food and it's amazing. Where you take it from there is up to you."

Goldberg said the job can get stressful, but that her team of 10 cooks is in getting the preparation and plating done on schedule.

"No matter how hectic it gets in our kitchens, I try to remind my staff that it's food, it's just food," she said. "It's good food, simple food, tasty food, and people are going to love it."

Kildare's plans to open additional restaurants with more extensive menus in King of Prussia and Manayunk in May and June of this year.