



Food service director for Aladdin Food Management Services at Appalachian Bible College in Bradley, Susie Gooden is a Clarksburg native. She handles the management of all the details and personnel concerns that go into meal planning and preparation of daily meals for students and faculty and for special occasions and conferences on the campus.

PHOTOS, RICK BARBERO/THE REGISTER-HERALD

# Feeding Faithfully

Susie Gooden cooks up enthusiasm, fun and safety for ABC students and staff.

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REGISTER-HERALD SENIOR EDITOR

On any given day, Susie Gooden's work shift could start at 5 a.m. and end in late evening. Or, she could go in at 7:30 a.m. and leave at a "normal" time. "It all depends on what's going on. If we have Homecoming or special meetings or events, it can be a longer day, but when I come in, I never know for sure exactly when I'll get home," she said.



"Totally surprised" was Susie's reaction upon winning the Safety Award presented by Aladdin. The recognition came for a year without any accidents or Workers' Compensation claims. Susie is quick to credit her staff for their diligence and excellent performance record.

The food service director for Aladdin Food Management Services at Appalachian Bible College in Bradley shoulders the responsibility of managing all the details that go into meal planning and preparation for students, staff and campus guests for conferences and special events. "There's never a dull moment, and I like it that way," the Clarksburg native said. "There are new challenges all the time, and I work with such wonderful people, I can't imagine having a better job."

She enjoys coming up with fun events, such as building a 50-foot hoagie for students. "I love the students here. I think of them as my kids," she said. "I enjoy finding some unusual things to do for them and with them" she continued.

During the summer camps operated by Alpine Bible Camp, an extension ministry of ABC on the north side of its campus, Susie and her staff prepare more than 40,000 meals. Daily, she helps feed about 400 people. There are more than 300 members of the student body



Susie likes making things special for her diners, she says and loves opportunities to add a creative flair to table settings/ She wants all dinner guests to have a good meal and an enjoyable dining experience.



The campus environment is like a huge family, says Susie. She especially enjoys working with her kitchen staff. Some of them shown above are, from left, Susie, Gwen Toler, Carol Bosley and Grace Hunt.

who file into the spacious, attractive dining hall on the second floor of the servant center.

"When I first came here, the kitchen was in an older building. The Servant Center is a beautiful place, and I have a cook's dream kitchen and storage area here." Supervising a nine-member staff and 60 or so students who help with food services, she keeps track of inventory, does the ordering, conducts regular safety meetings and provides the motivation and encouragement for her workers.

"We are a big family here, not only in our kitchen staff, but the whole student body and faculty," she went on to say. "From the president of the college on down, the people here are so polite and respectful, and we all really care about one another. No matter how hectic things get, I can always count on having a lot of people stop and talk and share encouragement, and there are lots of smiles and fun times, too," she continued.

Growing up in Belington in Barbour County, Susie says she loved to cook. "It seemed like everybody came to our house for Sunday dinner. I've always loved to cook, but baking is really my thing," she said.

She found catering to be a good career and worked as a catering director before signing on with Aladdin and working for what was then Salem-Teikyo College.

In 1996, she was offered the opportunity to come to Bradley and become director for the company that subcontracts from ABC to provide its food services. "I had never heard of ABC, and I hadn't been down in this part of the state much, but I immediately felt it was something I should do. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made."

She met and married Howard Gooden from Elkins. "The Lord had plans for me. I know He brought me here, for a lot of reasons, including my husband," she said.

Working in a faith-filled environment also proved to be spiritually rewarding. "I wasn't a Christian when I came here. I was a good person in many respects, but I didn't know the Lord. Dr. Anderson (ABC's president) told me, 'Susie, you came here to serve the bread, and the Lord gave you the Bread of Life.' He was surely right about that," she said.

She visits her dad in Belington almost every weekend, and the two enjoy taking their shotguns out and participating in shooting matches.

This summer, she attended a regular seminar conducted by Aladdin each year at Oglebay Park in Wheeling. There were the usual kinds of business, but Susie was thoroughly surprised during an awards ceremony. "They were giving out the safety award, and they called my name as the winner. It took me a few seconds to realize they were giving it to me. I was totally shocked," she said. The award represents a year without accidents or Workers' Compensation claims.

"My staff gets the credit for this award," she said. "I have wonderful employees. They work well together, and they all pay attention to what they are doing and give their best on the job."

Aladdin district manager Kelly Burke pointed out Gooden also won an "Attitude" award from the company. "Susie is an all-star employee. She does a really good job, and she does it with a smile," he said.

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