Sullivan students enjoy learning in the beautiful Caribbean.

Sullivan students in no particular order Matt Johnson, Amy Eicher, Michael Ford, Kyle Ouute, Monet Caballeros, Kit Keegan, Lauren Hotetz, Michael Ford, Lauarette Kokasso, TerikTy Stanford, Chris Williams, Kelly Carlton, Kylee Hill, Cassie Adkins, Kelly Grosse, and Aaron Schreiber with chaperones, the late Professor Kerry Sommerville, Hospitality Management Department Chair, Chef/Instruction Bob Straw and Instructor Anne Sandhu prepare to transfer to the Kon Tiki boat to begin their snorkeling adventure.

A record number of Sullivan Hotel-Restaurant Management and Travel, Tourism & Event Management students recently participated in an all-inclusive resort tour in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. The students and their three faculty chaperones were greeted with spectacular Caribbean weather and top-notch service at the Ocean Blue Golf and Beach Resort.

Punta Cana lies on the easternmost tip of the Dominican Republic and is home to a coastline of silky-fine, white sand beaches dotted with coconut palms. “It’s one of the largest and fastest growing tourist destinations in the Caribbean,” said Hospitality Instructor Anne Sandhu, a faculty chaperone.

“With over 40 resort hotels and more than 25,000 hotel rooms, Punta Cana is one of the largest tourist destinations in the Caribbean.”

Students gave rave reviews during their stay, students had the opportunity to experience all of the resort’s amenities, which include more than 375 beautifully-decorated suites, nine restaurants, ten bars, two infinity swimming pools, and even a bowling alley. “This resort has everything,” said student Linda Johnson. “You never really have to go outside the gates.” “The grounds and the landscaping were spectacular,” added Hotel-Restaurant Management student, Maurice Clifton. “I’ve never seen so many different colors of flowers, and the palm trees that are everywhere just blew me away.”

Students Amy Eicher and Chris Boggs proudly display the medals they received at the Salute to Excellence gala banquet. (Read more about Chris and his brother on page 11.)

“Underwater fun was an all-day Kon Tiki Snorkel Tour was enough to coax everyone away from the resort and to a large boat which would take the group out into the Caribbean toward a 30-mile coral reef off El Cortecito Beach. Snacks, beverages and snorkel gear were provided; many students enjoyed the opportunity to try snorkeling for the first time. “I’ve never experienced anything like this,” said student, Kit Keegan. “The colorful fish and the coral were just awesome.”

International culinary experience

Even with so many activities to choose from, food and dining took center stage, and students were able to sample a large variety of traditional Dominican cuisine.

“The cuisine stems from native Antillean and hearty Creole recipes and is prepared similar to the dishes of Central and South America,” said Instructor Sandhu, adding, “Rice and beans are usually served with a variety of meats, seafood, meats, and vegetables along with light spices or coconut added to the traditional Caribbean flavors.”

Left to right: Chef/Instructors Bob Straw and Instructor Anne Sandhu strike a pose before checking out the fantastic beach.

When Sullivan’s Culinary Arts students want fresh herbs, they only have to walk as far as the door. For 20 years, the University has maintained an on-campus herb garden that performs many functions.

“Obviously the benefits of having the freshest herbs at a chef’s fingertips not only enhance the dishes created, but the feeling of picking something and walking straight to the cutting board, with the obligatory pass through the sink, gives a chef a certain feeling; one that results in pride and respect for whatever it is that is being prepared,” stated Culinary Arts Chair Allen Akmon, CEC, CHE, adding, “From a Chef/Instruction’s point of view, the herb garden is a great tool for the teaching of product identification, often difficult when only one or two species are present. However, Sullivan’s garden, has Thai Basil, Opal Basil and Sweet Basil with a variety of Thymes, Italian and standard Parsley, Dill, Cilantro, Oregano, Savory, Rosemary, Sage, Chives, Garlic Chives, Lemon Grass, Lemon Verbina, a wide variety of chilies, and some very stubborn mint!”

Strolling around the lush grounds of the Ocean Blue Beach Resort were, front row, left to right; Lauren Hotetz, Cassie Adkins and Jamatha Days. Back row: Andres Delvalle, Michael Bakur and Kit Keegan.

Sullivan students honored by reknowned National Restaurant Association

Sullivan’s Hotel/Restaurant Management students, Amy Eicher and Ronald (Chris) Boggs, were recently honored by the Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association (NRA) at the Salute to Excellence Student Forum and Awards Banquet. They joined the ranks of a few select student scholars from college hospitality programs around the nation.

The NRA hosts this event every year in Chicago.

“I was honored to be picked to represent Sullivan University at the Salute to Excellence program (at the National Restaurant Association),” said Amy Eicher, “At the banquet, you can meet and network with the select few students picked for this program nationwide.”

“The Salute to Excellence Banquet was very exciting. Getting to walk up in front of hundreds of people, knowing that they are at the program to honor you gave me a great feeling of pride,” said Ronald Boggs. “This trip really helped me appreciate the valuable education that I received at Sullivan University. I would like to thank all of the Chef/Instructors for the knowledge that I have gained while attending Sullivan.”

The gala banquet included a speech from Hermie Cain, past NRA President and former President/CEO of Godfather’s Pizza. Cain also addressed the students earlier in the day at a luncheon where students and their faculty chaperones had the opportunity to network with other industry luminaries.

The weekend also featured several meals at local Chicago restaurants including a lunch in Chinatown (that featured among other items fried chicken feet), dinners in an authentic Greek restaurant and at National 27, whose name refers to the 27 recognized Latin American countries.

Sullivan alum gets an insider’s view from Sheryl Crow’s personal chef

Chef Jane Storella has been a busy lady. In addition to attaining her Professional Catering degree in 2006, and working as a Hospitality tutor, she will earn her Bachelor’s in Hospitality Management next month. But that’s not all. Jane recently completed the Personal Chef class at Sullivan and is certified by the American Personal and Private Chef Association (APCPA).

Jane recently had an opportunity to experience the life of a Personal Chef when she worked alongside Chef Chuck White. Chef White travels with renowned singer Sheryl Crow on tour, preparing and serving meals to her and her band. Chef White contacted Sullivan’s National Center for Hospitality Studies searching for a chef to help him with the evening meal.

“I had a wonderful time working with Chef Chuck,” said Chef Storella. “He has the right combination of skills that make him very successful in the Personal and Private Chef segment of our industry. We started the day unloading and setting up his portable kitchen. Grocery shopping is next. After returning, we unpack, store the groceries and start on the menu. Lots of logistic have to be worked out during the day as to where, when, who, and how Ms. Crow and the band will be served. After preparing a snack for rehearsal, the rest of the dinner is completed. We plate, serve, clean up, and pack up. It wasn’t all hard work because we get to enjoy the concert. I am thankful for the opportunity Sullivan provided for me to see first hand the life of a Personal Chef.”

After graduation, Jane plans to return to New Hampshire and open her personal chef business.

Some of the resort’s restaurants served Italian cuisine, Mexican cuisine, and of course, traditional American fare.

Sullivan Hotel-Restaurant Management and Travel, Tourism & Event Management students participate in two annual tours. The cost of the tours is included in the students’ tuition and fees. After this fall’s trip to Boston, department chairs will be hard at work planning next year’s exciting travel destinations.

Some of the resort’s restaurants served

Sullivan students enjoy learning in the beautiful Caribbean.

Wow! What a fantastic classroom setting!

Students Amy Eicher and Chris Boggs proudly display the medals they received at the Salute to Excellence gala banquet. (Read more about Chris and his brother on page 11.)

Chef Jane Storella with Chef Chuck White