

QUINCY HERALD-WHIG

Quincy native inducted into Missouri Restaurant Hall of Fame



Russell "Buddy" Lahl

By **Ethan Colbert** Herald-Whig
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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Earlier this year, Quincy native Russell "Buddy" Lahl was inducted into the Missouri Restaurant Hall of Fame during the annual convention of the state's restaurant and food service industry.

It is an honor that he said was "very humbling" for the once-novice dishwasher and busboy who worked at the now-closed Stipp's, a Quincy steakhouse owned by Doris and Art Stipp.

Lahl says he spent hours during his childhood watching his grandparents, parents and employees who worked at Doc's Flame, a restaurant at Fifth and Maine, prepare meals.

"For me, it all ties back to Stipp's and to the Flame. Doris would always say it was our goal to make sure every guest leaves here 100% satisfied," said Lahl, who now lives in Grandview and is director of dining services at Kingswood Senior Living Community, where he supervises a staff of 62.

"The restaurant industry is one of the few industries where you can start a job like a dishwasher and with hard work and determination, you can move up the ladder and be an owner or manager, but only if you are willing to work hard," said Lahl, a 1986 graduate of Quincy Senior High School.

He previously worked for Myron Green Corp. as it expanded its operation to include managing dining operations for long-term care facilities.

Today, Lahl said his time in the kitchen is spent putting the finishing touches on the dishes before being served. Lahl said it helps him stay connected to his roots and the passion for food he discovered in those Quincy kitchens long ago.

"I love to eat. I love to cook. I love to play with food and to try new things. I love to make people happy and to provide people with an experience that makes them look back and say that was the best meal they ever had," Lahl said.

While Lahl said he "never considered himself worthy" of being inducted into the industry's hall of fame, Missouri Restaurant Association CEO Bob Bonney disagrees.

"Buddy's commitment to the industry is over the top. His ability to get things done is amazing. When something is important to Buddy, he is going to find a way to get it done," said Bonney, who explained how Lahl helped distribute much-needed equipment and dishes left from a restaurant that closed in Kansas City to training kitchens across the state.

"Buddy realized that equipment, the flatware, the pots and pans could all be used, and in this case, it was in the ProStart teaching kitchens around Missouri. So, Buddy loaded all of that up, put it in a storage unit at his own expense and then drove it across the state to the people that could use it. Not many people would do that, but that is the kind of person that Buddy is. He cares deeply about helping other people in the same way he was helped," Bonney said.

According to remarks made at the Hall of Fame induction, Lahl believes it is vital "to provide a shirttail for a youngster to grasp," which is why Bonney says Lahl's greatest contribution to the state's restaurant industry is his involvement in the ProStart kitchens.

ProStart is a nationwide, two-year high school program that teaches vital kitchen skills and management lessons such as menu development and marketing. In Missouri, ProStart is in 100 high schools and career centers with more than 6,000 students involved.

"He is absolutely passionate about ProStart. He understands that our industry is a producer of middle-class jobs and can give young people a foot in the door and career advancement as long as they work hard," Bonney said.

Lahl was nominated for the Hall of Fame by members of the Missouri Restaurant Association's Board of Directors.

Lahl said, "It is very humbling. I know most of the previous honorees, and I see them as being true industry icons, who have done great things in our industry. I never thought of myself in being of that caliber."

Among those previously inducted are the late Jessie Alice Cline, a home economics professor at the University of Missouri who worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study the management, methods and techniques of food preparation and wrote meat cookery manuals for the U.S. Army and Navy during World War II; the late Vincent Bommarito, who was considered to be one of St. Louis' most celebrated and revered restaurateurs; the late Florence Hulling, who became the namesake of Miss Hulling's, a downtown St. Louis cafeteria-style restaurant; the late Herb Leonard, who was a successful franchise owner of the Steak 'n Shake restaurant chain in Springfield, Mo.; the late Doris Layman, who was director of nutrition for the St. Louis Public Schools for 20 years; Dick Walls, who as a 23-year-old opened Heidelberg Restaurant, which is now a staple of Columbia's restaurant scene; and the late Maxine Griggs, who in 1972 opened Maxine's Gourmet House and Lounge in Sedalia.

Lahl is the son of Patty Doyle and the late Russell Lahl. He is the grandson of the late Bud and Agnes Lahl and the late Bade and Evelyn Reis, all of Quincy.

He and his wife, Juanita, have one daughter, five grandchildren and a great-grandchild. Lahl previously was president of the Greater Kansas City Restaurant Association in 2011 and Missouri Restaurant Association president in 2016.