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Daren Heslop

The shelving Shoemate built was intended to create a fresher, more farmstand-style atmosphere in the Gazebo as they launched their new healthier focus.

From the kitchen to the woodshop

Last school year, Linda Brinegar, executive chef, was looking for projects her employees could tackle during the slower months of summer break. After prayerfully considering options that would both stay within budget and continue to move Dining Services in the right direction health-wise, she hit upon an idea.

“Her idea was to change the atmosphere of the Gazebo,” explains Joseph Shoemate, lead cook on the morning shift in Dining Services. “When you want to make major changes to your offerings, the easiest way to do that is to change the way everything looks at the same time.”

Joseph was tasked with taking unused pallets and turning them into shelving for the Gazebo. He built endcap and stand-alone shelving to display the

made-to-order restaurant’s wares and condiments.

“We wanted to make the space look more like a farmer’s market where you can get fresh produce straight from the farm,” Shoemate explains. “Changing the environment changes the culture, which is really the end goal.”

Shoemate, who had never built shelves before and was unsure of his abilities, began working on the shelving in June and completed the last piece in September, spending close to full-time work in the woodshop each week.

“I was nervous,” he admits. “It was a ton of work.”

Shoemate is no stranger to making things from scratch; as a professionally trained and educated chef, his passion is creating and experimenting, especially when it comes to hands-on projects.

He attended Johnson and Wales University in Denver, Colo., and

earned his culinary arts degree, which he followed up with an externship in Grand Teton National Park working as a breakfast chef for one of the Grand Teton Lodge Company’s restaurants. Then he accepted a position at Southern Adventist University (Collegedale, Tenn.) to help the dining services team work toward healthier concepts.

He now has been working at Andrews for four years, and enjoys coming to work each morning to prepare breakfast for the campus.

As for the shelves he built, “I’m really happy with the end result,” says Shoemate. “I’m very proud of what I’ve done, and I’ve become 100 percent more confident in my woodworking skills because of this project. The whole process was a giant learning experience.”

What’s next for this creative chef who’s also skilled in the workshop? Bread.

“I’ve been spending a lot of time perfecting my sourdough bread-making skills,” he says. “I want to learn more and get even better at what I already do well.”

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Becky St. Clair is media communications manager at Andrews University.

