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FROM STEAK TO NACHOS: TWO U. CITY CAFETERIA WORKERS HAVE LOVINGLY COOKED MEALS FOR STUDENTS SINCE THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION; THE RISE OF THE BEE GEES

University City, MO – Years ago, the School District of University City cafeteria staff was once famous for its **U. City Steak**, a breaded and egg-washed steak served with or without homemade gravy.

It was so delicious, alumni still sometimes call Cafeteria Manager **Sharon Knuckles** and her coworker **Delores Gardner** for the recipe. Both know it by heart. That’s because the pair has been working in the school cafeteria for a combined 63-plus years. And, both love their job so much, the pair has *never missed a day of work* but to attend family funerals.

Sharon Knuckles, who also attended U. City, has been cooking for the district for more than 40 years. She started with the District in 1977 when the Bee Gees ruled the charts, Jimmy Carter was president and Cabbage Patch Kids hit the store. She was following in her mother’s footsteps. Her mother had also been a longtime cafeteria worker with the district. In her 40-plus years since, she’s seen styles change, including eating habits. Long gone are the U. City Steaks and the large sheet-pan casseroles, replaced by more streamlined finger foods like nachos, pre-made pizza and baked chicken fingers. They’ve also witnessed the demise of the deep fryer to healthier preparation methods and more nutritional choices. But there’s always been one constant: hungry kids grateful for meals, who are glad to see Miss Knuckles and Miss Delores serving it up day after day.

“I’m happy and I love it,” said Knuckles. “I have no plans to retire anytime soon.”

Delores Gardner, who still whips up a mean Mac and Cheese, has worked in the University City High School cafeteria for 23 years and is planning to retire soon. Her last day cooking lunch will be on Thursday, May 30th. **Staff have planned a special preparation of the U. City steak in honor of her and Knuckles.**

Their day starts at around 5:45 a.m., and ends at around 2:30 p.m., with Knuckles often providing rides to and from work for her co-workers. In addition to breakfast and lunch, they also started preparing after school dinner bags for students this school year to meet the needs of families who may have food insecurity in their homes. When it started, as many as 275 students were taking sack lunches home to have in the evening.

“Sharon Knuckles and Delores Gardner rarely ever miss a day of interacting with the students of University City,” said Dereon Hill, Director of Dining Services. “They have served thousands of students over four decades for Sharon and two decades for Delores. There is nothing they love more than the kids they interact with on a daily basis.”

In the School District of University City, our food service workers are important to us and an important part of energizing our student community. That’s why we’re taking the time to recognize two of them.

#UCLionPride

On February 21, 1911, with a City population of only 2,417, The School District of University City was officially established. Classes began in September 1912 with a total school population of 769. Today, you will find outstanding educational programs serving a student population of approximately 2,800 with a preschool, four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. In May 2018, University City High School held its 101st formal Commencement Ceremony.