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Gecko's Restaurant Group: American Pub Food with a Gourmet Twist

Every town has its go-to local hotspot. Gecko's Grill & Pub is proud to be just that in Sarasota, Florida. Born and raised in Sarasota, owners, longtime friends, and business partners, Mike Gowan and Mike Quillen, saw a need for an exuberant local watering hole that would also provide fresh and quality food. So, in 1992, Gecko's was born, and it quickly became the place to be. Lines to get in would span the length of the street until 2:00 a.m. every night, and legend has it even the famous Michael Jordan used to hang out there!

Gecko's Hospitality Group began as a single restaurant and, after much success, has expanded over the past 30+ years and it now has six locations and three additional seafood concepts.

In speaking with Chief Operating Officer, Fiona Farrell, it is clear that while they aim to provide top-notch hospitality, one of their other main priorities is philanthropy. "We're incredibly focused on giving back to the community. We have three pillars of community outreach: children and education, first responders and law enforcement, and agriculture," said Farrell. Gecko's works closely with local farms to source fresh ingredients for their restaurants and has partnered with their local 4H club; they also give away approximately 20,000 free student meals each year. Not to mention, giving back to the community by way of connection.

Farrell says that they employ hundreds of locals and that about 250-300 of their staff have been there for at least 10-20 years. "We have an incredible amount of tenure at our company. We have a dishwasher and prep cook who's been with us 28 years, which is very unusual in the hospitality industry," she said. "The reason they stick around I think is because of the family that we create for them."

So, when Florida was hit by multiple hurricanes earlier this year, it was the dedicated and robust team at Gecko's

that Farrell knew she could count on to help get things at their waterfront properties back up and running. "When we see 'challenges' in our company, there's nobody else I'd rather have in my corner. They are just phenomenal, and they truly go above and beyond for our brand, and the loyalty they have to Gecko's shows every day," she said, getting emotional at the memory.

Not only do her staff feel like a second family, but Gecko's guests, especially their regulars, do too! In fact, Farrell's favorite part of the day is getting to connect with them.

"I love getting face-to-face time in our restaurants... saying hello to the regulars and interacting with the guests. That's my favorite part – that I still have the opportunity to be out on the floor," she said.

While Sarasota tends to be a fairly seasonal destination when it comes to tourism, Gecko's remains open year-round largely due to their faithful regulars. "It's the local spot where people want to come because they know they're always going to get consistency and a smiling face when they walk in the door," said Farrell.

Just take it from their famous tagline, 'You can't buy friendship, but you can find it at Gecko's.'

To learn more about Gecko's or to check out their delicious menu, visit:

www.geckosgrill.com

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