



FLY

ON THE WALL

Self-made restaurateur enjoys giving to others



From left: Steven Palm, owner of the Bronxville restaurant Underhill Crossing and the steakhouse Harry's of Hartsdale, and Dr. Joseph F. Manzi, a White Plains dentist and board member of Westchester ARC. Palm was among two-dozen employers honored at the nonprofit group's Employer Recognition Breakfast, held March 11.

From his first job at age 13, Steven Palm has spent more than two decades in the restaurant business, making his mark with two successful Westchester eateries. He owns Underhill Crossing in Bronxville, which adds a global twist to American favorites, and Harry's of Hartsdale, which stretches the steakhouse concept beyond meat and potatoes.

When a satisfied customer at Underhill Crossing struck a friendship with Palm, the restaurateur was happy to help him. Dr. Joseph F. Manzi asked if Palm could help a nonprofit on whose board he served, Westchester ARC, which serves people with developmental disabilities.

"Steve said yes, and he's been giving ever since," said Manzi, a dentist whose practice 1st Advantage Dental is in White Plains. Manzi has a family history with ARC: The group's service to his sister, who has developmental disabilities, inspired his mother Ann Manzi to get active with the group, which has named its Mount Kisco center for her.

Last fall, Palm went beyond writing checks for Westchester ARC. When the group held its annual dinner fund-raiser "A Matter of Taste" last year at Rye's Whitby Castle, Palm not only co-

chaired, but trained at Underhill Crossing two men referred to him by Westchester ARC, Michael Greenebaum and Darnell Winfield.

Greenebaum already had restaurant experience, 19 years at Zodiac Restaurant, within the Neiman Marcus store in White Plains.

"We taught them how to bus tables, serve food, pour water, hold trays and keep the dining room as tidy as possible, how to act in a fine dining establishment," Palm said.

Palm was one of two-dozen business, government and nonprofit employers honored by Westchester ARC at its annual Employer Recognition Breakfast, held March 11 at the DoubleTree (formerly Hilton) Tarrytown hotel.

"People with disabilities have been, and will continue to be, contributors to the economic growth of Westchester," said Marsha Gordon, the event's keynote speaker and president/chief executive officer of The Business Council of Westchester.

Palm, 37, began his restaurant career as a snack-bar attendant at Leewood Golf Club. After striking a friendship with Tom Carvel, the ice cream magnate named Palm his personal busboy. A couple of years later, Palm turned up at the old Alex & Henry's on Route 22, advancing from busboy to maitre'd in seven years.

Hungry to run a restaurant, Palm took a job managing a New York City café, and became a partner three years later: "I went from nothing to making a lot of money."

Palm returned to Westchester with a job at Rockwell's in Tuckahoe, where he learned to integrate computers into the business. A decade ago while at a barber shop getting a haircut, he heard the old Palm restaurant in Bronxville was available for sale. After checking out 74-1/2 Pondfield Road, he bought the place and changed its name to Underhill Crossing. Three years later in 1998, he snapped up Harry's of Hartsdale, 230 East Hartsdale Ave.

Both places, Palm said, try to keep current with the industry: "We have a staff that pays attention to what's happening in New York, in California, the new trends in France or Asia. We cater to multiple palates," Palm said.