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by Suzy Feine

## Mr. Garlough Goes to Washington

The owner of My Chef Catering represents the interest of small businesses in our nation's capital

Once Bill and Karen Garlough's catering business, My Chef Catering, became established in the town of Naperville, IL, the two were able to focus more time on their passion: volunteering. "Naperville is a progressive, pro-business town," says Bill. "And we are volunteer-minded, so we knew that this was the atmosphere we wanted to be in. My wife and I became very involved in this community."

Bill gives credit to his strong team at My Chef Catering who are able to run the show so the Garloughs can focus more of their time volunteering. "We've had our business 19 years and it has always been our concern to create an environment to empower our employees and give them a place of stability and security," he says. "We have 75 employees on a regular basis, and our department heads run the business, giving us the confidence to get more involved in the community."

The couple is involved in up to 30 non-profits in the community, donating either financial gifts or chef-attended dinners that are auctioned off. Karen is on the Naperville Chamber of Commerce and is also a board member for Naperville Cares where she heads up all fundraising. Bill has been in the Rotary Clubs of Naperville for the past 16 years. This fall, the two are starting up a new fundraiser called Soups On, which will feature food from 20 restaurants that will be divided between three food pantries in the area.

The couple has received numerous awards for their strong community involvement. In 2006, their catering company was awarded the Naperville Chamber of Commerce Small Business Award. And, the chamber also nominated them to the US Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Of the thousands of companies that were nominated, My Chef Catering was selected as one of 60 blue ribbon award winners that first year.

In 2007, My Chef Catering was once again nominated, and won the blue ribbon award. "The blue ribbon award winners were then divided into seven regions," says Bill. "One winner from each region was selected to travel to Washington, DC to attend a gala awards ceremony where one of the seven is selected to be on the US Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. We were that one company in 2007."

In order to be nominated, the Garloughs were told they needed to have a strong business plan, annual growth and dedication to the community. "What put us over the top was our community involvement; we exceeded the norm," Bill says.



Bill attended an initial orientation in May in Washington, DC, and expects to attend another three to four meetings while on the board. He knows the interests of large corporations are very well represented across the board and hopes to help the US Chamber of Commerce recognize that small businesses are a very important component of the US workforce. "I want to bring the voice of small business to that group and talk about what our issues are," he says. "It's a very humbling process, and I'm happy to do what I can to promote foodservice." **CS**