

Host Management?s Vera Mirescu wins Foodservice Catey

CATERER
AND HOTELKEEPER

Extra Mile Award



2013 winner
Vera Mirescu
Catering manager,
St Christopher's Hospice,
Host Management

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Vera Mirescu has worked as catering manager for Host Management at St Christopher's Hospice in Sydenham, London for four years and the difference she has made in that time to the quality of catering and care has been remarkable.

Working in an often unsung sector of foodservice, Mirescu has the opportunity to make a meaningful difference to the lives of the patients at the hospice and she does so with a level of passion and sensitivity that has made her a clear winner of the Extra Mile award.

She shares a belief with the centre's director Nigel Hartley that a quality food offer has an enormous impact on the final days and weeks of the hospice patients. While nutritional quality is paramount in this area of foodservice, Mirescu goes a step further in her conviction that treating patients, and their families, to whatever it is that they fancy – be it a special dessert, a pre-dinner drink or a favourite cake – is a crucial element of their care.

Mirescu has always been mindful of the difficult environment in which she is working through her commitment to make the patients' time there as calm and happy as possible.

She is currently implementing a room

service option for patients as well as a full hospitality suite in a bid to make the service she provides more akin to a hotel than a hospital, and it is not unusual to find her on the job beyond the hours expected, often arriving at work at 5am in order to prepare for the day ahead.

"Vera has transformed both catering services and our social areas at the hospice, mainly due to her acute levels of attention to detail and her ability to work way beyond what one would expect," noted Hartley. "As well as managing and leading the catering team, and enabling them to develop and deliver food of the highest quality, she makes the lives of our patients and their carers much better by taking the time to make relationships with them through listening and responding to the tiniest requests."

"It is very difficult, within the third sector, to find ways of acknowledging the part that people play in creating high quality experiences for those people who use the services," added Hartley.

"Our patients die within a short time frame and it is difficult to make sure that the feedback they give us is captured. As one patient recently said to me: 'Vera lights up my day; she makes you glad to be alive' – I think that says it all. She is, quite simply, a star."

Shortlisted

- Gerard Jacob, catering manager, Vacheirin
- Vera Mirescu, catering manager, Host Management
- Shirley Moore, paediatric catering supervisor, Royal Marsden Hospital

The judges

This award was judged by the Caterer and Hotelkeeper editorial team

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CATEYS



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