

Donor Spotlight

Naming of Dorm is about Giving Back, Honoring Family

Ralph Pfremer came to work at Lindenwood in 1994 as the school's manager of food service. Today, Pfremer is founder and CEO of Pfoodman, the company that provides food service for Lindenwood University and numerous other clients around the country.

Despite that success, Pfremer says he has not forgotten where it all started. And when Lindenwood's two newest residence halls open this fall, one of them will bear the name Pfremer Hall. Pfremer says the naming is part tribute to his father, part legacy for him and his wife, Janie, and part payback to the place where he started what has turned out to be a very successful business.

When Pfremer was hired to run the food service at Lindenwood, he said his goal was to improve the service and "overdeliver." At that time, Lindenwood's cafeteria was in the lower level of Ayres Hall. He worked at Lindenwood until 1999, at which time he left to take a job with a company that ran the food service at Washington University. Before he left Lindenwood, however, he helped put together the design for the cafeteria planned for the new Spellmann Center.

During the next year, he said he was in regular communication with Lindenwood Vice President Julie Mueller over the cafeteria design as the building was coming together.

"It became apparent how much Lindenwood meant to me," Pfremer said. "My goal, even when I left, was to come back to Lindenwood."

Pfremer did just that. He returned the following year after starting Pfoodman; initially, Lindenwood was his only client.

"We had the support of the school and I was able to start a company conceptualized around Lindenwood and this building (Spellmann Center)," Pfremer said. "It means a lot to me that we don't take the school for granted."

Pfremer has given back in a number of ways since then. He endowed a scholarship in entrepreneurial studies in his father's name, because he said his success is a product of the influence Lindenwood gave him, meshed with the things he learned from his father.



Janie and Ralph Pfremer in front of Pfremer Hall.

"Other people we admire have named these dorms. They are real-life heroes right here at Lindenwood. They are the reason we want to give back. They set the example for everyone else to follow."

— Ralph Pfremer

"Pfoodman was born out of those things," Pfremer said.

He also speaks on campus to business classes and he assisted in putting together Lindenwood's cycling team, bringing to bear his passion for the sport.

"It's really like a family to him," said Janie Pfremer. "The school means a great deal to Ralph."

Pfoodman has grown considerably since its early days when Lindenwood was its only client. The company is now a leader in the food service industry, specializing in educational and senior living facilities. Pfoodman has, in fact, branched out beyond food service into the design and building of senior residential facilities. He said his success is based partly on the business values he developed while working with the school.

"The idea is to provide a good work environment for our employees and take care of the things that made us successful," Pfremer said. "We've embraced the vision of the school. You look back on the heritage and do the things you're supposed to do. It is the Sibley values that drive the framework. You learn about the history by being involved in the fabric of it."

As he was with the Spellmann Center cafeteria, Pfremer has also been heavily involved in the planning for the cafeteria in the new Student Commons building to be constructed adjacent to the Hyland Performance Arena.

"The new facility will be the culmination of seven new and exciting national brands developed for first use at Lindenwood," Pfremer said. "This facility will be a nice one, and we will play a hands-on role in putting that together."

On the decision to name a residence hall, as opposed to the various other naming opportunities on campus, Pfremer said it was based on the influences he has had from the leadership of the university.

"Other people we admire have named these dorms," Pfremer said. "They are the reason we want to give back. They set the example for everyone else to follow."