

## Rittel serves up more than food at center

By Sue Bero Times Correspondent nwi.com | Posted: Monday, September 13, 2010 12:00 am



Sara Rittel enhances the quality of life for those she serves through Pines Village Retirement Communities in Valparaiso.

Rittel is director of dining services. While she's only held that position for four years, she's been employed by Pines Village for almost 15 years. She started as a server when she was in high school and continued to work as she attended Valparaiso University, earning a degree in sociology.

She currently attends Purdue University Calumet, working toward a certification in nutrition.

As director of dining services, Rittel is in charge of food served at Pines Village Retirement Communities' 151 apartments, both independent and assisted living, as well as Campbell Street Café, a public restaurant and a community center for adults, located within Meridian Woods, a subdivision for older adults developed by Pines Village Retirement Communities.

The unique eatery serves breakfast and lunch, and offers daily specials and homemade soups from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday.

Rittel designs menus, orders food, handles budget and bills, and oversees staff. She does a lot of catering and box lunch events for the center, and is in charge of food service for Village Park Enrichment Center at Banta, last month serving 645 meals.

In addition, she prepares food five days a week, Monday through Friday for two routes for Visiting Nurse Association Meals on Wheels. Rittel and her crew prepare 22 hot and 14 cold meals daily.

When asked what she likes best about her job, Rittel quickly answered "the residents."

"Really, the whole point of my being there is to make sure they get healthy, nutritious food and to make sure their dining experience is a pleasant one. The residents are the biggest piece of my job. When I come into work, I feel like I'm with 151 grandparents. They're so in tune to my life, and I'm so in tune to theirs. I love my job," she added.

Rittel is a member of Emerging Leaders Society through The United Way. She lives in Wanatah and is engaged to Robert Olenjiczak.