

# Serving A Passion

*She's been behind the scenes for much of her career, but Danette Little's fervor for managing Yankton's Fryn' Pan Restaurant is still set on high.*

After some 83,200 hours of serving customers as manager of Yankton's Fry'n Pan Restaurant, Danette (Kortan) Little still exudes passion for her job.

Come August 2015, Little will mark 40 years of service at the restaurant. In addition to an office wall papered with photos of current and past employees and their families, Little treasures the wealth of memories customers and staff have served up for her over the years.

"The restaurant opened on Halloween night in 1972," Little says. "I started working here in August 1975. There were seven kids in my family and if we wanted something we had to get a job. At one point all of my siblings worked here, too."

Once she started at the restaurant, Little recognized her passion for the work. While she was in high school, fellow waitresses discouraged her from skipping school to be at work.

"I love working with people and giving them an enjoyable dining experience. When I was in high school, I'd cut class and hang out here. But waitresses then, like Lorene Novak, Betty Ketter and Mary Lou Deuschle, who were like second mothers to me, helped keep me on the straight and narrow. Now I find myself doing that for some of the young people I hire."

Little's enthusiasm for meeting others is well satisfied by the patronage of customers who come from across the United States and around the world. Tourists visiting the area and those who travel to Yankton to enjoy the lake area often take time to stop at the restaurant.

"Rob Williams and his wife Chelsea became like grandparents to me and the rest of the employees here," Little says. "He was a physical sports therapist in Vermillion. Once he retired, both he and Chelsea came in every day for lunch and supper. They always had a good word to say to the waitresses, making the girls smile. Giving compliments was a habit for them. They always told us they knew God put all of us here for a reason. One time, when I was walking with a limp, George brought his tools in and worked on my shoe insole to make it more comfortable. All of us who work here have a million stories like that about customers who became like family."



*Danette (Kortan) Little will soon surpass 40 years of employment at Yankton's Fryn' Pan Restaurant. Beginning as a waitress, Little was soon appointed Assistant Manager and then Manager of the business. A deep-rooted love for what she does is part of what's kept her on the job all these years.*

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*Kynan C. Trail, MD, FACS*