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Suppliers show off food, swag and more at Pitt showcase

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By **MARTY LEVINE**

The chance to sample wares, snag promotional items and get questions answered about Pitt suppliers drew lines to the latest Supplier Showcase on Nov. 7 at the William Pitt Union, which featured University-affiliated caterers, hotels, airlines, printers and graphic designers, car rental companies and more.

Food was certainly the biggest draw. People were happy to take the cannoli offered at the Pitt Catering Company booth and taste the El Jefe Bowl (brown rice, kale, black beans, charred corn, red onions, avocado and much more) from Roots Natural Kitchen, in Bloomfield and on Forbes Avenue in Oakland.

Judah Cowen, owner of the Elegant Edge Catering Company in Squirrel Hill, was offering beefy kafta kabobs, bourekas (a cheese pastry), breads and sushi with tahini and other sauces. The long menu of items offered by Elegant Edge for catering Pitt events includes breakfasts, sweets and dishes from a wide variety of cuisines, including a mezze platter of Mediterranean favorites.

In their fourth year as Pitt-affiliated company, Elegant Edge supplies kosher items for the Delicatessen eatery in Litchfield Towers and caters many events, since it is both kosher and halal-certified. "We're in this to feed people and make them happy and contribute to the University and the growth of Pittsburgh," Cowen said.

Airlines aplenty were happy to detail their discounts for Pitt employees. Southwest Airlines allows two free bags per person to Pitt travelers, while United Airlines allows passengers in its Mileage Plus program to earn personal miles while flying on Pitt business. Delta's rep, Eric Holifield, noted that "our contractors are prioritized over the general population," so Pitt people get first dibs for help after a cancelled flight.

A plethora of printer options were on offer as well. AlphaGraphics in the Strip District featured a table covered with past Pitt printing products, from a flyer for the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) to items for athletics and the Office of Philanthropic and Alumni Engagement. They create paper and magnetic items, from signage to direct mail; do design marketing and branding, from the spiral-bound to the saddle-stitched; and have hung acrylic and vinyl signs of impressive size in the Petersen Events Center.

Thomas S. Barbush, sales rep from printer R.R. Donnelly's Point Breeze plant, was proud to note that this 160-year-old company once printed the Encyclopedia Britannica and Webster's Dictionary — but more recently and locally they've done work for the Swanson School of Engineering, GSPIA and the schools of law, medicine and public health. "We are immediately available" for any project, he said, with the plant running 24/7.

At the Reed & Witting booth, president E.J. Cyphers showed off commercial printing products including banners and note cards, plus branded products from its associated company Clayton Kendall, which can do Pitt shoes, Pitt phone cases, Pitt backpacks, Pitt suitcases, Pitt sunglasses — even a Pitt cowbell. "You can pretty much brand anything," he said. "Anything that has a hard surface."

And it seemed as if every hotel in town was there. The boutique Tryp Hotel in Lawrenceville promoted its proximity to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and its two restaurants, one called Over Eden, which may be a play on a way to cook eggs, but definitely refers to the fact that it is on the hotel's roof above Eden Way. The Marriott City Center, across from PPG Place downtown, hosts visiting sports teams for both Duquesne and Pitt, as well as the Pitt football team's first and second stringers prior to home games, so they can be together for team meals and meetings, not to mention their curfew. "We've been very grateful to have the team," said Brenda Porto, sales manager. "We've brought them good luck," she said of this winning season.

A rep from Canon, which provides copiers and printers across the University, was busy telling Pitt people about the new software coming for all Canon devices, which offers new capabilities (printing across different Pitt locations, changing print parameters, sending print jobs to colleagues and more). Pitt's Logistics and Printing Services office was there supporting that message while also reminding staff and faculty that they still have a mailing operation and a small printing operation. That includes producing paper posters via the Copy Center, up to 42 inches wide and any length, with "near photo quality if the images are really good," said Rob Fitzgerald, senior manager of printing services.

Enterprise, the car rental company, was also on hand to remind Pitt employees of its Emerald Club loyalty program at National, a fellow Enterprise rental concern, that is for personal as well as Pitt use.

The winner of most colorful booth certainly went to Pop World, maker of fruit pops, with samples of papaya, strawberry and dragon fruit on a fruit-themed table cover. You can find them at Pitt's farmers market, see their cart or tent at other University events and get these non-dairy frozen treats for your own Pitt occasion, such as this fall's dental school welcome-back event that featured the pops.

"I'm a Pitt graduate, 712 years ago," said proprietor Amy Benedetti as more staffers with Pitt purchasing powers stopped to sample. "I'm happy to be here. I'm glad that people are learning to connect with us."

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