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## KINDNESS: Terri Henry In Food Business

By Hunter Lee  
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Terry Henry  
—Courtesy photo

Terri Henry has always been in restaurant industry for the love of it.

In 1999 she made the jump from Orange County to Long Beach and right off the bat she fell in love with the city.



After a career spanning more than 25 years in the corporate marketing world — including vice president of marketing for Grill Concepts — Henry took a shot at starting her own restaurant marketing and PR firm in 2011, Terri Henry Marketing LLC.



As she took a deep look at the city, Henry saw much untapped potential in its diverse restaurant industry, and launched Long Beach's first Restaurant Week in 2013 alongside her former business partner Elizabeth Borsting, of Elizabeth Borsting Public Relations.

The first restaurant week, in March 2014, featured a long list of notable Long Beach eateries including Yard House Restaurants, Michael's On Naples, Michael's Pizzeria and the Federal Bar.

"It was such a strange concept when we introduced it," Henry said. "People didn't understand what it was or how to go about experiencing it."

Restaurant Week, which began in New York City in 1992, began as a promotional event where restaurants offer reduced price menus that allow customers to try dishes that might normally be out of their price range.

The event would eventually rebrand as Dine LBC in 2016, with two iterations happening in the summer and in the fall.





Terri Henry, founder and organizer of Dine Out LBC in the hat, with some of the chefs from Dine Out LBC in 2017. Clockwise from front left, Luz Torres, owner of Cesars Bistro, Louise Solzman, executive chef at Delius, Rosita Wang, owner of Aji Peruvian Cuisine, Janine Falvo, executive chef at Sip Lounge, and Dana Tanner, owner of Restauration. —Photo by Brittany Murray, SCNG

Eventually Henry had the idea to help more than just the restaurants. During the week leading up to the November Dine LBC — which is during a national homeless and hunger awareness week — Henry assembled chefs from across the city to provide five-course, restaurant quality meals for those in need, partnering with Long Beach Rescue Mission, numerous senior centers and Christian Outreach in Action.

"The streets can be pretty rough. The residents who come here can feel down and out, like nobody cares for them in this world," said LBRM Executive Director Robert Probst. "But when you have people like Terri who take their time and organize a nice meal just for them it gives people a reason to think maybe mankind isn't so bad. That there are people who care about them."

"It does a lot for morale, and to give these people a little hope to help turn their lives around," he added. "That's what it takes to change your community. Being of service and providing for those in need."



But what would have been its seventh year came to a halt — along with the rest of the country — with the coronavirus pandemic. Restaurants were forced to close their doors and Dine LBC was no longer a possibility.

"I felt so deeply for those restaurants," Henry said. "It is a tough gig, tough to make a buck. You really have to love it."

"Having worked with restaurants, I know how tight profit margins are," she added.

Fortunately, Henry had launched her nonprofit, Long Beach Food & Beverage, in 2019, offering restaurants and chefs zero-cost consultation, marketing, public relations and more. The nonprofit only received official nonprofit status from the IRS in late July.

The nonprofit served as a replacement for Dine LBC, instead offering residents the chance to attend virtual culinary courses led by renowned Long Beach chefs and mixologists, including Gladstone's Chef Pete Lehmar.

"Terri approached me about a month ago pitching this idea of online courses" Lehmar said. "The funny thing is that a buddy of mine had already suggested this idea to me and I've already hosted about 14 courses."

Gladstone's has remained closed throughout the pandemic, much to Lehmar's dismay. But Lehmar, alongside his wife and sous chef Mary Ann, hosted his first class with Long Beach Food & Beverage Sunday, Sept. 13, featuring classic eggs Benedict and French toast.

"We're asking people to prepare a fruit bowl beforehand and either Terri or I will judge whoever has the best presentation, and the winner will get a free Zoom course with a chef," Lehmar said before the event.

"I initially only had family and friends attending my courses, so it'll be great to connect with the community after so long," he added.

Out of all her endeavors, Henry says her favorite event of the year is CANstruction Long Beach, which pits teams of local architect and engineering firms against each other to transform some 15,000 pounds of canned goods into magnificent steel and tin creations. Once a winning team is decided, the canned goods are donated to Food Finders, a Lakewood-based food bank and food rescue organization that links donated food to pantries and shelters.



"Its so much crazy work involved, but I love the work Food Finders does," she said. "Fighting food insecurity is something I've always been passionate about."

But the pandemic has also caused Henry to postpone the CANstruction event originally scheduled for October. She hopes to announce a new date in March 2021 in the coming weeks.

Despite having no income for the last six months and having to reorganize events that have required significant preparation, Henry said she hopes to continue her work even with the delays she's been forced to deal with.

"This work is a labor of love," Henry said. "But I have love for my city and couldn't imagine living anywhere else."

