



Our Host on the Boardwalk

By Kim Asch

Greg Shockley '83 half-jokes that Shenanigan's, his popular Irish pub and grille on the boardwalk in Ocean City, has "the most wacked-out business model." He sees most of his customers over 60 days during the height of the summer season. He relies on a staff who is with him for just 90 days. And he has no control over the weather, which has a big impact on sales.

He credits his liberal arts education — and his part-time job at Maggie's of Westminster as well as other restaurants where he worked during summers — with his ability to adjust and adapt as necessary. The savvy entrepreneur is celebrating his 25th year in what has become an O.C. institution and his 10th year as host of the now-legendary Alumni Night at Shenanigan's.

Each year, Shockley and his wife, Susie, treat a crowd of alumni of all ages to a delicious spread of food and drink while they toast the alma mater. The Shenanigan's event typically draws between 35 and 60 alumni from across the decades and a range of zip codes. Shockley says he enjoys observing the interactions between retirees and young graduates, folks from out of state and just down Coastal Highway.

"It's a feel-good event for me because I get to do something for the College," he explains one weekday morning just before this year's Oct. 26 party. "I owe the College for my positive experience over four years and this is an opportunity for me to help continue the good work of McDaniel by helping to spread the word."

An Ocean City native, Shockley has deep roots in the resort town, which swells each summer to become

the second-largest city in Maryland. On the Hill, he was a political science and international studies major and went on to earn a master's degree in public administration at the University of Baltimore with the intention of eventually becoming a lawyer. He agreed to open Shenanigan's when his father, a real estate attorney, and his father's partner, Dough Rollers owner Billy Gibbs, bought the building at 309 N. Atlantic Ave.

Though there is no Irish blood in the family, Shockley says he is a big fan of the food, beer and music — all of which distinguish Shenanigan's offerings. "I become more Irish each year," he says.

Originally, he planned only to stay long enough to get the business up and running. "But it became a challenge that kept me engaged," he says. His role as owner and operator is multifaceted and requires equal parts business savvy, hospitality and mentoring skills. Each summer, Shockley hires 60 or 70 mostly young people to bolster his core staff — among them a couple of dozen students from Ireland who have temporary

work visas. "For many, it's their first time living away from home and school. They're here to spend the summer at the beach and have fun and meet new people and, obviously, go out every night. We have to make something out of them, to wrangle them into showing up and working well," he says. "They can make good money working here, enough to help pay some of their college expenses."

The Shockleys' twin sons attend Stephen Decatur High School in nearby Berlin, where Tom Zimmer '84 is the principal. Each of Zimmer's three children works at Shenanigan's every season (one is in college and the other two are teachers). Shockley says he hasn't had a McDaniel student on staff for a few years, but hopes to hear from some eager candidates for next season.

Meanwhile, Shockley looks forward to seeing more alumni who stop in to say "hello" while vacationing at the beach. "I usually get several each summer who ask to meet me. They always seem excited to know that I'm an alum too."