Hotelies roll out record for charity: 1,424-foot-long spring roll

By Courtney Potts ’06

Efforts to raise money for charity were on a roll Saturday afternoon, April 30, in Barton Hall: a spring roll, or Southeast Asian-style egg roll, that was 1,424 feet long.

Under the guidance of Howard Ho ’05 and Garnie Nygren ’05, both students in Cornell’s School of Hotel Administration, over 60 Cornell volunteers set a new record by creating the world’s longest spring roll, officially measuring 414 meters (about 1,424 feet). Part of an event called Roll for Relief that raised more than $20,000 for tsunami relief in Southeast Asia, the spring roll beat the old Guinness record, held since last June by Changi General Hospital in Singapore, by more than 200 meters (656 feet).

Ho and Nygren came up with the idea of a world record attempt shortly after the devastating tsunami hit Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia on Dec. 26. “We wanted to bring Hotel School students together behind a charitable cause and we know that Hotel School students like to do things with a lot of flair,” said Ho. They decided on making a spring roll because of the food’s Asian origins, as well as its feasibility.

Creating this masterpiece required preparation almost as lengthy as the spring roll itself. A nearly 12-hour endeavor began at 9 a.m., when volunteers started preparing ingredients in the Hotel School kitchens in South Building. By 11 a.m., when the last section of roll was finally put into place in Barton Hall. “In order to get the Guinness record, everything has to be done in one day, so nothing was done prior to today [April 30],” Nygren explained. They also followed Guinness requirements stipulating that the length of the roll had to be measured by a certified surveyor, and that a health inspector be on hand to verify that the roll was, in fact, edible. “We’re being very sensitive to time and temperature,” said Bob Langkammerer, MMH ’90, regional executive chief for the Syracuse division of the superchain. “Wegmans is serious about this thing.” Langkammerer explained. “One of our credits is being good to our community, and this is part of our commitment to the community.”

The excitement was built as the afternoon progressed and volunteers in red aprons and white chef hats raced to finish on time. Chefs went up from volunteers and outlooks as the last two pieces came together, and dozens of people rushed out to sample the end result and listen to local bands. Servings of the roll were sold for $5 and came with an entry for a chance to win a 4-cm roll and an inscription with the event’s slogan: “Let Love Roll.”

Ho and Nygren were pleased with the event’s success. “We had three goals going into this,” explained Nygren. “One, to build the world’s longest spring roll; two, to raise at least $15,000 for tsunami relief; and three, to bring Hotel School students together.” They’ve “done all three of those things. We’re beyond happy. We’re ecstatic.”

Having raised more than $20,000 in donations, Nygren and Ho say they are committed to raising at least another $5,000 before the end of May. The money is being donated through the Tzu Chi Foundation, a worldwide charity based in Taiwan that provides humanitarian aid to those affected by the tsunami. Representatives from Tzu Chi were on hand at the event, distributing literature and giving out chocolate-covered strawberries.

One of the foundation’s representatives, Huei-Ju Lin, was impressed with everyone involved in the event. “Their brains are very bright, and their hearts are very bright,” she said.

Linda Canina, associate professor at the Hotel School, also came out to offer her support to the students involved. “I think the whole idea of trying to bring the student body together to raise money is wonderful,” she explained. And the spring roll? “Delicious!”

Courtney Potts is a student intern with Cornell News Service.

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By Franklin Crawford

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