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Rane Culinary mixes community and cheer in holiday baking class



Cookies preparing to be baked at Rane Culinary's baking class for kids.

Photo by [Christine Pham | Photographer](#) | The Auburn Plainsman

By [Ella Walton | Newsletter Editor](#)

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As the holiday season is now in full swing, Auburn University provides a plethora of ways in which the community can get involved and make merry memories.

On Saturday, Dec. 2, the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management hosted a holiday baking class for kids ages 7 to 12 at the Tony and Libba Rane Culinary Science Center. The class lasted from 1–4 p.m. and consisted of 16 kids, each with a grown-up helper.

The day's menu contained three types of cookies: stained glass sugar cookies, peppermint pinwheel cookies and holiday drop cookies. Each child and grown-up pair were provided with the recipe for each cookie and pre-measured ingredients, while a guest baker led step-by-step instructions.

Hospitality students worked as volunteers to assist the guests in the kitchen, providing both guidance and the materials needed to create the holiday treats.

To the children's surprise, Aubie made a guest appearance at the end of the event while guests enjoyed cookies and hot cocoa.

Caitlin Myers, the director of community engagement and economic development at the Horst Schulze School, oversaw the whole event. The Rane Culinary Science Center opened last year in August, with Myers beginning her position the following October.

Although this was its first time hosting a holiday baking class, the Rane Culinary Science Center has put on a variety of events since its opening. Caitlin said they created these events to show the different aspects of the building: the bakery, the kitchens, the wine appreciation lab and the exhibition kitchen.

"We'll have baking classes and cooking classes where we bring a professional chef in and people get to cook; we have wine tastings, and we've had bourbon tastings," Myers said. "We just try to showcase this building and involve the community because this is an asset for the whole state."

The hospitality department offers specialization in event management, culinary science and hotel and restaurant management.

Amani Warren, a first-year culinary student, expressed her appreciation for Myers' arrangement of the event.

"We couldn't do any of this without her, to be honest," Warren said.

Warren enjoyed getting to be with all the kids and seeing them have fun with baking, something she has loved for a long time.

"Cooking has been my passion since I was little — I just love everything about it," Warren said.

The guest baking instructor for the afternoon, Dalaiia Conner, works at [Lorraine's Bake Shop](#) in Montgomery, Ala. Like Warren, Conner enjoys seeing people share in her enthusiasm for baking.

"I loved the interaction — watching people have fun with baking, because I absolutely adore it. So watching other people have the same type of excitement for cooking and baking is wonderful," Conner said.

Conner currently attends Auburn University at Montgomery, where she is working towards her master's in psychology.

"This was my first time teaching a class, so I was extremely nervous in the beginning, because I thought I was going to mess it all up. But it was great, and I would love to do this again. I think when you have such a good, nice group of people, that plays a major part in it," Conner said.

Margaret Ostendorf, age 7, was accompanied by her mom, Elizabeth Ostendorf. In addition to being surprised by Aubie, Margaret liked making the pinwheel cookies the best.

"We love any chance to see Aubie," Elizabeth said.

Quin Walker, age 10, attended with his mom, Ali Walker. Quin's favorite cookies to make were the holiday drop cookies, which consisted of peppermint mixed with chocolate.

“It was put together really well, and it was nice that we didn’t have to do any of the dishes,” Ali said. “Everything was ready for us, so it was a really fun way to learn.”

The Rane Culinary Science Center’s holiday baking class was the perfect way to whisk guests into the holiday mood — providing guests with all they need to start the holiday season off on a cheery note.

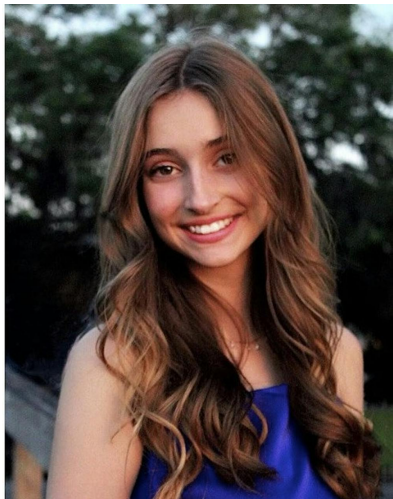
Future community events hosted by the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management can be found on their [website](#).

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Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.



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