

All in a Half-Century's Work

Tina Badi has been a UAlbany employee for 50 years – and she has no plans to retire.

By Cindi Schmalz, B.A.'07

Five days a week, Tina Badi drives to work at the University at Albany to help staff the Indian Quad dining hall. That might not seem unusual – until you consider the Chartwells employee is 90 years old and celebrated her 50th anniversary at UAlbany last March 17.

Badi began her tenure at the downtown campus before the uptown campus even existed. She has worked nearly everywhere at UAlbany and in many different jobs: line woman, manager, breakfast cook, cashier. In 1971, she chose to work on Indian Quad because her grandmother was full-blooded American Indian. She has been there ever since.

Indian Quad has been Badi's favorite place to work because she enjoys meeting students. They obviously enjoy seeing her, too. She stands at her station, ready to swipe SUNYCards for breakfast or lunch and greeting the freshmen with a twinkle in her eye. Badi warmly welcomes them, making them feel as if they were entering their grandmother's kitchen instead of a residence hall dining room.

As she swipes a card, she says, "Hello, how are you?" "Hi, Tina," or "Good afternoon," they reply as they read the pin of the day on her sweater. Today, the pin reads, "My other body is in the shop." Badi chats briefly about the weather and offers some advice: "Dress warm tomorrow. It's going to be very cold." She likes to talk and says that being a cashier gives her an opportunity to interact with the students. Badi adds that she cannot remember names – she sees more than 800 freshmen a day – but she does remember faces. Even after students move from Indian Quad, some return to visit her, perhaps because of her philosophy: She treats them like adults, not children.



Mark Schmidt

Tina Badi poses with some of the freshmen at Indian Quad.

Last winter, students and staff threw Badi a 90th birthday celebration, complete with a cake and balloons.

Asked if she plans to retire soon, Badi smiles and responds politely, "That word is not in my vocabulary."

A native of Keene, N.H., Badi moved to New York as a child. She married in the 1940s and has three children, eight grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren. Badi did not plan to work at the University for five decades, but after her husband passed away in the 1970s, she decided that she would keep working so she would not have to sit at home alone all day. On the job 35 hours a week, she says that she enjoys her work and does not notice that she has been working at UAlbany for 50 years.

But others have taken notice. Those who see Badi every day appreciate her sense of humor, her kindness – and her hard work.

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Gina Muscato