

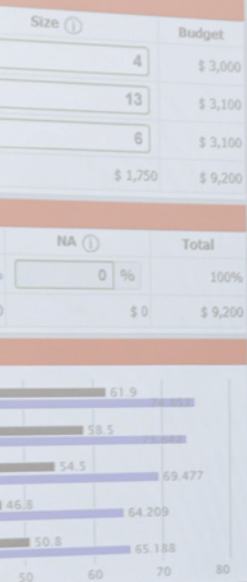
LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

2026 Q3



*Made in
Douglass Co.*

*Douglass intentionally spelled with two "S" to honor abolitionist Frederick Douglass
and not the former pro-slavery senator from Illinois.*



ADVANCE YOUR CAREER AND EARNING POTENTIAL.

Earn your MBA from Washburn University School of Business in as little as 12 months or choose your own pace.

FLEXIBLE

Our flexible hybrid graduate program caters to working professionals and adult learners from any academic background.

- o Traditional In-Person Program
- o 100-Percent Virtual Program
- o Blended Hybrid Program

SCHEDULING OPTIONS

Part-time and evening options are available. Choose a pathway that works for you.

SKIP ENTRANCE EXAM

Skip the GMAT or GRE graduate program entrance exam.

EARN FROM ANYWHERE

Earn your Washburn MBA from any distance. Apply now: washburn.edu/mba

Three convenient start dates:

Fall, Spring, or Summer

More info at

mba@washburn.edu
785.670.1308

WASHBURN
UNIVERSITY

**Master of Business
Administration**



PROFESSIONAL [SPOTLIGHT]

Steve Maceli Scaling New

From cooking in the dorm for students to owning his own event spaces, he started small and rose up with the help of his community.





Heights

by Nick Spacek, photos by Steven Hertzog

Steve Maceli's catering business has benefited from community since its earliest days. During his time as director of the Grace Pearson Scholarship Hall at The University of Kansas (KU), Maceli didn't want to eat bad food, so he taught himself to cook for large groups.

"Then I taught the guys, and we created a system to make sure, to the best of our ability, that we had good food," the owner of Maceli's Catering & Events recalls. Because of the knowledge he gained at the scholarship hall, a friend asked Maceli to cater her wedding. By happenstance, Lenoir Ekdahl, former head of KU Dining, was in attendance at the church where the wedding took place.

"She asked for my business card," Maceli explains. "And I said, 'I don't have a business card. I'm just a dude. I'm just a guy doing stuff.'"

He thought that the former head of KU Dining, for whom the Daisy Hill dining hall is named, thought his food was good got Maceli's head spinning. From there, the nascent entrepreneur began catering events for women at his church and community groups. Five years later, he opened his first commercial kitchen at 1119 Massachusetts St., the former Campus Hideaway location.

"We outgrew that place probably in 3½ years, and we were just looking for a commercial kitchen, and we ended up having this whole space," says Maceli, gesturing around the ballroom at 1031 New Hampshire St., where his catering business has been headquartered since 2005.

It wasn't a straight line to this point, however. In its earliest days, Maceli's wasn't run out of an actual business space but in various homes throughout Lawrence.

"I used to live in professors' homes for several years," Maceli says. "The first two years of Maceli's was out of professors' homes that were on sabbatical."

From there, he moved to 1220 Rhode Island St. and ran the business out of that house for the three years he lived there. Maceli used electric roasters placed strategically around the house so as to not blow circuits to cook dishes such as herb and garlic beef, a dish still on the catering menu to this day.

"And my poor roommates would wake up in the middle of the night and try not to trip over a roaster," Maceli recalls with a wry grin. "The whole house would reek of the herb and garlic beef, which is really tender and really yummy, but it could be a lot. They were very patient with me, knowing that I was building this business."

Despite all of the hard work and perseverance, as well as understanding roommates, Maceli's might not be here today had the community around it not stepped up at a crucial point.

Helping Hands

One of the organizers of the Omega Outdoor Music Festival, a weekend long camping and music celebration just outside of town, came to Maceli looking for someone to provide vegetarian food. Given the transmission on Maceli's Honda had just gone out, and he needed \$1,000 to repair it, he agreed.

"I was like, OK, I've really gotta make this work, because I need the money," Maceli says. From there, he borrowed a friend's van, rented a tent from Sunflower Outdoor and bought tons of groceries. "My friends all helped me. We went there to serve all this food."

It turns out the majority of the concert attendees brought their own food, and no one was buying anything Maceli had prepared.

"If they had money to spend, it wasn't on food," says Maceli with a knowing look. The first night, Friday, they closed up early feeling numb but hopeful things would be different the next day. They weren't.

"So by noon, maybe 1, we just said, 'That's it,' " Maceli remembers. "I'm done. Let's just pack it all up and go home."

When he got home, Maceli called Sunflower asking if he could pay for the tent rental in hummus to help discount the fees. He was freaking out, he says, because not only did he still owe for his car repairs, but he'd put everything on his credit card to fund what had ended up being a complete bust.

This is where the relationships Maceli formerly made began to come together. While in the scholarship hall, he and his roommate, Amy, had become friends with a woman named Juanita Strait, who owned a home right across from the scholarship halls. Strait spent the last couple years of her life in that house, homebound, and students such as Maceli adopted her as an auntie. And she adopted them in return, having dinner with the students every Sunday.

"Amy was talking to Juanita and said, 'Hey, we're in this little predicament,' " Maceli explains. From there, Strait called Juanita Henry from the Methodist Church and said, "Steve's in a predicament. Can you help?"

While at first, Henry said she didn't have time for such a thing, five minutes later, she started calling everyone she knew in the Methodist Church. Maceli's phone started ringing, and soon, his friends were delivering food all over the city of Lawrence until it was all sold.

"And my debt was paid," Maceli says, visibly tearing up at the memory. "It was like 'It's a Wonderful Life.' I was George Bailey that day. And I'll never forget it. It's in my soul. 'Cause the people you help, they help you back. We help each other survive in many ways."

Work Hard, Play Hard

In the years since, Maceli's has grown steadily. They started catering at the KU Alumni Association, and Maceli credits the expectations and the education he got to Bryan Greve, senior vice president of hospitality services, who helped raise him up several notches. He says that experience is likely what gave SpringHill Suites the confidence to use Maceli's as the in-house caterer for the new hotel when it opened in 2001.

It hasn't all been work for Steve Maceli, however. He met his husband, John Connolly, in February of 2005 when a mutual friend introduced the two at a Mardi Gras fundraiser for the Douglas County AIDS Project at Abe & Jake's Landing. Connolly is quiet and introspective, but Maceli says that's what makes their relationship work.

"We're the yin-yang, or we balance each other out," Maceli explains. "I push him, and he calms me down."

Connolly describes the experience of working at Maceli's an interesting one. Prior to coming on as an employee, he'd been a program coordinator in KU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, where he worked for 38 years before retiring in 2022.

"I didn't work in this industry at all," he says. "I worked up at KU, and then I retired from KU, and I worked with Steve for Maceli's for a few years. Now, I'm actually officially retired, but I come and help out when we're superbusy. But it's been a lot."

Four years ago, Maceli and Connolly attended their first Foundation Awards event as a recipient. For many years, the business had made it a priority to support community organizations—especially nonprofits that serve their most vulnerable friends and neighbors.

"Mental health has remained one of our central causes since we lost a dear friend to suicide many years ago," Maceli says. "Until that first awards ceremony, we had never considered supporting a different kind of initiative because our budget simply did not allow it."

Around that time, one lasting effect of COVID became clear: The catering and events business' previous reliance on part-time employees was no longer sustainable, Maceli continues. So in response, they combined responsibilities to create more full-time positions, helping them build a more reliable and dedicated team.

"That transformation continues today, along with the need to keep growing sales so we can provide our expanding staff with stronger pay and benefits," he explains. "The beauty of growing means we have the funds to hire other people to help us perform at better and higher levels."

When Maceli's was recognized with its first Foundation award in 2023, Maceli saw how the Foundation Awards celebrated the achievements of all types of local businesses.

SAY YES TO YOUR NEXT ADDRESS.

Don't let the perfect home go to voicemail. With Stephens, you have a team that's ready to move fast, negotiate wisely, and guide you through every step. We take care of the details so you can focus on what matters most. Let's get moving!

> stephensre.com



TIRED? GAINING WEIGHT? LOSING LIBIDO? FOCUS AND DRIVE LACKING?

Come experience the movement we are creating to help you get back to the top of your game!



GAMEDAY

MEN'S HEALTH

The Gameday Lawrence team's mission is to help you restore maximum health and vitality back in your life.

We offer complimentary in-house lab tests and consults in a luxurious and comfortable setting.

TESTOSTERONE
•
PEPTIDES
•
VITAMINS
•
WEIGHT LOSS
•
ERECTILE
DYSFUNCTION
THERAPIES

GAMEDAY

MEN'S HEALTH

4910 Corporate Centre Drive, Suite 100, Lawrence, KS 66047
785-222-4272 www.gamedaymenshealth.com/lawrence

Book Here:





"At that time, we were beginning to plan a renovation to expand and modernize our facility, and knew that our new spaces could help this event grow and become even more successful," the owner says. "Over the past three years, we have proudly hosted the Foundation Awards, and it has become one of our signature events—one we are honored to support both as a venue and as a financial contributor."

The growth of Maceli's came at the same time as the growth of the Foundation Awards ceremony itself, Steve and Ann Hertzog agree.

"We needed a bigger venue, so we moved the Foundation Awards to Maceli's; we knew it would be a good fit," the Hertzogs say. "But it has been amazing. We were excited to be the first in his new lounge space and help him showcase it. Since then, each year, Steve Maceli has brought something new and inventive to help us showcase the Foundation Awards, and he continues helping us make them better. What a great partner; we are so lucky to have him in Lawrence."

Looking Ahead

While COVID slowed down public events and, thus, Maceli's business model in the years since the pandemic, the catering and events business has only grown. After Scotch Cleaners moved out of its downtown space, Maceli's expanded into that space with its bistro room, as well as purchasing Arterra Event Gallery, at 2161 Quail Creek Dr., in 2022.

Now, Maceli's is expanding once again, having purchased and taken over the former Einstein Bros. Bagel shop, at 1026 Massachusetts St. The new space offers a slew of benefits to the business, beginning with the fact that it's located directly across the alley from their main space. Also, while it might be smaller, that's the point, Maceli says.

"We want it to be smaller," he continues, "because it doesn't make sense for us to host groups of 30 or 35 here at Maceli's or at Arterra."

Maceli describes the newest location as a highly stylized event space with a speakeasy feel—having higher-end cocktails and, hopefully, espresso drinks and mocktails.

All of this wouldn't be possible without the community, which has supported Maceli's throughout its more than three decades of business. So Maceli gives back, as well, noting that many community groups don't pay room rental fees.

"My early days were started by helping community groups," he explains. "Those are my first customers, and they got me out of some predicaments a couple times. I will be eternally grateful, and I know my roots. I know my history." ▲

EASY PROCESS.
BEAUTIFUL RESULTS.



KITCHENS - BATHS - ADDITIONS - EXTERIORS

www.csdesignremodel.com

785 424 5225

LAWRENCE





GROWING YOUR BUSINESS?

Here's your 150-year head start.

Thanks to you, our customers and our communities, we've been growing for 150 years now. That's a century and a half of experience we bring to business customers, big, small, and ready to grow.

So, how can we help you *today*?

150
YEARS of Tradition for Today

 **INTRUST**
Bank®

Member FDIC | © 2026 INTRUST Bank