

# LOCKWOOD MCKINNON SPOTLIGHT SERIES

## MICAELA MIRANDA



Motivational, optimistic, and energizing - the first Spotlight interview of 2021 with Micaela Miranda, the RGM of Johnston Taco Bell, sets a positive mood. When speaking with Micaela – you sense the commitment to the conversation and the openness she projects. It’s refreshing and creates this desire to learn more about who she is and where she came from...to learn her story.

Micaela is not a native of New England. Her roots began in Culver City, California. She describes a difficult early childhood, but she maintains connection with 1 full sibling and 9 half siblings. Most of her family still lives in California – one lives in Pennsylvania. She finished high school in California and was 4<sup>th</sup> in

her class and was awarded a number of scholarships. She is proud of that accomplishment. An early vacation memory was a trip she and her family took to the Philippines when she was 10 y.o. to visit her father’s side of the family. It was interesting to see the different culture there. A memory that Micaela shares with me – stands out to her, fondly – a concert she attended with her sister to see her childhood idol, Britney Spears. She recalls the event vividly and how happy she and her sister were to be at that concert (the one with the snake). The song that puts her in a good mood is from the artist Selena – Itty Bitty Bubble or bidibidibombom (The sound a young woman’s heart makes every time her crush is near.) Today her music tastes have expanded to artists like Lana Del Rey – music that is both inspirational and motivational.



Threads of inspiration and motivation weave their way throughout Micaela’s personal and professional history.

She came to Lockwood/McKinnon Group as an outside hire. As a graduate of Johnson and Wales she has degrees in Nutrition; Clinical Dietetics and Culinary Arts. Her passion is baking. She was known to “stress bake” in college. In fact, if she were to be asked to present on a 40-minute subject of choice she could easily present something on baking cupcakes! (Now that’s a workshop I’d attend!). It is important to note that Micaela also stated that she could speak about work ethics if a request were made to do so. Since graduating – Micaela has worked in hospital kitchens, catering and prior to Taco Bell – she was employed at a RI spa as a private vegan chef. Covid-19 hit and she found herself looking for another opportunity – that’s when she came to work at LM. She started in



the N. Providence Taco Bell with Calvin Fortes; moved on to Bald Hill Taco Bell under the leadership of Jenny Marchessault and now is the RGM of the Johnston Taco Bell. When asked about the dynamics of each location she has worked at within Lockwood/McKinnon – Micaela notes the following: N. Providence is a close knit, self-sufficient store with a family vibe; Bald Hill is a self-sufficient and high-volume store; and Johnston has potential and is moving towards a stronger and more empowering culture.



Her goal in the Johnston store is to build on the culture that is there. As with any leadership change there are a number of challenges that need to be met. Accountability is something she is working on with her team. Micaela wants to see the store do better and her focus is currently on bettering the culture in the store and hitting speed. She is a big promoter of positive reinforcement and has implemented recognizing the employee of the month. That employee that has “gone the extra mile”. When hiring she is not looking for someone to be perfect at what they do, but someone with the

right attitude...positive. Her feeling is that people can learn on the job. People who are coachable are open to learning new things.

“Learning new things” .... while listening to what Micaela had to say during this interview – it was apparent to me that she was “Full on” in her focus and the new challenges before her as a leader. When we first began our interview – one of the initial statements she made was – she was active in every day part. Upon further discussion she admitted that she has been known to say “yes” too often. Delegation is important. She recognizes that balance is necessary and respecting her boundaries will avoid burn out in the future. This is a trait she is working on to unlearn. Her second in command – is Lina Leav – a veteran with Lockwood McKinnon – a good leadership partner who can help create the foundation that Micaela is striving to achieve in the Johnston Taco Bell.

In her earlier years – Micaela worked at a Camp in Southern RI that was comprised of international students. She found that those students were intrigued by American Culture and Language – so she helped them understand some of what that culture held. She had conversations with them about different environments that they observed: the beach, the mall and people’s demeanors. She continued in this vein when she went to work at the RI School of Design and Catering, where there were a mix of European students. Ultimately, she recognized her interest and passion for diversity.

It may sound like all work and no play, but Micaela makes time for her personal life – as well. She makes time for the little things that matter – dinner with her husband; walking her dog, Panda (a Shichon – combo Shih tzu and Bichon Frise); baking; spending



time with her cat, Regina George (from the movie Mean Girls); and having her smoothies. She enjoys Paint and Wine nights and knitting (scarves and headbands). Holidays are spent at her husband’s grandfathers’ house with a number of his aunts and uncles. Of course, she bakes for those occasions – and with pleasure. Sometimes you will find her visiting family in California, as well. (Not this past year due to travel restrictions.)



Yoga is another passion that she practices...specifically, Shavasana Yoga or Konasana Yoga. She aspires to become a yoga instructor. With Yoga, you are taught to live in the present moment to surrender to different emotions and reap the benefits of practicing and achieving calming poses – releasing those positive hormones called endorphins. With Yoga your focus is on the gut, heart and the brain (physical, spiritual and psychological – “the three hearts”.) It’s a community in and of itself. A community of friends with a common goal.

The past year has been a challenge and there are more changes to come, but Micaela is a “doer” and has a “can do” attitude. Her goals for the new year are to build good relationships; move analytics in the right direction; empower her team and gain experience through it all. Micaela states that the pandemic has given her an “aha” moment. She wants to spend more time with family and friends – because they are so important and she wants to cherish those moments.

We complete our interview with a quote from Micaela:

“The best is yet to come. Keep going; keep trying.” Micaela Miranda

*Lisa Brissette*