**Government Food Service:** In 2012, the Air Force Personnel Center became the umbrella over formerly independent field-operating agencies (FOAs), including the Air Force Services Agency. Consolidation was in its fourth phase last year (building out the divisions and branches of the integrated organization) and was to be completed by February 2015. Update us on the consolidation.

**Col. Piccolo:** In the past year, there were some major shifts in organizational alignment. In October 2014, the Directorate of Services moved from the Air Force Personnel Center and realigned under Air Force Material Command (AFMC); it is now a Principal Supporting Unit (PSU) under the new Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center (AFIMSC). In December 2014, the Directorate of Services was reactivated as the Air Force Services Activity. Due to these changes, the organizational structure supporting the Air Force Services Activity is not fully completed yet.

**Government Food Service:** What does this restructuring mean for food service, dining facilities and the food program (appropriated, as well as nonappropriated)?

**Piccolo:** The restructuring will have no impact on Air Force appropriated or nonappropriated food service programs at this time.

**Government Food Service:** How is the Food Transformation Initiative progressing and is utilization improving? Tell us about what has been learned at the installations participating in the pilot. Has a decision been made to expand the number of bases participating beyond those in the pilot?

**Piccolo:** The Food Transformation Initiative (FTI) has progressed exceptionally well for the 13 installations currently operating under the program. FTI has benefitted our morale, welfare and recreation programs, as well as dining facilities, by improving the quality of foodservice programs available to our airmen. Dining facilities involved in FTI have seen improvements in their facilities and operations that have resulted in increased customer satisfaction in the activities provided to our military communities. Utilization rates of our Essential Station Messing (ESM) customers increased 563,000 meals when comparing fiscal 2010 baseline headcount numbers to fiscal 2014 customer counts. The propensity for ESM members to consume meals at our facilities increased from 39 percent to 58 percent at our FTI locations. The added benefit of our Campus Dining program has allowed ESM members to use their entitlement at our nonappropriated foodservice operations resulting in over one million meals being served to our customers since inception. We have learned from our FTI participating installations that our customers are very happy with the expanded hours of operation, healthier menu offerings, improved quality of food...
Green is a nutritional-recognition labeling system providing the airmen/soldiers with a quick assessment of the nutritional value of menu offerings and food products in the dining facility. The menu offerings and food items are labeled green (eat often), amber (eat occasionally) and red (eat rarely), based on the impact the food can have on an airman's/soldier's performance. For example, foods labeled green are high-performance foods that can positively impact performance, and foods labeled red are performance-inhibiting foods that can negatively impact performance. The program has posters and menu cards for the serving line providing explanation of the color-coding system.

**Government Food Service:** Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, Yokota AB, Japan, and March ARB, Calif., are among the 14 installations participating in the Healthy Base Initiative pilot. Can you tell us anything about what has been learned so far from those installations and whether any practices have been implemented?

**Piccolo:** The Healthy Base Initiative (HBI) program is a Department of Defense (DoD) program being tested at 14 locations to include three Air Force installations: Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, Yokota AB, Japan, and March ARB, Calif. The following information was provided to us from Lt. Col. Richard Roberts, USAF, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), HBI Program Manager.

Obesity and tobacco use among U.S. military health care beneficiaries add over $3 billion per year to the DoD budget in health care costs and lost duty days. Failure to meet weight standards is a leading cause of involuntary separation from the military, and obesity in the civilian community may be limiting DoD’s ability to recruit qualified personnel. To help combat this problem, military installations should provide environments that encourage good nutrition, active lifestyles and tobacco-free living. OSD’s Office of Military Community and Family Policy is carrying out the HBI to help meet this need.

Specific to the food environment, the Air Force is utilizing the Military Nutrition Environment Assessment Tool (m-NEAT) to assess the eating environment at demonstration sites, which will inform commanders, health promotion staff, food-facility operators and other stakeholders with greater situational awareness of healthy eating options. Additionally, the Air Force has implemented the following food-specific initiatives at its HBI locations:

**Go For Green:** The Go for Green program is the dining facility nutrition education program. Go for Green is a nutritional-recognition labeling system providing the airmen/soldiers with a quick assessment of the nutritional value of menu offerings and food products in the dining facility. The menu offerings and food items are labeled green (eat often), amber (eat occasionally) and red (eat rarely), based on the impact the food can have on an airman's/soldier's performance. For example, foods labeled green are high-performance foods that can positively impact performance, and foods labeled red are performance-inhibiting foods that can negatively impact performance. The program has posters and menu cards for the serving line providing explanation of the color-coding system.

**Better-for-You:** The Better-for-You (BFY) program is a bridge between “for-profit” food companies and food activists who believe food companies should be more responsible regarding obesity. A well-received study demonstrated that “better-for-you” products drove more than 70 percent of food company sales growth in the last five years (Hudson Institute, “Better-for-You Foods: It’s Just Good Business,” October 2011). This HBI Better-for-You program is a nutritional-recognition labeling system that will provide customers in a “for-profit” food environment the means to quickly assess the caloric value of menu offerings. Menu items are labeled “BFY” (eat often) based on caloric thresholds. The program has posters and other educational materials to explain the labeling system.

**Menu Renovation:** Menu Renovation is a multifaceted program that seeks to enhance the nutritional profile of food offerings at military dining facilities and snack bar outlets. This is done through a train-the-trainer course where instructors provide a foun-
opportunities to improve service and reduce costs in our foodservice operations, and looks forward to the opportunity to further discuss and understand the scope of DLA’s integrated Food Service Program. The Air Force is currently engaged with its own transformation initiative at 13 locations in CONUS. Dubbed the Food Transformation Initiative, or FTI, the Air Force has successfully contracted with corporate foodservice vendors to provide enhanced delivery of food service using comparable platforms to those found in college and university feeding programs. In addition, we are working with the OSD Office of Military Community & Family Policy as it provides objective analysis of the entire department’s feeding capability, and we look forward to its recommendations for providing a cost-effective and quality feeding platform for our military community.

Government Food Service: Operation Refresh is an ongoing process of creating new recipes and incorporating new cooking methods that improve dining. As of last year, Air Force dining facilities introduced 31 new recipes since September 2011. How many new recipes were introduced during 2014?

Piccolo: We have discontinued the Operation Refresh program because we are in the process of implementing a new system called Corporate Automated Food Enterprise (CAFÉ), which allows us to update menus and recipes in the field on a regular basis. This system allows us to incorporate the latest culinary trends within industry and concepts learned through our FTI program that were tested and proven to be popular with our customers. To date we have implemented 47 of 65 installations, and hope to have the entire Air Force implemented by fiscal 2016.
**Government Food Service:** Branding is becoming more common in Air Force dining facilities, and on the APF and NAF sides. What has been learned from the brands introduced through FTI?

**Piccolo:** “Branding sells” is what we have learned from the brands and restaurant theme concepts introduced at our FTI locations. UFOOD Grill, a well-known concept in industry specializing in healthier meal options, provides our customers with more contemporary menu offerings, such as Un-Fries (baked not fried), bison burgers (a leaner-meat option) and Smuuthies (fruit and yogurt drinks). These items have been very popular with our customers and continue to be some of our top-selling items. Additionally, we have incorporated popular restaurant-themed brands, such as Chop Sticks (Asian cuisine), Zoca (Mexican), Tavolino (Italian) and BBQ District (Traditional BBQ). These examples of branded concepts that were incorporated into FTI operations have significantly expanded the variety of menu options for our customers while increasing customer satisfaction.

**Government Food Service:** Budget factors caused the Armed Forces Food and Beverage Workshop to be cancelled for fiscal 2013 and 2014; what is the outlook for this year?

**Piccolo:** Budgetary constraints continue to hinder the Armed Forces Food and Beverage Workshop from being held in 2015. Air Force Food and Beverage is utilizing different methods to get information to the field to include telecoms, DCOs [Defense Connect Online Communications] and online training until funding becomes available. Our plan is to conduct this workshop to train our food and beverage managers in the future once funding becomes available.

**Government Food Service:** Can you discuss plans for the Hennessy Awards in 2015?

**Piccolo:** As you know, the last few years’ fiscal constraints forced us to make tough decisions on the way Hennessy evaluations were conducted. Traveling teams were reduced to only National Restaurant Association (NRA) professionals conducting on-site visits; their evaluation combined with a thorough review of financial databases and customer feedback by Air Force Services Activity personnel determined the Air Force Hennessy winner. This year, we are glad to announce that we’ve included military members in the traveling team. They will evaluate exceptional foodservice programs from 11 bases across the Air Force, and select the winners based on their exemplary culinary and foodservice management skills.