



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Food Bank of Delaware celebrates 47th and 48th culinary graduating classes

Newark, Del. (May 25, 2017) – Twelve graduates from The Culinary School have overcome obstacles like incarceration, substance abuse recovery, unemployment and more to complete the Food Bank of Delaware's 14-week culinary arts training program. Eleven of these graduates already have employment lined up.

Their accomplishments were celebrated this morning at a graduation ceremony. The graduates include: Kirell Brown, Latoya Burise, Tamika Gary, Dwayne Horne, Trayvon Howze, Kevin McCafferty, Leonard McClain, Nuria McNamara, Adam Marrow, Catherine Pierce, Cady Tobin and Kevin True. Two students who were not able to attend the 46th culinary graduation were also recognized. Those students are Cleon Stewart and Jameel Webster.

Students have spent the past 14 weeks developing their skills both in and outside the kitchen. From proper knife handling techniques to ServSafe® certification and completing a two-week internship, the students are prepared for entry-level jobs in the food industry. Guest speakers and field trips have rounded out the formal training program.

Saad Soliman, Re-Entry and Training Specialist at the United States Probation Office, provided keynote remarks.

"One thing that never leaves these men and women is their passion," said Soliman. "Food is the point in which we all commune. This is the fabric of what The Culinary School provides. We are putting ourselves in a position where we work together as a community."

"I'm standing here today as a changed man," said graduate Cleon Stewart. "The sky is the limits for all of us." Cleon and fellow classmate Jameel Webster were not able to attend their February graduation. When Vaughn Correctional Institute was taken over, all of the Delaware Department of Corrections facilities were under lockdown, including the Plummer Center where both were housed. Both students were thankful for the opportunity to return to celebrate their accomplishments.

When Cady Tobin started The Culinary School 14 weeks ago, she was 11 months sober. Today, she is celebrating her sobriety and new career in the food service industry. "We just needed someone to demonstrate that they believe in us. The Culinary School gave me the confidence to get my own job," she said.

For Lenny McClain, The Culinary School was the fresh start he needed after a 13-year prison stint. "These opportunities are a blessing," he said. "My past is my past and it has shaped who I am."

Students' tuition was funded through multiple sources including corporate scholarships from Capital One, Chase and Comenity Bank, the Delaware Department of Labor, Delaware WONDER (Work Opportunity Networks to Develop Employment Readiness), a federal grant geared to getting people into the workplace and off SNAP benefits. This employment and training program is led by Delaware Health and Social Services Division of Social Services (DHSS), which administers the SNAP Program in Delaware.

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Students have landed employment at Deerfield, Cocina Lolo, Saladworks, Tom Foolerys, Shake Shack, Delaware Park, Firestone and Two Stones.

“Graduations are always my favorite Food Bank of Delaware events. It is always so rewarding to see the students’ growth and progress over the past 14 weeks. We are all so proud of them for their hard work and commitment. We look forward to watching these graduates grow in their new careers,” said Food Bank of Delaware President and CEO Patricia Beebe.

Several students were honored with special awards. They are:

- Highest GPA: Kevin McCafferty and Catherine Pierce
- Perfect Attendance: Leonard McClain, Kevin McCafferty and Dwayne Horne
- Best Final Dish: Tamika Gary and Dwayne Horne
- Most Improved: Kirell Brown
- Overall Transformation: Cady Tobin
- Most Dedicated: Dwayne Horne
- Outstanding Leadership Award: Lenny McClain

After the ceremony, graduates served guests a lunch buffet that included marsala mushroom ravioli, herb-crusted pork loin, baked salmon with lobster sauce, curried chicken, garlic mashed potatoes, assorted desserts and more.

The mission of The Culinary School is two-fold. First students are taught skills that are highly desirable to employers in the food industry and second, these newly-developed skills have the potential to lead to jobs in the industry that provide job security and economic sustainability. To learn more about The Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware, visit www.fbd.org/the-culinary-school.

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About the Food Bank of Delaware

The Food Bank of Delaware distributes millions of pounds of products each year to its network of 575 hunger-relief program partners throughout the state and also provides thousands of meals a month for children through the After-School Nutrition Program, the Summer Food Service Program and the Backpack Program. The Food Bank’s hunger-relief programs provide for Delawareans at risk of going without meals each year. The Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware, the Food Bank’s workforce development arm, provides training for adults interested in careers in the food service industry. For more information about the Food Bank of Delaware, visit www.fbd.org or call (302) 292-1305.