



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Graduates express gratitude, move on toward success**

**Milford, Del.** (May 8, 2015) – Eleven members of The Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware celebrated their achievements today during a graduation ceremony for the fifth class at the Food Bank's Milford facility.

Students in this class represented a community partnership with at-risk populations from the Sussex Community Corrections' Sussex Work Release Center. Of the 11 students, nine were in the program.

The graduates are: Gregory Barton, Justin Falkinstein, Timothy Kurak, Anthony Leonardi, Javier Limon, Stephen Mazza, Eugene Pennewell, Richard Pineda, Erick Smith, Keith Truitt and Kevin Williams. All have obtained full-time employment at local restaurants.

Chad Robinson, Milford Branch Director, told the graduates, their families, friends and guests attending the event that this ceremony represented the Food Bank's mission since each of the graduates had found employment.

"If you don't believe that people can change, all you need to do is talk to any one of the men to my right," he said.

Patricia Beebe, the Food Bank's President and CEO, praised not only the partnership with the Department of Correction, but also the students themselves.

"I told them they are trailblazers, that they will prove to the community this works, but they are also extremely talented people," she said. "I can't emphasize enough how important this is. We are really on to something here."

Guest speaker for the occasion was Robert M. Coupe, Commissioner of the Delaware Department of Correction and retired Delaware State Police Superintendent Colonel.

Coupe noted that the graduating students didn't just receive certificates of completion, but earned their graduation through hard work and dedication.

"Your sacrifice and future success will ensure that those who come after you have the same opportunities you have had to earn your graduation and create your own pathways to success," Coupe said. "I hope you will accept that responsibility and embrace your new roles as team members and as leaders, because through acceptance, availability and support you will be empowered to help others transform their lives in positive ways."

These students spent the past 14 weeks developing their skills and passion for the culinary arts. 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.

Chef Instructor Tim Hunter was pleased with this class.

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"This is a special group," he said. "I tell them it's not a job, it's a career, and sometimes it's not about cooking, it's about life. This is a great opportunity for these guys."

Each of the students took the microphone to thank Chef Hunter, the Food Bank and the Department of Correction after receiving a certificate of completion.

Among the audience members were representatives of cooperative employers, including SoDel Concepts, DiFebo's, Abbott's Grill and (a)Muse.

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. Students are referred to the program through the Criminal Justice Council, Delaware Department of Labor, Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and other community-based organizations.

The next culinary class at the Milford Branch begins May 26. Applications are currently being accepted. To learn more, visit <http://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 550 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. For more information about the Food Bank of Delaware, visit [www.fbd.org](http://www.fbd.org) or call (302) 292-1305.