



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Nine graduates start 2018 with new careers

**Newark, Del.** (January 11, 2018) – The Food Bank of Delaware celebrated the accomplishments of nine students from The Culinary School this morning. A variety of life circumstances brought the students to this 14-week training class, but they all ended the program with one commonality – a passion for the culinary arts.

Scott Kammerer, President of SoDel Concepts, provided keynote remarks along with Dr. Saleem Khan.

This morning's graduates include: Bennie Clowers, Nicholas Giove, Dennis Kane, Samuel Keller, Lakesha Land, Tony Martinez, David Murray, Jeffrey Rowan and Taylor Crawford Williams

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.

Kammerer shared his own personal journey from addiction to Delaware Business Man of the Year award winner. "I was an addict. I was helpless and hopeless. I got a job washing dishes for minimum wage in a Mexican restaurant," he explained.

In partnership with the late Matt Haley, Kammerer has built an expansive group of restaurants in Sussex County with SoDel Concepts.

"Greatness can come from anywhere. You are about to join the most dynamic industry in America. It is up to us to make the magic happen behind the scenes," he said.

Khan also encouraged students to be their best. "Keep learning," he advised. "It is the beginning, not the end. As they say, 'the sky's the limit.' Work hard and make things better every day."

Graduates interned at the Sheraton, Bellevue Community Center, Lorelton Assisted Living, Panda Express, 299 Old School Grill and Stewart's Brewing Company.

"I never thought I would get to this day," said graduate Bennie Clowers. "I thought I would get to six weeks and then they'll kick me out."

Clowers said that Executive Chef Tim Hunter advised him to write something down that will keep him going. He did exactly that, and Clowers' hard work paid off as he was awarded the class' most-improved award.

Taylor Crawford Williams, a self-taught vegan chef who moved to Delaware from Houston less than a year ago, was awarded the class' best dish award. "I am grateful for this opportunity," she said. "It was a new start for me. I was scared coming in. This experience has been good for me. The best is yet to come."

Jeffrey Rowan was awarded the class' perfect attendance award.

Students' tuition was funded through multiple sources including corporate scholarships from Barclays, Capital One, Chase and Comenity Bank, the Delaware Department of Labor, and 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.

After the ceremony, graduates served guests a lunch buffet that included shrimp burger sliders, coconut curry chicken, assorted strombolis, macaroni and cheese, a mashed potato bar, grilled vegetable medley, cheesecake cupcakes 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](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 536 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](http://www.fbd.org) or call (302) 292-1305.