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Food Bank's Culinary School graduates bask in success; start new careers

Milford, Del. (May 2, 2018) – Four members of The Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware celebrated their achievements today during a graduation ceremony for the 18th graduating class at the Food Bank's Milford facility.

The graduates were: Tanesha Milbourne, Hershial Morris, Cameron Smallwood and Stephanie Woomer.

United States Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester delivered keynote remarks to the students. As a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Blunt Rochester is committed to ensuring that Delawareans have access to workforce development training opportunities like The Culinary School at the Food Bank of Delaware.

"I believe everyone deserves an opportunity to have a good job or start a business. The Food Bank's Culinary School provides that. In January, I met with students of the program and was impressed by their initiative and willingness to put in the hard work to improve their skills and standing in life. It's why I promised to be there for them when they graduated," said Blunt Rochester. "Today's graduates knew the road ahead would be challenging, and I applaud them for their perseverance in the face of adversity and commitment to learning a valuable trade that will help them earn a job in an in-demand field. These graduates are proof that sound investments in workforce training can positively impact our economy and help individuals find purpose in rewarding and meaningful work."

Patricia Beebe, the Food Bank of Delaware's President and CEO; Tim Hunter, The Culinary School's Executive Chef; Tish Badamshin, Chef Instructor, and Ruthann Messick, Workforce Training Program Manager, each offered remarks as well.

"For these students the only failure lies in the failure to start," said Hunter. "These four students persevered until the end. They have all finished what they started. This is not an easy class, so we are proud of the four remaining students who made it to graduation."

Those attending the ceremony enjoyed a buffet luncheon prepared and served by the students. The menu featured fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, blackened fish with mango salsa, skewered grilled shrimp, green bean casserole, grilled fruit salad, ratatouille, deviled eggs and salad.

The new graduates expressed gratitude for the opportunities they received during the 14-week program in which they developed their skills and passion for the culinary arts.

"This course taught me about the culinary field and myself," said Morris. "I learned how to interact and communicate better with people. Being on time is very important! I also learned how to control my attitude and reactions to people and situations. I know I learned the basics in culinary here but those basic skills are what I need for my journey in this field. I hope to one day own my own restaurant. This program isn't just about culinary, it's about teaching you to better yourself and have faith in yourself and your work. It gets you ready for the real working world in culinary and life itself. This program helped me turn my life around."

From proper knife handling techniques to Serve Safe certification and completing a two-week internship, the students are prepared for entry-level jobs in the food industry. Students spent the past 14 weeks

developing skills inside and outside the kitchen. They learned proper knife handling as well as industry workplace skills to move into an entry level position in the food service industry.

Some of the students' tuition was funded through Delaware WONDER, a federal grant geared to getting people into the workplace and off SNAP benefits. This employment and training program called Delaware WONDER (Work Opportunity Networks to Develop Employment Readiness) is led by Delaware Health and Social Services Division of Social Services (DHSS), which administers the SNAP Program in Delaware. It offers targeted career tracks in construction, culinary arts, and manufacturing and broad-based job placement.

Graduates interned at Harrington Raceway and Casino, Dover Downs and the Food Bank of Delaware. Of the four graduates, three have obtained employment. They are employed at Harrington Raceway and Casino, Restaurant 55 and Dover Downs.

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.

The next class of The Culinary School in Newark begins Monday, May 14. To learn more about the program, 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 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 or call (302) 292-1305.