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Innovative Career Exploration Event Inspires Rhode Island High School Students

High School Students get Career "Straight Talk"

Providence, RI (November 9th) – The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) brought its award winning Showcase of the Stars™ to over 350 RI high school students at Johnson and Wales University's Xavier Auditorium.

Showcase of the Stars™ is a live, interactive career exploration event that informs students from multicultural communities about the rewarding career opportunities that exist in the food and hospitality industry. The events bring the future workforce and leaders from top companies together for a straight-talk conversation about successful career paths in the industry.

The industry is projected to add about 1 million new jobs by 2020, while the workforce is becoming less White as more Asians, Blacks and Latinos enter. Showcase of the Stars™ aims to communicate the industry's commitment to hire, develop and retain top talent from diverse backgrounds that reflects the changing demographics.

Industry leaders from all career levels and backgrounds participated in this event, providing a wide variety of perspectives and presenting real-life examples about overcoming obstacles, achieving dreams and building a successful career in foodservice or hospitality. Panelists included Charley Wright, Director of Operations at **Legal Sea Foods**, Michael Needleman and Liam Lynch who are both Operation Managers at **ARAMARK**, Carolina Villela-Ferreira, Senior Event Manager at **Renaissance Providence**, as well as Monete Cockburn Sophomore Student at **Johnson and Wales** as well as being Incoming President of **National Society of Minorities in Hospitality**.

Students were able to interact with the panelists who provided students with a preview of what a career in the foodservice and hospitality field is really like. Students learned of the hard work that it takes to achieve a high-level career in the industry as well the many rewarding benefits that this type of career provides. Students also learned how important it is for them to be motivated, to study hard, to find career mentors and to take risks.

Fernandez spoke to students about motivation through education, mentoring, and career opportunity. He shared his own career success story from dish room to board room and his own personal motivation for founding MFHA. "I took a big risk," he said, "but that risk, turned out to be one of the best risks I've ever taken. It was always about helping the industry and never just about finding a job. I wanted to inspire people that are in the same shoes I was 30 years ago. All of our panelists today are living examples for our future workforce."

For students, it was an eye-opening experience: "I already knew that I wanted go into hospitality, but I never realized how many different career paths this industry offers. This event has inspired me to keep an open mind and to do my homework when it comes to choosing a career." said one student attendee.

For more information about future events and to view a video on Showcase of the Stars™, visit www.mfha.net/index.php/events-a-programs/showcase-of-the-stars-trade. For more information about MFHA, visit www.mfha.net.

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The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance's (MFHA) Showcase of the Stars™

MFHA is a non-profit organization in the food and hospitality industry that educates, advocates for and connects its members with opportunities to build their cultural intelligence in order to effectively engage

multicultural employees, customers and communities. MFHA's Showcase of *the Stars*[™] is an award-winning program fostering access and opportunity for underserved high school and college students within the industry. For more information, visit www.mfha.net visit www.mfha.net.

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