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## **WOWorks and Noodles & Company Join Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance's Pathways to Black Franchise Ownership Program**

*MFHA Sets Goal to Create 100 Black-Owned Franchises by Year-end 2023*

WASHINGTON, DC – November 4, 2021 – The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) announced today WOWorks and Noodles & Company are the first restaurant franchise companies to adopt the [Pathways to Black Franchise Ownership](#) program. Launched in 2020 by MFHA with a \$2.5 million commitment from PepsiCo, *Pathways* is dedicated to helping black entrepreneurs from all backgrounds develop and operate high performing franchise businesses.

MFHA set a goal for Pathways to create 100 new black-owned franchise restaurants by year-end 2023. WOWorks and Noodles & Company will be key Pathways partners and have officially added the program to their respective franchising development and unit growth strategies. The companies will provide qualifying participants with specialized Pathways training, coaching, mentoring and other support to open both single and/or multi-unit franchise businesses.



WOWorks offers franchising opportunities across a broad portfolio of popular brands including – Saladworks, Frutta Bowls, Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh, and The Simple Greek.



Named one of America's Best Employers for Diversity by Forbes, Noodles & Company represents more than 450 restaurants across the country.

MFHA developed Pathways with 4thMVMT, a social equity organization that vets, trains, facilitates funding, and partners with individuals from underserved communities to own and operate competitive businesses. Pathways serves as the centerpiece of MFHA's efforts to set even higher standards for diversity, equity, and inclusion across the industry especially in the ownership ranks.

MFHA is eager for other companies to join Pathways and is working closely with National Restaurant Association and the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation (NRAEF) to expand the program. Restaurant franchisors can learn more about Pathways at: <https://mfha.net/pathways-to-black-franchise-ownership-program>.

"While our industry is one of the most diverse in the U.S., underrepresentation in ownership is clear with only eight percent of restaurants being Black-owned," said Gerry Fernandez, President and Founder of MFHA. "Training and access to capital remain significant barriers for Black entrepreneurs who want to own their own business. Through



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Pathways and this exciting collaboration with WOWorks and Noodles & Company, we can make restaurant ownership more attainable than ever before. We hope other franchisors will join us as well to make this a reality for more people.”

“It’s an honor to partner with the MFHA to advocate for greater diversity and inclusion in the restaurant space,” said Kelly Roddy, CEO of WOWorks. “We want to give more Black entrepreneurs the opportunity to become a part of our family of healthy fast-casual brands, which can also boost their communities. Increasing the number of African-American business owners in the nation starts with franchisors like us, and we are committed to fostering and supporting franchisees every step of the way.”

“Earlier this year, Noodles & Company advanced our own inclusion and diversity initiatives by taking the CEO Action pledge and we see becoming one of the first restaurant brands to partner with MFHA on Pathways as a natural next step in that journey,,,” said John Ramsay, Noodles & Company vice president of franchise sales. “It was an easy choice. Not only do our values align when it comes to increasing diversity in our organization, but the platform has the potential to grow beyond Black franchises, empowering all voices to operate high-performing businesses.”.

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### **About MFHA**

Founded in Minneapolis in 1996, the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) has steadfastly made the business case for diversity and inclusion in the industry for nearly 25 years. Since its founding, MFHA's mission has evolved from advocating for career opportunities for people of color to the need to build Cultural Intelligence and promote the business case for diversity and inclusion. MFHA is now an affiliate the National Restaurant Association. The Association's mission includes strengthening operations and developing talent and workforce for the restaurant and foodservice industry.

### **About WOWorks**

WOWorks was formed in 2020 with a mission to help guests pursue their passions and live their best lives by serving healthy, nutritious and flavorful fuel along with first-rate hospitality. Fully owned by Centre Lane Partners, LLC, WOWorks' portfolio consists of: Saladworks, the nation's leading fast-casual salad brand; Frutta Bowls, a unique restaurant franchise serving a variety of superfood bowls, fresh fruit smoothies, oatmeal bowls and more; Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh, a popular Mediterranean restaurant concept; and most recently, The Simple Greek, which offers a fresh and healthy take on ancient Greek recipes in a fast-casual setting. WOWorks seeks to drive explosive growth across all of its brands through a variety of channels, both traditional and non-traditional, including ghost kitchens, food trucks, grocery retail and more.

### **About Noodles & Company**

Since 1995, Noodles & Company has been serving noodles your way, with noodles and flavors that you know and love as well as new ones, you're about to discover. From indulgent Wisconsin Mac & Cheese to better-for-you Zoodles and Other Noodles, the company serves a world of flavor in every bowl. Made up of more than 450 restaurants and thousands of passionate team members, Noodles was recently named



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by Forbes as a winner of America's Best Employers for Diversity Award 2021 and America's Best Employers for Women Award 2021. Additionally, Noodles & Company also has been named one of the Best Places to Work by the Denver Business Journal for its unique culture built on the value of "Loving Life" which begins by nourishing and inspiring every team member and guest who walks through the door. Noodles has also earned the Women in the Lead Certification for its investment in women-empowering initiatives for its female team members and has proudly partnered with the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance to build cultural intelligence within its teams.

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