

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Media Contact:**

Szilvia Szegedi  
Senior Manager of Marketing & Communications  
The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA)  
401.461.6344  
szilvia.szegedi@mfha.net

## **MFHA'S CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE EXPERIENCE**

PROVIDENCE (April 11, 2012) – In this increasingly multicultural world, where crossing countries, borders, and boundaries is routine for business managers, the ability to effectively interact and create mutual understanding across different cultures is vital.

The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA), in an attempt to address this increased need for mutual understanding, is teaching employees, customers, and communities in the food and hospitality industry about cultural intelligence, competencies, and fluency so diversity in the workplace can continue to grow.

Launched last year, MFHA's Cultural Intelligence (CI) Initiative offers workshops geared toward top-level executives to mid-level managers who share a desire to build their knowledge and cultural perspectives. The workshops, presented nationwide, include such topics as Latino Identity, Break Black/African-American Perspectives, Asian Insights, and LGBT Employees and Guests.

"The world is changing and the United States now consists of multicultural communities within a larger global context," said Gerry Fernandez, MFHA's founder and president. "Those changing demographics and continuing global shifts will require innovative and flexible strategies. That is why we are focusing on these issues through the CI Initiative."

MFHA's Cultural Intelligence (CI) Initiative brings value through:

- **Education & Insights:** Attendees are given the opportunity to confront, explore, and discuss their knowledge and understanding of Asians, Blacks, Latinos, LGBTs, and other cultural groups in the world and workplace. The CI approach helps participants develop deep knowledge about each cultural group, and then focuses on building skills and strategies so leaders and managers can effectively cater to multicultural markets.
- **Competency Building:** MFHA's CI Initiative builds necessary competencies to effectively communicate across ethnic, racial, and cultural lines through healthy, nonthreatening dialogue. Attendees are trained to ask the right questions in the right way and deliver the right kind of message.
- **Employee Engagement:** Knowing how employees feel and letting them know that you care are effective ways to drive employee engagement. Engaged employees are more productive. They are more customer-focused and less likely to leave their jobs. The CI Initiative drives engagement by providing knowledge focused specifically on each cultural group.

The CI Initiative workshops are highly interactive, insightful, and create a space for intelligent discussions about race, ethnicity, and culture in the workplace.

First-class speakers and facilitators guide participants through an examination of facts, myths, and assumptions of race, ethnicity, and culture. Speakers have included Pepper Miller, president of The Hunter Miller Group and co-author of *What's Black About It? Insights to Increase Your Share of A Changing African-American Market*; Robert Rodriguez, Ph.D., senior vice president, ALPFA Consulting and author of *Latino Talent: Effective Strategies to Recruit, Retain and Develop Hispanic Professionals*; Claire L. Tse, M.A., principal and senior consultant of Tse Solutions and co-author of *The SOLVE Communication Method: Working Out of the Bamboo Box*; and Rohini Anand, Ph.D., senior vice president and global chief diversity officer of Sodexo.

The program includes cultural quizzes, case studies, group exercises, and visual elements to demonstrate the importance of taking a culturally intelligent approach in order to reap the benefits of a multicultural workforce. Benefits of a culturally intelligent workforce include:

- Engaged employees are more productive, more reliable, and committed.
- Engaged employees deliver better customer service.
- Engaged employees feel more appreciated and ultimately stay with their employers longer.
- High cultural competency skills allow management to leverage employees to their full potential and capacity.
- Recognizing the cultural motivations and preferences of customers will lead to increased innovation, which will drive sales and revenue.

"These workshops have been a resounding success," Fernandez said. "Participants walk away with increased sensitivity, an abundance of knowledge, and a real understanding of the intricacies of cultural intelligence."

The latest addition to MFHA's Cultural Intelligence events, "The LGBT Opportunity: Innovative Strategies to Engage LGBT Employees and Guests," was held on Friday, Feb. 10, 2012, at Johnson & Wales University's North Miami campus. The inaugural event received high marks from hospitality leaders. The session informed, educated, and equipped leaders with knowledge and insight on how to effectively support the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) workforce and marketplace.

The event was moderated by Lou Kaucic, chief executive officer and founder of Coaches Collective International (CCI) and former chief people officer of Applebee's International. Presenters included Fred Sainz, vice president of communications & marketing of Human Rights Campaign (HRC); Thomas Mathes, senior general manager of Eventi Hotel, a Kimpton Hotel; and Simma Lieberman, founder of Simma Lieberman Associates.

For more information, go to [www.mfha.net](http://www.mfha.net). To view a video presentation of the Cultural Intelligence Initiative, go to [www.mfha.net/index.php/cultural-intelligence-video](http://www.mfha.net/index.php/cultural-intelligence-video).

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#### **The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA)**

2012 marks The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance's (MFHA) 15<sup>th</sup> year of making the case for multicultural opportunities in the food and hospitality industry. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization educates, advocates for, and connects its members with opportunities to build their cultural intelligence in order to effectively engage multicultural employees, customers, and communities. For more information, visit [www.mfha.net](http://www.mfha.net).