

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**INAUGURAL LGBT SEMINAR RECEIVED HIGH MARKS FROM HOSPITALITY LEADERS**  
Event Promoted Recognition and Engagement of LGBT Employees and Guests

PROVIDENCE (March 14, 2012) – Over 80 industry professionals gathered for the inaugural LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) event, organized by The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) at Johnson & Wales University's North Miami campus on Feb. 10. The latest addition to MFHA's Cultural Intelligence Solution Series "The LGBT Opportunity: Innovative Strategies to Engage LGBT Employees and Guests" was moderated by Lou Kaucic, former Chief People Officer of Applebee's International and Founder of Coaches Collective International (CCI). The program, designed to tackle the industry's most difficult discussion, received high marks from participants, ending the event with great success and opening the door to new opportunities.

"I thought it was a great session! It certainly caused me to think about my own behaviors and biases," said Jenn Crenshaw, Burger King Corporation's Vice President of Human Resources. "I'm not surprised that the event received high marks from the audience."

The session offered unparalleled insights on the business potential of appealing to the LGBT market, supporting LGBT talent, and promoting culturally intelligent actions when connecting with the LGBT community.

"Engaging the LGBT community as employees and guests is not about politics or religion—it's about business," said Gerry Fernandez, MFHA Founder & President. "Equipping employees—including gay employees—to do their best work comes back to the bottom line in the form of better performance, reduced cost and increased sales. LGBT consumers are the most loyal of all. Consequently, if they feel unappreciated or worse yet discriminated against, they will turn to cyberspace and tell all their friends not to patronize your establishment."

Speakers 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.

The program created a space for open and honest dialogue for a mix of LGBT and heterosexual audience. Participants walked away with tools and resources to better engage LGBT employees and guests. "When interested people can show up curious and authentic and share their stories and insights on a little understood topic, it's an amazing thing. This event was one of those amazing things!" said moderator Lou Kaucic. "I left informed, inspired, and energized."

Fernandez confirms that MFHA will host future seminars in support of LGBT inclusiveness in the industry. For more information on MFHA and its various programs, visit [www.mfha.net](http://www.mfha.net).

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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).

**Johnson & Wales University**

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