



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

West Ashley High partners with Schwan's Chef Collective

Student/real-world collaboration leads to record number of meals served

West Ashley High School

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Charleston, SC – From October 8–11, the Schwan's Company partnered with West Ashley High School (WAHS) for the fourth Schwan's Chef Collective K-12 Kitchen Collaborative. The program encourages more students to eat in school cafeterias; Schwan's has previously worked with schools in Wayzata, MN, Albuquerque, NM, and Houston, TX. This is the first time they collaborated with a school on the East Coast.

"I was invited to be a part of the Schwan's Chef Collective a long time ago," said Todd Erickson, Food Network Executive Chef. "Since then I've formed great relationships. Being able to create new dishes that more closely resemble what students eat at home makes me feel great."

The project began at West Ashley High with DECA, a student-led business organization that prepares emerging leaders for careers in finance, hospitality, marketing, and management. Their job was to find out what students like to eat through the completion of a survey and to promote the fact that new menu items were being created by the Schwan's team.

Once all of the data was collected the students began to promote the Schwan's Chef Collective at WAHS. Designed and hung posters around the school and created engaging social media posts. DECA president Kimberly McCurdy (WAHS Class of 2020) and Executive Vice President Madison Haywood (WAHS Class of 2021) put the information together into a formal presentation on Wednesday which was then shared with the Schwan's team. It proved to be quite the learning experience for both students.

"I learned better organizational skills, how to analyze data, and how to become more confident in my presentations," said McCurdy. "I really liked learning the behind the scenes aspects of what marketing is all about."

West Ashley High's Culinary Arts students were also heavily involved in the week's activities. They were on hand every step of the way; they asked

questions during Wednesday's presentation, helped develop recipes to be served at lunch, and received hands on experience by serving on the line right alongside the chefs from the Schwan's Chef Collective.

"I just feel really honored that our program was chosen to participate in this," said West Ashley High Culinary Arts teacher Jason Wheless. "Then to hear the incredible things that were said about our students and their work ethic by everyone involved; that really meant a lot."

One of the highlights of the week for the Culinary Arts students was working one-on-one with the Schwan's chefs. Culinary students Orion Tyra, Madison Haywood, Ny'Asia Seabrook, and Reggie Miller were all paired with a celebrity chef and tasked with creating a new menu item that would be served on Friday.

Both of the menu items chosen, taco pizza and chicken lo mein, were developed by Chef Uno Immanivong and WAHS junior Orion Tyra. "It was great; for a day I kind of felt like a celebrity," said Tyra. "I really liked sharing our food to the school and seeing what people thought. The chefs gave me the motivation to commit to culinary and start thinking about creating my own restaurant."

The day the new recipes were served was a day of what some involved described as polite chaos. Celebrity chefs and Culinary Arts students provided needed help to serve the meals. Students turned out in large numbers to try what the celebrity chefs created. Both meals were a big hit; according to the Charleston County School District's Office of Nutrition Services a district record 1,212 students and 122 teachers went through the lines in the cafeteria.

Wheless confirmed this was not only a major event for West Ashley High School but hopes it will have a lasting effect for the high school and its community.

"I think it was a once in a lifetime partnership and an event that students will remember for years to come," added Jason Wheless. "There are people working really hard to make the food as good as they can so I would like to see students get excited about lunch."

For more information, please contact WAHS Public Relations Coordinator Donnie Newton at (843) 852-2516.

Photo Captions

West Ashley High partners with Schwan's Chef Collective (01)

WAHS junior Madison Haywood (left) and WAHS senior Kimberly McCurdy (right) collected data from students through a survey to determine their favorite things to eat. On Wednesday, they presented that data to Schwan's through a formal presentation in the Media Center.

West Ashley High partners with Schwan's Chef Collective (02)

On Thursday, several of the Culinary Arts students had the opportunity to work one-on-one with the celebrity chefs. Senior Reggie Miller (left) and Top Chef Season 15 Runner Up Adrienne Cheatham (right) worked to create possible menu items to be served on Friday. "I grew in confidence," said Miller. "I was nervous at first but working with them made me feel better as a chef and as a person."

West Ashley High partners with Schwan's Chef Collective (03)

Both of the menu items chosen to be served in the cafeteria on Friday were created by Houston-based restaurateur chef Uno Immanivong and WAHS junior Orion Tyra. According to senior Adam Bauer, who tried both meals, "it was a much needed change at West Ashley High School. We finally got good proportions and it really filled me up."

West Ashley High partners with Schwan's Chef Collective (04)

Houston-based restaurateur chef Uno Immanivong served chicken lo mein and taco pizza to students on Friday who came through the cafeteria during lunch. This was Immanivong's first time with the Schwan's Chef Collective.

West Ashley High partners with Schwan's Chef Collective (05)

The whole process from start to finish was rewarding for all involved. "[Working with the Schwan's Chef Collective] changed my perspective on student involvement in schools," said Adrienne Cheatham. "The levels of professionalism and how hard the Marketing and Culinary Arts students worked was truly impressive." Front row (l to r): Reggie Miller, Jet Tilla, Adrienne Cheatham, Todd Erickson, Uno Immanivong, Madison Haywood. Second row (l to r): Jason Wheless, Deb Hay, Michael Gunn, Craig Claude, Kimberly McCurdy, Terry Stutts.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.