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Media Release

Bread + Butter Chef Program Teaches Culinary Skills to CCSD Students

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Communications

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Charleston, SC – Bridging the gap between job training and placement for Charleston’s hospitality community is the mission of Bread + Butter a program that provides culinary arts students the hands-on training they need to be successful in the hospitality industry. Co-founders Xan McLaughlin and Becky Burke developed this initiative idea in 2015.

Two years ago, a [partnership](#) was formed with Charleston County School District to enable students to learn how to be chefs, leaders and confident members of their community. Bread + Butter launched its pilot program with Burke High School (BHS) students. It resulted in 30 percent of those students finding employment in the hospitality industry.

Bread + Butter placed those students in jobs after they met the application and interview requirements. Students completed a 120 hour paid externship for academic credit. That success led to the program expanding to West Ashley High School (WAHS).

Bread + Butter facilitates opportunities for local chefs to enrich the current culinary curriculum at the two schools. Guest chefs commit to teaching two classes a semester and hiring one student within the next year. Each class is like a working interview, and chefs get to know the students and their skill level.

“There will be 4,400 new jobs in Charleston’s hospitality industry by 2021,” said Burke. “There are over 1,700 restaurants in Charleston and more opening every day. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of National Restaurant Association members reporting labor recruitment as their top challenge more than doubled. Training and placing these students is critical to the industry.”

Participating chefs represent Charleston Country Club, Farmstead, Home Team BBQ, Husk, Les Dames, Magnolia’s, McCrady’s, Minero, Ms. Roses, SMG Entertainment, Swig and Swine, Trident Technical College, and Uptown Social.

Aaron Siegel, owner, and founder of Home Team BBQ, was recently a guest chef at West Ashley. While he demonstrated the art of blanching, shocking and plating vegetables, he weaved in soft-skill lessons that are critical to any line of work.

"I went to culinary school, not business school," Siegel told the students. "In the beginning, I depended on my partners and investors to show me the business side of running a restaurant. What I learned through that process is that you have to take care of your employees and each other. Everything else will fall into place. Everyone has a home team. You take care of your team, hence the name of our restaurant."

WAHS culinary instructor Jason Wheless said the course teaches essential life skills that students need to learn, even if a student doesn't pursue culinary arts.

"Bread + Butter has tied in a lot of things as far as soft skills, that these students can take anywhere," said Wheless. "Things such as being on time, being a member of a team, helping out your teammate, giving back to the community, being a good employee and being a good citizen are just some of the things being taught through this program and in this class."

Wheless said that Bread + Butter mirrors his culinary curriculum in that it teaches front-of-the-house service techniques, customer service, human resources, and management.

West Ashley student Brazil Murry recently completed the culinary courses at WAHS and has started her work-based learning requirements with a job at a local smoothie shop. She's also been accepted to two renowned culinary institutes and is working to secure scholarships to attend one of them.

"Chef has taught me a lot in these classes," said Murry. "I've learned everything from knife skills to sanitation. Taking those out into the real world and using them is important. The importance of building relationships is also something we've learned; you never know who is going to open a door for you."

Those lessons went a long way for one BHS student. According to Burke, that student started the Bread + Butter program wearing an ankle monitor due to some poor choices he had made.

"Once he got immersed in the program he connected with a bunch of local chefs, began volunteering with them, helping out in any way he could and just kept up a terrific, positive attitude," said Burke. "He ended up working at one of Charleston's premier restaurants and is now on track for a leadership position all while balancing football, his home life, and school. He is growing as a person by working there, and they all love him."

To learn more about CCSD's culinary curriculum contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at 843-937-6303. For more information about Bread + Butter, visit www.breadandbutterchs.org.

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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.