



**CHANGING LIVES.
BUILDING CAREERS.**

2025 IMPACT REPORT



Michelle L. Korsmo

Michelle L. Korsmo
President & CEO
National Restaurant Association
CEO
National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

AS A COMMUNITY CORNERSTONE AND AN ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE, restaurants are often a first or early job, equipping people with skills that they use throughout their lives. But more importantly, restaurants are a catalyst for careers – a place for people from every background to stay and build a future that meets their individual goals and aspirations.

In partnership with our industry that employs more than 15.7 million people, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation spent 2025 investing in people at every stage of their career journey through its work entry, training and education, and workforce development programs.

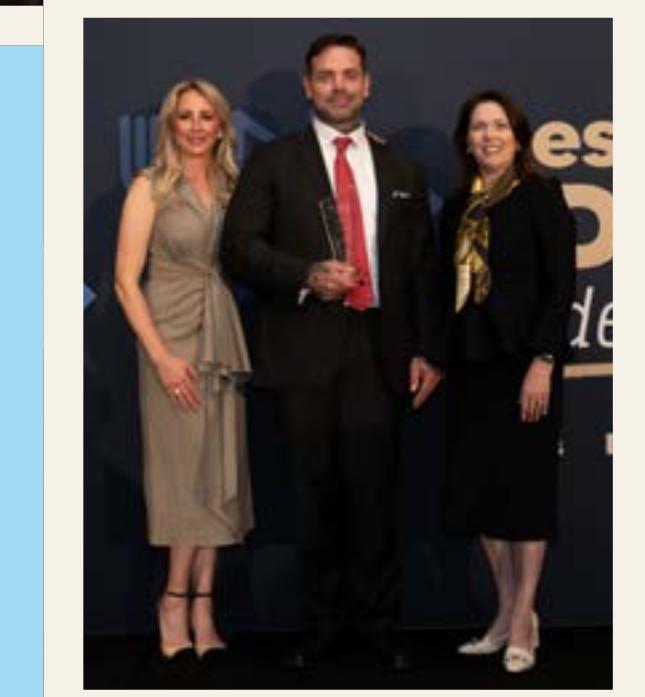
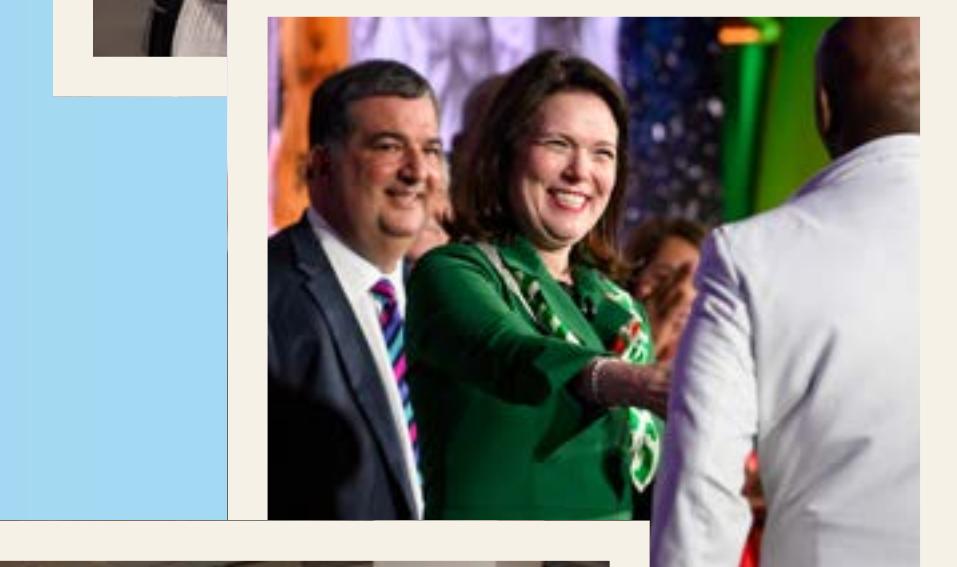
Each of the Foundation's programmatic initiatives paved fresh ground in 2025. ProStart sparked passion and knowledge in 222,000 young people through its unique blend of hands-on career and technical education and industry engagement, while the Registered Apprenticeship program equipped more than 500 people with skills and credentials to advance into management roles.

The Foundation's commitment to people entering our industry for the first time through Restaurant Ready and Hospitality Opportunities for People (Re)Entering Society (HOPES) also grew. Restaurant Ready equipped more than 1,300 individuals with foundational skills needed for first jobs. As a subprogram of Restaurant Ready that focuses on justice-involved individuals, HOPES expanded into six new states and served more than 480 individuals through its network of community-based organizations. While these numbers quantify the Foundation's work in 2025, the stories of participants and alumni are the true proof-point for success. You will see their perspective woven throughout this Impact Report, from HOPES participant Totanisha Jones, who says that HOPES taught her to "keep going, no matter what," to Natalia Thompson's testimonial that ProStart sparked her career aspiration of owning a catering and event venue.

These stories are fuel for the Foundation's work to change lives, build careers, and seek fresh ways to engage and equip the industry workforce for the years ahead. To that end, the Foundation began introducing self-serve tools in 2025 to equip people with knowledge about industry career pathways.

The new RestaurantsWork portal was central to this work. Launching mid-year, it offers an interactive deep dive on the 2,000 unique pathways that our industry generates, from the national to the local level, to help individuals see all that is possible in a restaurant career. Find it at ChooseRestaurants.org/RestaurantsWork.

In closing, let me emphasize that the Foundation's mission is only possible because of our supporters, which include state restaurant association partners, organizations, and countless individuals. Thank you for your partnership. **TOGETHER, WE ARE CHANGING LIVES AND BUILDING CAREERS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY.**



CHANGING LIVES THROUGH THE POWER OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

OPPORTUNITY THRIVES IN RESTAURANTS. The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation invests in individuals throughout their career journeys, equipping them to grab ahold of the opportunity to create a better future, while building communities that foster their growth and development. With a people-first focus, we empower our industry to maximize its human potential as America's second-largest private-sector employer.



PEOPLE

We invest in individuals throughout their restaurant career journeys, equipping them with education and training to launch and grow their futures.



COMMUNITIES

We bring communities together – promoting inclusive pathways for people to achieve their dreams in the restaurant industry.

INDUSTRY

We empower our industry to maximize its human potential through workforce development and best practices.

2025 IN REVIEW

222.5K

High-school students are learning industry fundamentals

200

Post-secondary students received Foundation scholarship funds to support their career goals

116

New ProStart high schools

837

justice-impacted people have secured training and job placement

200

Active-duty military personnel received professional foodservice training

2,508

individuals received first-job skills training

500

Restaurant workers advanced their careers through apprenticeship training

51

State restaurant association partners

32

New Restaurant Ready sites teaching first-job skills to people of all backgrounds

6

New states implementing the HOPES community-collaborative model to equip justice-impacted people with industry skills and job placement

2

New Department of Labor grants to support HOPES expansion

\$17.5M

Total Foundation revenue

\$3M

Raised at the 2025 Ted J. Balestreri Leadership Classic

314

Companies, organizations, and individuals supporting Foundation programs

72

Restaurant employers using apprenticeship to level up their teams for advanced roles

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

The Foundation invests in people, equipping them through work entry programming, training and education, and workforce development initiatives that build their futures. In 2025, we expanded our network of community partners and strengthened our commitment to building an industry with opportunity for all.



WORK ENTRY

Our work entry programs utilize a community-collaborative model to empower people to take on first jobs in the restaurant industry and build futures that meet their goals. In 2025, we partnered with 35 state restaurant associations to engage people with training, skill development, and ongoing support through Restaurant Ready.

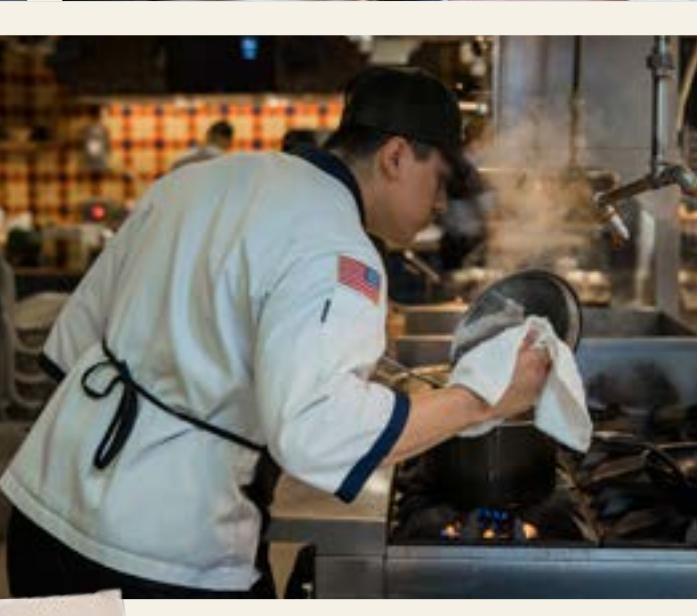
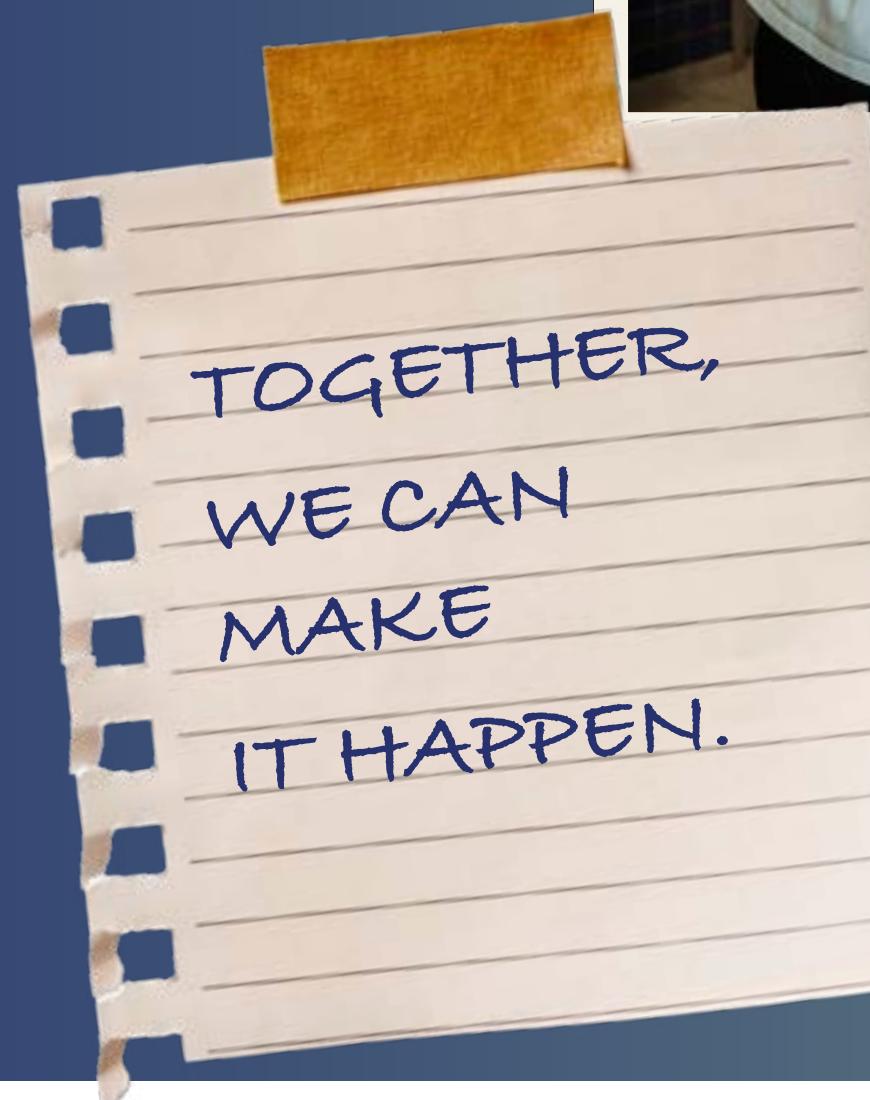


RESTAURANT READY

Restaurant Ready equips people with first-job skills and training to prepare for restaurant industry employment. In 2025, the program added 32 new community-based organizations to its list of partners and expanded across five new states to reach more than 1,300 new people.

"The biggest challenge I faced before Restaurant Ready was communication. The program helped me overcome that challenge by motivating me to improve my skills. Now that I've graduated, I use my communications skills every day in my job."

Nyasia Cashwell Abney
Restaurant Ready Alumni and Drake Pathways Grant Recipient



"The lesson I learned from the HOPES program was to keep going no matter what. You're going to have troubles along the way, but you can get out of any [situation]."

Totanisha Jones
HOPES alumni and Drake Pathway Grant Recipient

HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE (RE)ENTERING SOCIETY (HOPES)

HOPES uses the Restaurant Ready curriculum to reach justice-impacted people with skills, training, job placement, and wrap-around services through a network of 23 sites in 13 states. Implemented in collaboration with state restaurant associations, industry employers, and local correction departments, HOPES welcomed 487 people to the program in 2025 and received two Department of Labor grants totaling more than \$9 million to fuel its expansion in 2026 and beyond.



WORK ENTRY

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

With training and education, there's no limit to what people can achieve. Our goal is to ensure that the next generation of industry leaders and employees have the knowledge and skills needed to advance their careers going forward.

► [PLAY JUMPSTART VIDEO](#)



PROSTART

ProStart is instilling passion and knowledge for the restaurant industry in more than 222K students nationwide. Located at more than 2,200 high schools across the U.S., Washington, D.C., and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico, ProStart teaches the fundamentals of culinary arts and restaurant management.



“As a ProStart student, I served as captain of my culinary and management teams at both our state and national competitions. I also got the opportunity to appear on a baking show, and worked with the American Culinary Federation. Because of ProStart, I believe my dream of opening an event center that hosts weddings and other parties and celebrations will become a reality.”

Natalie Thompson
Student, University of Wisconsin



JUMPSTART GRANT

In 2025, students from W.D. & Mary Baker Career Center in Lafayette, La. were selected for the first-ever JumpStart grant program, taking advantage of an immersive industry experience at the 2025 National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago.

PROSTART EDUCATORS

Educators bring the ProStart program to life – teaching curriculum and connecting students with the industry in meaningful ways. The Foundation has partnered with academic and industry experts to offer resources that help these educators advance, grow, and succeed alongside their students. This includes specialized training and credentials to help them implement the ProStart program in their schools, training and certifications, as well as the ability to manage students' exam sessions online and view their scores.

IF IT'S
YOUR
CALLING,
IT WILL
KEEP
CALLING.

"I spent 11 years in the restaurant industry, but had no formal culinary school training. When the apprenticeship opportunity came about, [my supervisor and I] both knew it would be right for me, that it would help me ... become a program manager at our organization."

Brittany Jones
Program Recruitment Manager
Work Options,
Culinary Training Initiative & HOPES Partner



APPRENTICESHIP

Our Apprenticeship program focuses on advancing current restaurant and hospitality employees into larger roles within the industry. This program provides employers with accredited training programs for line cook, kitchen manager, assistant kitchen manager and assistant restaurant manager participants. In 2025, 875 people and 92 employers participated in the apprenticeship program.



MILITARY

The Foundation empowers military members with training that builds top tier skills and certifications for their time in service and transition to a civilian foodservice career when ready. This year, 203 active-duty military service members participated in our military training programs.

- Advanced Military Professional Educational Development (AMPED), offering hands-on learning and integration of cutting-edge technologies
- Advanced Culinary Training Program (ACTP), in partnership with the Culinary Institute of America, exposes service members to the CIA's pro chef level one requirements
- Advanced Military Management Training Program (AMMTP) allows attendees to earn certifications from the Foundation's ServSuccess certification program
- DOD Skillbridge pre-apprenticeship program for military members interested in industry careers

"For years, I've practiced day after day, around a hectic work and school schedule, to prepare for culinary competitions at the state, regional, and national levels, and having my potential recognized by the Foundation shows me I'm on the right path. If anyone knows what a promising chef looks like, surely it's the National Restaurant Association."

Drake Hamilton
Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship Winner

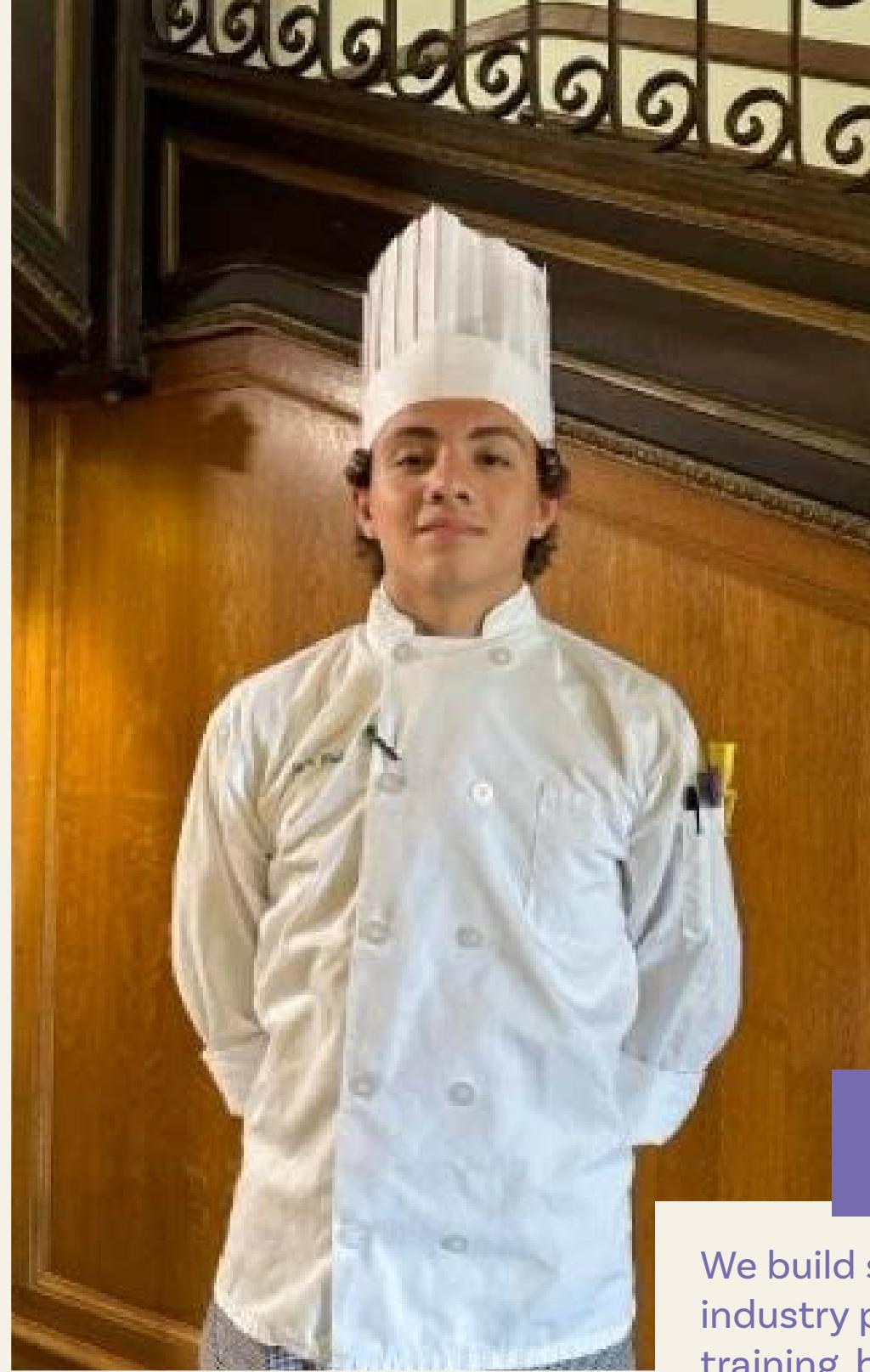


SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

Since 1987, the Foundation has awarded more than \$27 million in scholarships and grants to over 6,000 students and foodservice educators pursuing restaurant-related degrees and professional training through its scholarships and grants programs.

In 2025:

- UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS RECEIVED \$662.5K
- NATIONAL PROSTART INVITATIONAL COMPETITION PARTICIPANTS RECEIVED \$190.5K
- SIXTY-TWO EDUCATORS RECEIVED GRANTS TOTALING \$132K



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We build skills and fuel leadership growth in restaurant industry professionals, reducing the cost of education and training, building a skilled workforce through apprenticeship, and ensuring military members have the tools to succeed in the restaurant and foodservice industry.

EMPOWERING
A FUTURE READY
WORKFORCE



MFHA HIGHLIGHTS

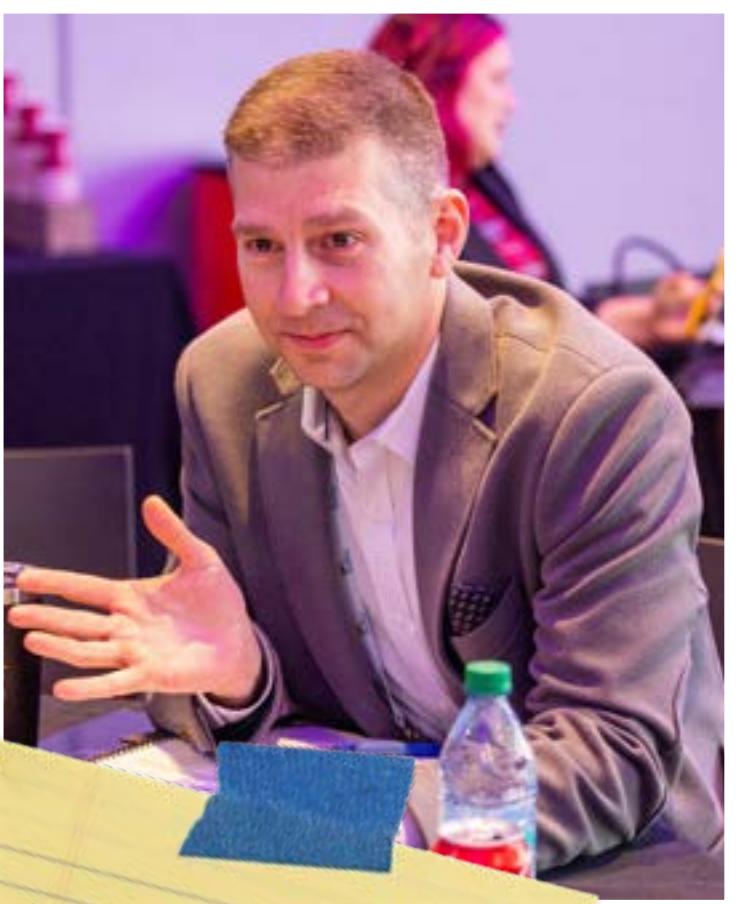
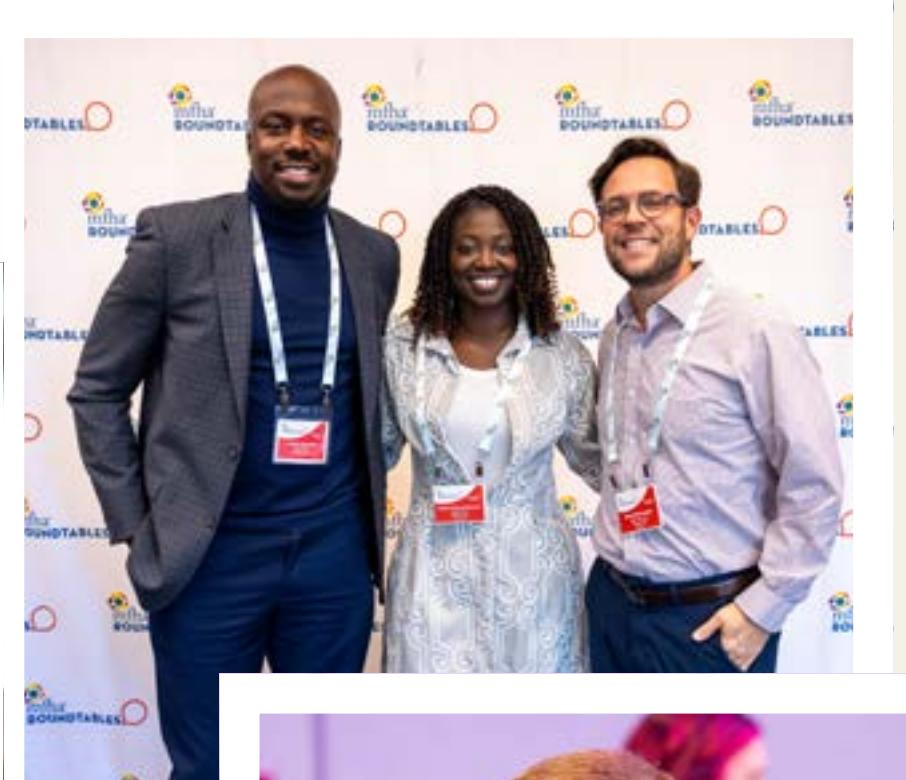
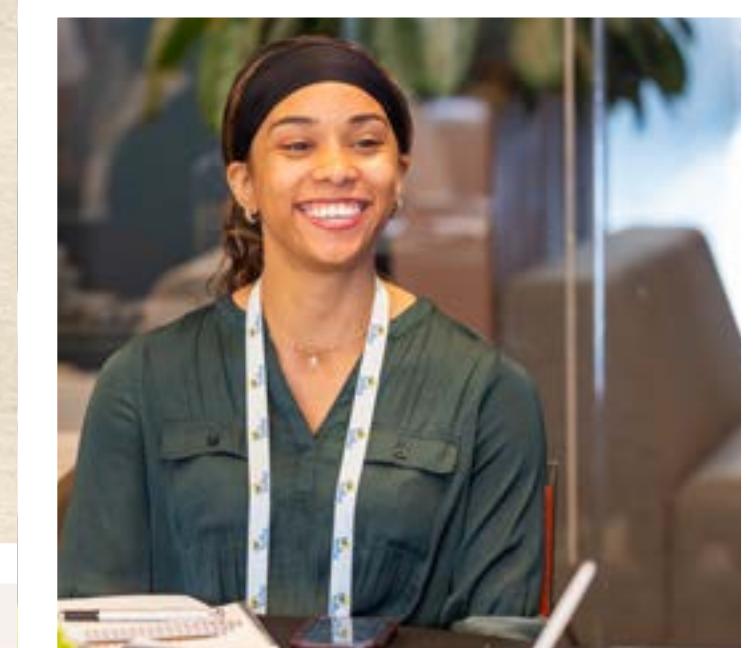
In 2025, the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) elevated the role of cultural intelligence in building successful industry organizations. Led by Erika Cospy Carr, MFHA hosted three Roundtable events that were attended by over 200 decisionmakers from more than 50 companies.

As an industry resource, MFHA also hosted several webinars covering the role of cultural intelligence in second chance initiatives, like HOPES, and building industry organizations that meet the needs of today's employees. Leadership participated in 10+ speaking engagements: at the National Restaurant Association Show, Hospitality Pathways Conference, The Table, Hospitality Hued, Black Women in Food and the Family Reunion, and other companies, such as General Mills and Korn Ferry.



"We're committed to helping brands develop future-ready leaders who drive innovation, inclusivity, and growth. Shaping systems, attitudes, and actions to build culturally intelligent brands will not only redefine the industry's future, but also elevate the guest experience it provides."

Erika Cospy Carr
Leader, Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance



*WHEN THE WHY
IS CLEAR, THE
HOW IS EASY.*

CONNECTING IN PERSON

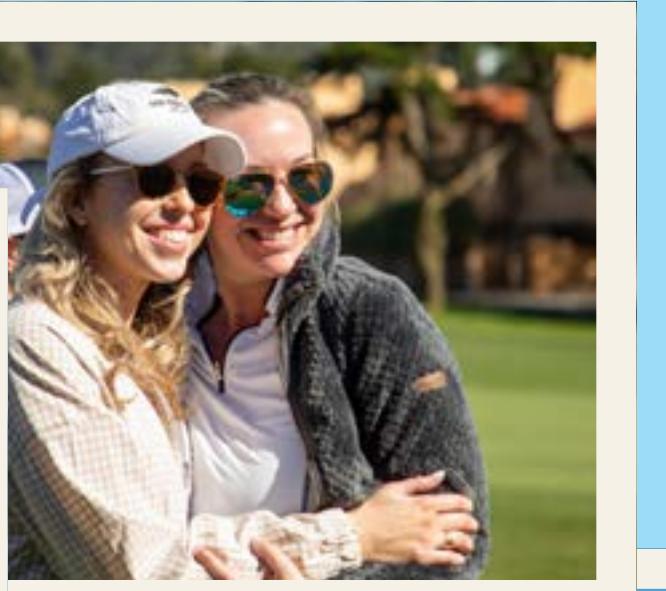
The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation empowers our industry through in-person events that build connection, collaboration, and engagement, with a range of opportunities that are available in restaurants.

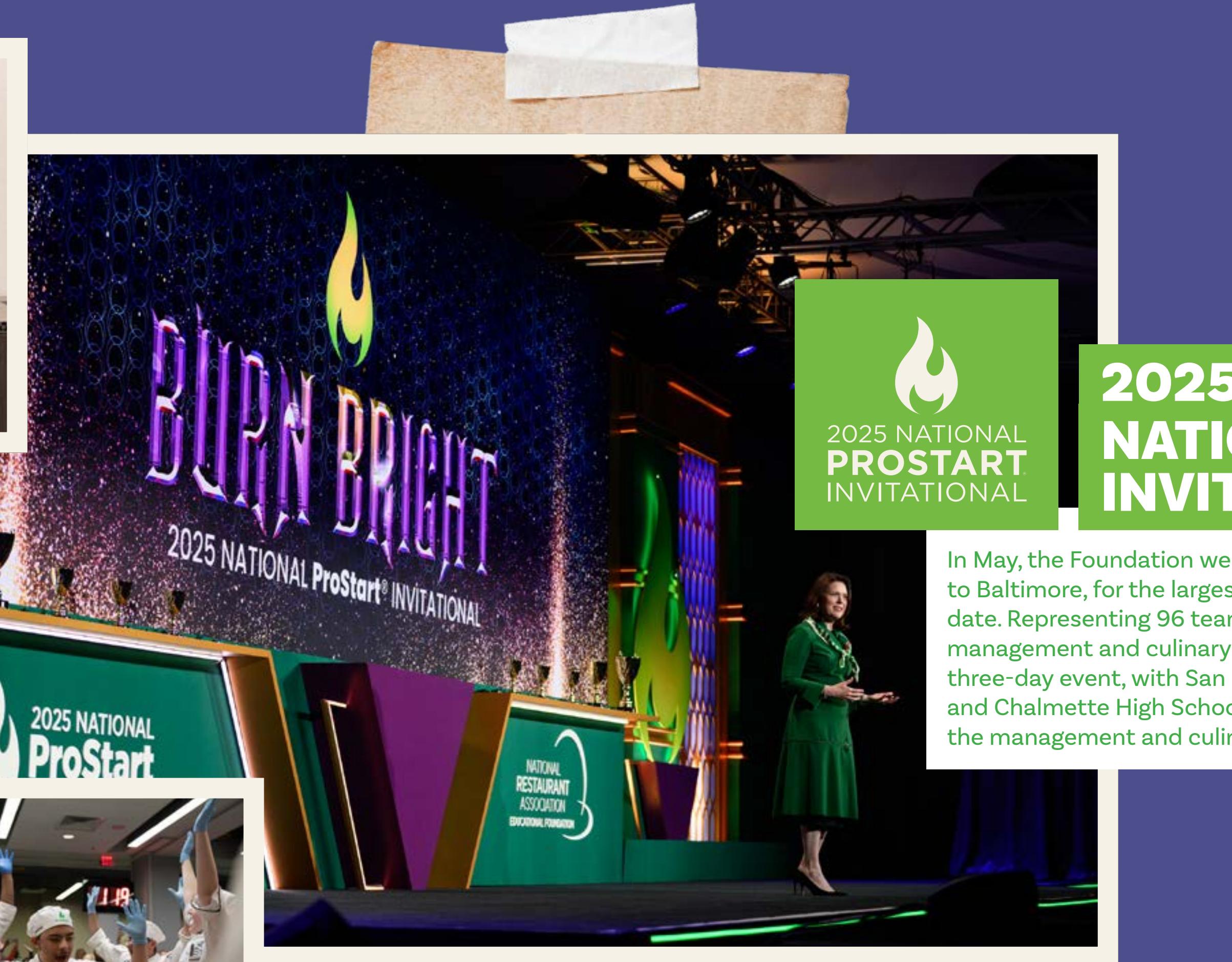
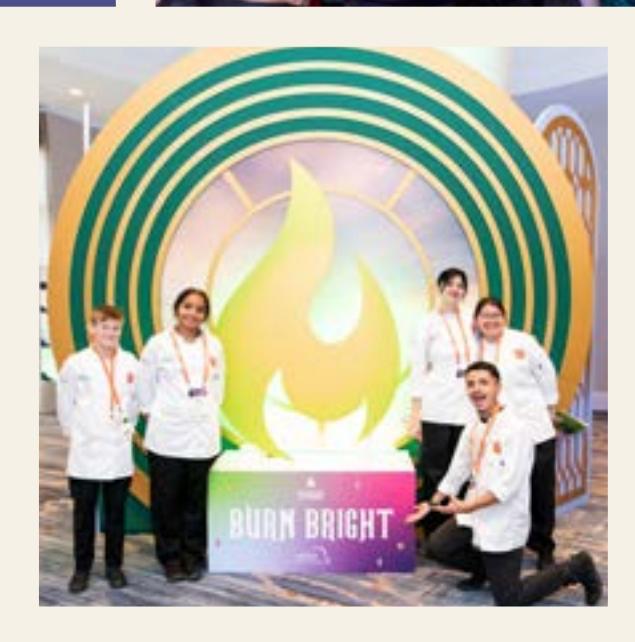
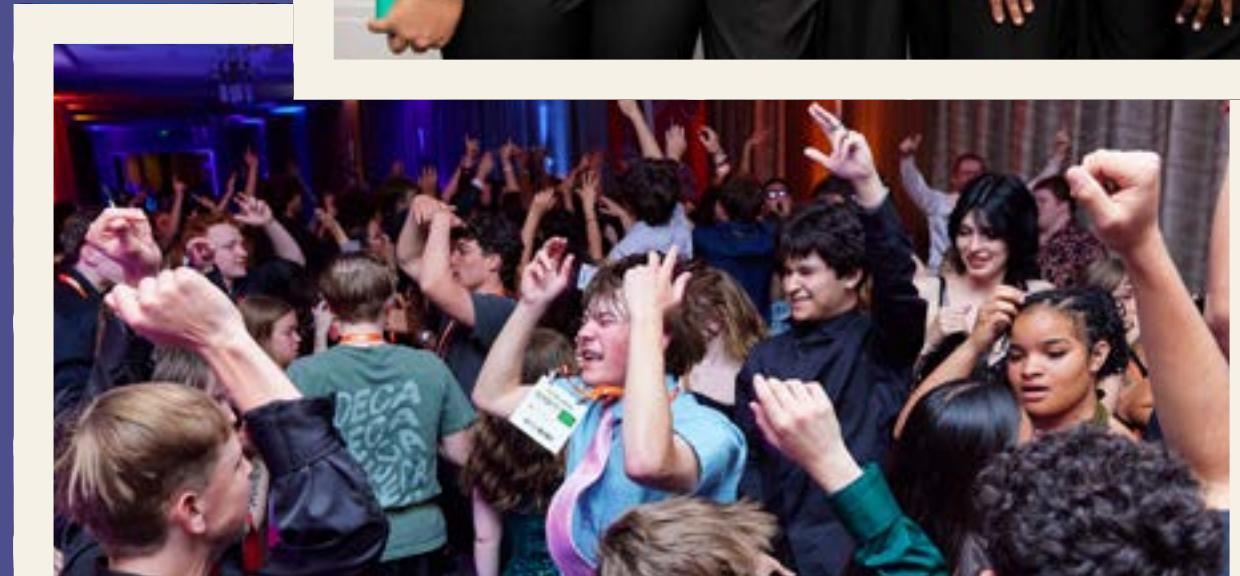


CONNECTING IN PERSON

TED J. BALESTRERI LEADERSHIP CLASSIC

The Ted J. Balestreri Leadership Classic (TJB), the Foundation's premier executive experience and annual fundraiser, saw top industry leaders hitting the links to support our work and play golf at some of the world's most magnificent courses. This year, TJB raised \$3M on behalf of the Foundation's programs and initiatives.





2025 NATIONAL PROSTART INVITATIONAL

CONNECTING IN PERSON

In May, the Foundation welcomed more than 400 students to Baltimore, for the largest National ProStart Invitational to date. Representing 96 teams and 48 states across restaurant management and culinary competitions, students competed in the three-day event, with San Dimas High School in San Dimas, Calif., and Chalmette High School in Chalmette, La., taking top honors in the management and culinary competitions, respectively.

► [PLAY PROSTART VIDEO](#)

CONNECTING IN PERSON

2025 MILITARY FOODSERVICE AWARDS

The Foundation held its 2025 Military Foodservice Awards in Chicago in May, recognizing the top foodservice teams from the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Military Sealift Command. Veteran and keynote speaker Derrick Green, founder of Waffles and Whatnot, delivered remarks during the event.

The ceremony kicked off a weekend of programming in conjunction with Armed Forces Day on May 17, which included participation in the Foundation's Advanced Management Training Program, where service members learned about industry career pathways, fundamentals of restaurant management and leadership, plus developing their own restaurant concepts.

► PLAY MILITARY LIVESTREAM



Military



OPPORTUNITY
THRIVES IN
RESTAURANTS



CONNECTING IN PERSON

HOSPITALITY PATHWAYS CONFERENCE

In August, the Foundation held the 3rd annual Hospitality Pathways Conference, welcoming more than 200 workforce development stakeholders and partners from justice agencies, community-based organizations, and state restaurant associations. Themed “Passport to Employment – Connecting to Industry”, the conference featured peer-networking opportunities, educational workshops, and interactive sessions to increase awareness of the many career pathways available in the restaurant and hospitality industry.

► PLAY PATHWAYS VIDEO

PATHWAY TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

CONNECTING IN PERSON

RESTAURANTS ADVANCE LEADERSHIP AWARDS

In September, the Foundation recognized four industry standouts at its annual Restaurants Advance Leadership Awards gala. They were honored for their work in driving opportunity, building careers, and strengthening communities across the industry. The awards, which were livestreamed for the first time, were sponsored by the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance, American Express, PepsiCo, and Ecolab.

► PLAY RALA LIVESTREAM

CELEBRATE PEOPLE
MAKING A DIFFERENCE



THIS YEAR'S EVENT HONORED:

KIM MORRISON
Co-founder of Coffee Café BeanZ & Co.

JOHN E. MICHEL
Co-founder of Soulcial Kitchen

JAMIE MCDONALD
Owner of Bear's Smokehouse BBQ

GREGORY J. HAMER SR.
CEO of B&G Food Enterprises



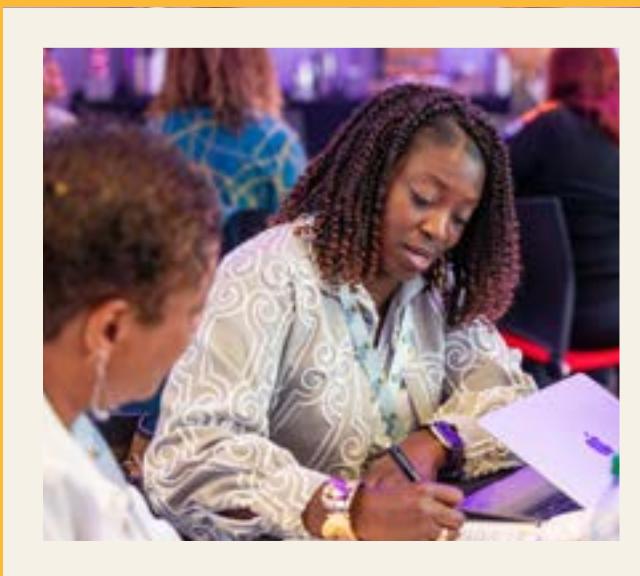
PROSTART PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Foundation's ProStart Professional Development (PD) educator program, held in New Orleans last July, offered technical and professional instruction to ProStart educators. It provided a forum for them to learn cutting-edge skills to apply in the classroom. The week-long clinic was conducted by industry experts from post-secondary institutions throughout the country, including hands-on training at the New Orleans Culinary and Hospitality Institute (NOCHI) and special programming at the World War II Museum.



FALL LEADERSHIP FORUM

The Foundation held its 2025 ProStart Leadership Forum in Minneapolis in October, where 52 state restaurant association representatives came together to discuss how the ProStart program operates in each of their states. The event also included a gathering of 30 of this year's ProStart Educator Fellows, who shared best practices and collaborated on development of future program content.



MFHA ROUNDTABLES

The three Roundtables—at Ecolab in June, Dine Brands in August, and the Coca-Cola Company in November—explored how cultural intelligence fosters more collaborative teams, enhances communication, and builds future-ready leadership. The Roundtables focused on developing the skills that not only make individuals invaluable contributors in any professional setting, but also empower organizations to build strategies that allow them to adapt, endure, and thrive.

► [PLAY MFHA VIDEO](#)

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Paradox, A Workday Company
The Pebble Beach Company
The Pennsylvania State School of Hospitality

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Nestlé Premium Waters
Noodles & Company
Panda Restaurant Group Inc.
Paradox, A Workday Company
The Pebble Beach Company
The Pennsylvania State School of Hospitality

Suntory Global Spirits
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