

FORGE CITY WORKS

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DEVELOPMENT

We provide on-the-job training for adults with barriers to employment such as poverty, a criminal record or homelessness, then we link them to the right permanent culinary job where they can succeed.



We offer a cafe customer service training for Opportunity Youth, to prepare young people who are not working or in school with broadly relevant workplace skills and then we

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lives, and culinary jobs are a way for people to improve their lives even without higher education.

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Forge City Works trains more than 50 people per year and helps them find jobs. About 25 adults with barriers to employment learn back-of-house kitchen skills and 28

Opportunity Youth learn customer service skills in our café

settings. In the last year, 90% of participants have completed the trainings. 75% of adults have gone on

to jobs and youth participants are working their way through internships to permanent placements. Trainees

earn minimum wage while they learn on the job with us, and we have seen that interning at another employer

increases their chances of retaining employment when they are placed. Our professional history as culinary

business professionals and small business owners enables

us to speak the same language with employers. Our unique social enterprise model raises public awareness in the

community and we have built many impactful relationships over our decade of professional training.

ADULT JOB TRAINING

We continue to train adults with multiple barriers to employment at the Kitchen on Broad Street, as we have since 2009. Through 2021, we expect that this program will

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including past addiction, recent incarceration and housing challenges. Participants earn minimum wage working 25-35 hours/week for ten to twelve weeks while learning food preparation, knife skills, and sanitation. Trainees can earn the industry-standard ServSafe Food Handler certification. Graduates are competitive for jobs in restaurants, cafeterias, fast casual, and other commercial kitchens, such as grocery stores. We maintain an 85% success rate in achieving permanent full time employment for our graduates.

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We focus attention on the pipeline into the program, so that the candidates we accept are ready to take advantage of what we offer and are ready to engage in full-time work. Building relationships with agencies that provide support services to our trainees allows us to focus on job training and job placement. We hold regular monthly information sessions for potential participants to provide an overview of the training and job expectations; individual meetings with the social service agencies, shelters, and other organizations which provide support services, and broader breakfasts hosted quarterly for case management workers so that they remain consistently aware of our program, what we expect and what we offer.

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH'S FIRST JOBS

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opportunity. Young people work in the café at the Library, learning skills in a real work environment, setting the course up for success in their future interests and jobs. The end of our 2nd year grant cycle saw 93% of our participants earn their Serv Safe certificate and 89% complete our training and enter into internships.

We are focusing on youth (ages 16-24 who are not in school and/or under-employed) because there are 6,000 OY in Hartford. Twenty-two percent of Hartford young people ages 18-24 have not finished high school. Unemployment among young people is two to three times higher in the general population, and among people of color unemployment is often twice as high. Re-connecting these young people to a productive future is critically important not just for the individual but also for our city and state.

This new training is our primary work with young people. The purpose of this training is not to necessarily set a participant on a lifelong culinary career pathway. Instead, the program is meant to be the first successful work experience for a young person, introducing them to the job culture. This introduction occurs naturally in middle class homes, where teenagers regularly get their first jobs in retail or restaurants, teaching them basic job soft skills and how to operate in a professional environment. We provide an upward ladder for those youth interested in pursuing a culinary career. For other youth the program introduces them to the working world. They work in teams at the café serving customers, under the tutelage of a youth instructor.

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ABOUT US **CULINARY CAREER PATHWAYS** **PROGRAMS**

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It's the right thing for the industry

Restaurants tend to be segregated, with deep divisions along class, race, ethnic and gender lines. Historically, most people of color are in entry-level positions.

Data from the 2015 Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that low level, hourly positions such as dishwasher, prep cook, and busser are filled nationwide by minority workers 40 – 58% of the time-but managerial and professional salaried positions of chef and restaurant manager or highly tipped waiter or bartending roles are filled by Caucasians 75 – 85% of the time. There has clearly not been a widespread, employer supported upward ladder for people of color in the food industry. The goal of this initiative is to develop a culinary training that results in a local, educated culinary workforce that meets demonstrated employer needs. This training is envisioned as an on-ramp to higher-paying jobs for culinary workers-often people of color and women-who are mired at low-end jobs but who want to grow in the culinary field.

Culinary employers in Greater Hartford are reporting a serious labor shortage for higher-level positions at a line cook level and above. In the service sector of the business, owners and managers are looking for experienced servers, bartenders, hosts, and assistant managers. Because labor is highly mobile in food service, managers are constantly hiring. There are clearly delineated industry paths towards becoming a chef or a front of the house manager that are often closed to our city residents because of either the

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training does not require an advanced degree and the skills needed are highly transferable within the industry.

The current labor shortage has made providing a unique opportunity to engage with employers who are struggling to fill openings at their businesses. The investment in training is also an investment in a sector that is an economic driver for our region.

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Forge City Works has been the driving force behind creating job training in the culinary sector, a field where there are well-established pathways to mid-level jobs that do not require higher education. This is particularly true in Hartford, a city with numerous corporate cafeterias and middle level jobs but no real organized onboarding into those positions. The culinary sector has the potential to contribute to reducing inequities, but work remains to be done. We plan the development of a higher level training that will move individuals more quickly to middle-wage positions. This would grow the scale and impact of our work by engaging other employers in publicly supported career training which would directly onboard participants, including re-entry participants, into jobs leading to permanent careers. Our current adult and Opportunity Youth training programs very successfully onboard graduates into entry level positions but are limited in scope based on our physical capacity. We were successful in receiving public funding for culinary training, and have tripled the number of people in our culinary programs. However, for larger scale progress, culinary needs formal designation as an official career pathway, engaging partners and mirroring the sector-wide partnerships existing in the manufacturing and allied health fields. We need to make sure that we collect the right data to meaningfully measure individuals' outcomes. Planning for

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