

Strong Multi-Agency Partnerships Allow AVTEC to Serve Hospitality Education in Alaska

July 2022



In the last days of June, nearly twenty young men and women traveled to the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) in Seward to embark on a week-long hospitality and restaurant training program. For eight hours a day, participants dove headfirst into the finer points of hospitality operations. Students examined front-of-the-house procedures, exploring customer service, seating strategies, serving considerations, and working in tandem with the kitchen. They also analyzed back-of-the-house operations - starting with the supply chain and methodically moving through the systems that put food on plates. A genuinely successful week ended with job offers and changed lives.

The “Hospitality Bootcamp” was the brainchild of staff at the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Cathy LeCompte, Director of the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), and Kyla Pomrenke, Executive Director of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) saw a need for increased hospitality workforce development in Anchorage and outlying areas and a need for providing employment opportunities to young people struggling to get a start in a career. After serving in leadership roles on campuses across the state, LeCompte has been a longtime fixture within Alaska’s educational frameworks. “We were very excited at AVTEC to offer this opportunity to Alaskans this summer. The hospitality industry, including restaurants, are anxious to get qualified employees. Blending ServSuccess training was just what we needed to respond to that call. We look forward to developing more opportunities for this instruction to meet the ever-present need for a skilled workforce in Alaska’s hospitality industry.”

To get started, LeCompte reached out to AWIB staff in the youth serving and apprenticeship units. Anne Velardi, the Apprenticeship Coordinator from the Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development connected LeCompte with David Faro from the National Restaurant Association. Faro, a Sr. Manager of Workforce and Business Development, was delighted, “Utilizing the state hospitality association (CHARR) for local industry connections was key. A strong network of state agencies and organizations cooperated to create AVTEC’s inaugural 2022 Hospitality Bootcamp. The National Restaurant Association was excited to provide instruction that supports the industry recognized ServSuccess Certified Restaurant Professional (CRP) credential. We are confident that this training provided a firm foundation for meaningful employment in our industry. Alaskan employers felt the same way.”

In 2014, The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) enacted a comprehensive youth employment program for young people who face barriers to education, training, and work. The goal is to develop strategies and partnerships that facilitate the implementation of successful programs at both the state and local levels. The overriding objective is to improve the workforce outcomes for this population. Utilizing a WIOA Youth Grant, AVTEC Hospitality Bootcamp



participants gained wrap-around services, transportation, chrome books, resume building, and case management during the weeklong experience.

Shannon Ryan, the Project Coordinator for AVTEC’s WIOA Youth Grant, said, “This was a great experience for everyone involved! The youth were excited and engaged with all aspects of the training event. Providing youth with job skills training followed by connections with job opportunities is exactly what the WIOA

youth grant is intended to do. Everyone walked away with work experience, ongoing mentoring, new job skills, and a high-quality resume highlighting their skills. Many of the youth are now working at quality jobs they interviewed for while at the training.”

After the event concluded 94% of participants said that ServSuccess CRP training benefited their personal and professional development. Participants in the program shared comments like “It was amazing! I learned lots of little things I did not know” and, “I was offered a job that I never thought I could even think about applying for. I now see a lot of new pathways opening up for me because of this training.”

Colin Stewart, AVTEC’s Special Projects Coordinator, said, “We learned a lot together in this pilot project. Although we had to pivot a few times, we were building on good ideas throughout the whole experience. We know that a meaningful pipeline of trained hospitality workers is crucial for Alaska, and this experience answered that call for employers and students alike.”

“After such a successful first run, we hope to scale this effort for the summer of 2023,” says Faro from the National Restaurant Association, “We want to provide the same education to all communities in Alaska that depend on a strong, well-trained hospitality and tourism sector to thrive. AVTEC helped us to catalyze and expand that effort in Alaska in a tremendously significant way.”

The 2022 AVTEC “Hospitality Bootcamp” demonstrated that through partnerships with the Department of Labor and industry-based organizations like the National Restaurant Association, AVTEC continues to be a potent part of the state workforce development system. Chip Romp, Sr. Director of Workforce and Business Services for the National



Restaurant Association, said, “We watched this group respond to the training. They were engaged and curious, and as instructors, we can see how this gained knowledge will benefit them professionally. Through discussion, role play, and classroom education, we were able to provide an atmosphere to help them retain much of the information that builds from the ServSuccess Certified Restaurant Professional online program they each received. We were delighted to be a part of the opportunity and appreciative to the team at AVTEC for a spectacular experience for everybody.”

To learn more about the National Restaurant Association and the ServSuccess Certified Restaurant Professional credential www.servsuccess.com or contact [David Faro](#), Sr. Manager of Workforce Development for the National Restaurant Association