



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Sixth Annual Top Chef of Polk County Event
Held to Benefit Achievement Academy**

LAKELAND, FL (March 9, 2020) - Achievement Academy held its sixth annual Top Chef of Polk County event on Monday, February 24, 2020 at the RP Funding Center in Lakeland. More than 350 guests enjoyed signature dishes (tapas style) prepared by 12 local chefs. Thank you to each Chef, Community Leader, Sponsor, Volunteer and Attendee for making this year's Top Chef of Polk County the best year yet - raising a net of \$200,000 for children with special needs.

Participating chefs were:

Chef Brandon Bailey, Terrie Lobb Catering, Inc.

Chef William Ball, Cob & Pen

Chef Tina Calhoon, Frescos Southern Kitchen & Bar

Chef Gene Gelb, Publix Aprons Cooking School

Chef James Lazaros, La Imperial Bakery Café & Catering

Chef Matthew Oakley, Crave and Copper

Chef Dean Riley, The Estates at Carpenters

Chef Steven Rojas, Nutwood

Chef Patrick Schaefer, Patio850

Chef Jose Vicente, Brasa Latina

Chef Erik Walter, 1916 Irish Pub Lakeland

Chef Abigale Weech-Starkey, The Chop Shop

Top Chef of Polk County added an exciting partnership between the 12 chefs and 12 community leaders from all throughout Polk County! The Top 12 Community Leaders were paired with one of our participating chefs by a blind drawing to collaborate on their fundraising efforts the month leading up to the event. The Chef/Community Leader Team with the highest combined donations from the auction and online donations were awarded the “Top Philanthropic Chef” and “Top Philanthropic Community Leader.” Participating community leaders were:

Trish Buchanan, Publix Super Markets, Inc.

Brianna Burton, Polk County Builders Association

Taher Hamid, Alltek Services

Matt Hinton, PalletOne, Inc.

Jen Lay, Keller Williams

Erica Lupercio, CPS Investment Advisors

Kristi Merritt, Mulling Insurance Agency

Mark Miller, Holland & Knight LLP

Tora Miller, Lakeland Chamber of Commerce

Brenda Ramirez, Kaylor Law Group

Melody Robles, Bartow Ford

The Chefs/Community Leaders raised a total of \$61,665.00 with Chef Tina Calhoon, Frescos Southern Kitchen & Bar and Community Leader Melody Robles, Bartow Ford winning the Top Philanthropic Award. The Top Table Décor Award went to Chef Tina Calhoon, Frescos Southern Kitchen & Bar. Participating chefs sampled each other’s dishes before the event and voted for their favorite. The 2020 Chefs' Choice Award went to Chef Matthew Oakley, Crave & Copper. The Silver Spoon Award was added this year and was a surprise to the chefs. Three professional chefs located outside of Polk County were invited to secretly try each of the dishes and score them to determine the winner. The three secret chefs were Chef Rene J. Marquis, Chef Vanessa N. Marquis and Chef Philip O'Brien. The Silver Spoon Award went to Chef Brandon Bailey, Terrie Lobb Catering. The 2020 Top Chef of Polk County Award went to Chef Brandon Bailey with Terrie Lobb Catering!

Chef Bailey's winning dish was Elk Bourguignon and Wild Mushroom Demi-Glace with Caramelized Tricolor Baby Carrots. Regarding his dish choice, Chef Bailey stated, "I really wanted to do something different. I wanted to make something that got people talking."

Publix Super Markets Charities was the Exclusive Presenting Sponsor. Master Chef Sponsors were Artistic General Contracting, Bartow Ford and Horne Construction. Executive Chef Sponsors were Hillcrest Partners, LP, Pallet Recycle and Southern Homes. Sous Chef Sponsors were Alternative Gas Construction, BB&T now Truist, BKS Partners, Citizens Bank & Trust, GEICO, Janice & Steve Jones, Lakeland Surgical & Diagnostic Center, LLP, MIDFLORIDA Credit Union, Morgan Stanley and Senator Kelli Stargel. Sauté Chef sponsors were Alexander & Chandra Frederick, All Pro Used Auto Parts, Allen & Company, Ann & Ward Edwards, Avery Properties, Inc., Bank of Central Florida, CenterState Bank, CPS Investment Advisors, Crowe LLP, Furr & Wegman Architects, P.A., Greg & Theresa Wilhelm, Guynn Family Produce, Highland Homes, Interstate Batteries of Lakeland, John & Deborah Weber, John & Trish Buchanan, Keller Williams Realty, Lakeland Electric, Luke Markham & the law firm of Johnson Pope, Mid-State Industrial Maintenance, Mulling Insurance Agency, Norse Metals, LLC, Polk State College Foundation, Inc., Putnam Groves, Inc., Saddle Creek Logistics Services, Smart Title, Springer-Peterson Roofing & Sheet Metal, Inc., Summit, Sysco Central Florida, Inc., TECO Energy and TWO MEN AND A TRUCK. In-kind sponsors were Central Food Equipment, Dixie Signs, Emily Plank Photography, Roger Todd with 97.5 WPCV, Emcee and Jay Mueller, Auctioneer.

*The Achievement Academy serves children from birth through age five with various developmental delays and disabilities. The Achievement Academy offers two programs, each provided at no cost to the child or family. The first program is a **Charter School** that offers specialized instruction by certified teachers; small class sizes; individual speech, occupational and physical therapies; and assistive technologies that enable each student to reach his or her full potential at one of the Achievement Academy's three campus locations (Lakeland, Winter Haven and Bartow). The second is a "**Birth to Three Program**" that provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers who are "at-risk" for developmental delays and/or have been identified with a specific delay. Professional Early Interventionists serve these children and their families.*



Top Chef of Polk County and Silver Spoon Award winner Chef Brandon Bailey and Chef Terrie Lobb with Terrie Lobb Catering



Top Philanthropic Award winners and Top Table Décor Award winner Community Leader Melody Robles, Bartow Ford and Chef Tina Calhoun, Frescos Southern Kitchen & Bar



Chefs' Choice Award winner Chef Matthew Oakley, Crave & Copper and Stacy Williams-Myers, CFRE, Achievement Academy Development Director



Participating chefs and community leaders