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## **Chefs Compete at 3rd Annual “Top Chef of Polk County” Benefitting Achievement Academy**

**LAKELAND, FL (April 12, 2017)** Achievement Academy’s third annual “Top Chef of Polk County” event took place on Monday, April 10, at the Lakeland Center.

Top Chef of Polk County is a five-course fine-dining experience that places the spotlight on the area’s leading chefs while raising funds for programs and therapies for the children of Achievement Academy. Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam served as Honorary Chairman for this year’s “Top Chef of Polk County” event. The Presenting Sponsor was Publix Super Markets Charities; the Master Chef Sponsor was Pallet Recycle; the Sous Chef Sponsors were BB&T, GEICO, Hillcrest Partners Limited Partnership, Steve and Janice Jones and State Senator Kelli Stargel; the Saucier Chef Sponsors were Allen & Company, Express Employment Professionals, Farm Credit of Central Florida, Guynn Family Produce, Holland & Knight, Summit Consulting, The Libertore Fund for Children, Inc. and Two Men and a Truck.

A total of 11 chefs created and prepared, tableside, their own menu with accompanying wine and libations that complemented the flavors of each course. An expert panel of culinary-trained professionals judged each chef on their creations based on presentation, choice and taste of food. This expert panel included Jennifer Denlinger M.Ed, CCC, CHEP, a culinary educator for more than ten years; Samantha Slechta, CEC, culinary instructor and externship coordinator at Keiser University’s Sarasota Campus Center for Culinary Arts; and Adam Walkover, ACF, Marketing Specialist and Consulting Chef for Gordon Food Services.

Chef Chris Worley of Terrie Lobb Catering was crowned “Top Chef of Polk County 2017”. The expert panel of judges awarded Blue Palmetto Café at Bok Tower Gardens for best in Appetizer, Chef Wayne Haggard, Spectra Food Services best in Entrée and Chef Jose Vicente, Brasa Latina for best in Dessert. The Media Panel of Judges included Nancy Cattarius of Big Four Radio, Wes Craven of Pro-Ad Media and Curt Patterson of The Lakeland Magazine. Chef Tina Calhoon of Frescos and Chef Chris Worley of Terrie Lobb Catering tied for “Media’s Choice — Top Chef 2017.” The Media Panel of judges awarded Chef Jose Vicente, Brasa Latina for best in Appetizer; Chef Chris Worley, Terrie Lobb Catering for best in Entrée and Chef Tina Calhoon, Frescos for best in Dessert. Dinner attendees voted and awarded Chef Matt Fulwood, Blue Palmetto Café at Bok Tower Gardens the “Best Table Décor”. Chef Matt Fulwood of Blue Palmetto Café at Bok Tower Gardens raised the most funds for Achievement Academy through donated auction items and was awarded the “Top Philanthropic Chef” award.

The Chef participants for this year’s event were:

Chef Tina Calhoon, Frescos

Chef Jeff Conley, Publix Aprons Cooking School

Chef Marcos Fernandez, Nineteen61

Chef Matt Fulwood, Blue Palmetto Café at Bok Tower Gardens

Chef Wayne Haggard, Spectra Food Services

Chef Victor Kendlehart, SottoTerra Ristorante at Streamsong

Chef James Lazaros, La Flor de Espana

Chef Patrick Schaefer, Patio850

Chef Jose Vicente, Brasa Latina

Chef Lea Williams, Got Candy & More

Chef Chris Worley, Terrie Lobb Catering



(L-R) Patrick Spinosa; Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam, Honorary Chairman for Top Chef of Polk County 2017; Achievement Academy Executive Director, John Burton; and Achievement Academy Board President, Sam Houghton.



Chef Chris Worley of Terrie Lobb Catering was crowned the “Top Chef of Polk County 2017”.

*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. More than half of the Birth to Three Program's budget is funded by a generous allocation from the United Way of Central Florida.*

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