



**Open Hand
Empowering
Futures Through
Culinary Training**

***Sponsor Our Culinary Workforce
Development Program***



The Stephen Woods Workforce Development Program

The Stephen Woods Culinary Workforce Development Program is designed to prepare aspiring chefs and culinary professionals who are experiencing unemployment and underemployment for careers in the food service industry. Named after our visionary former Executive Director and launched in January 2025, this 11 week program gives apprentices the full culinary school experience-- and then some.

75%
graduation
rate*

90%
employed in
culinary*

*as of 2025

Program Highlights

- Hands-On culinary training in real kitchen environments
- ServSafe® training & certification testing
- Catering experience with live events
- Chef uniform & tools
- Bus passes, as needed
- Nutrition education with a certified RDN
- Career coaching & job readiness support
- Personal development & financial literacy training



Sponsor the Program

You can directly support the apprentices enrolled in our Culinary Workforce Development Program. In doing so, you'll be actively removing barriers to employment and stability. You'll help cover everything from training costs, uniforms, equipment, transportation, and wraparound services that lead to long-term success.

Jr. Sous Chef Sponsor - \$1,000

Gifts at this level contribute to overall program expenses, such as groceries, knife kits, etc. Also helps support excursions including field trips and the capstone microrestaurant experience.



Graduate Highlight: Kaneki

Cooking had always been a part of Kaneki's life, which is why it hadn't felt like work for the few years it had become his job: it was a passion. After experiencing homelessness at eighteen, he knew that he wanted to make a home in the culinary world. However, finding the means to attend culinary school was proving difficult. Enter: our Workforce Development Program.

"I'm so proud that I took the leap to do this program. You guys not only gave me the necessary skills, but you made an environment where I could learn and feel welcomed and open."

Chef Kira and Chef Jarrod worked together with Kaneki to help him feel more confident and think through his next steps to find an opportunity best suited for him. His hard work paid off before he had even officially graduated from the program: Kaneki was hired at Natalie Bianca, a local restaurant in Southwest Atlanta, where he still works as a line cook today.

"Open Hand, Chef Kira, Chef Jarrod: you changed my life. You literally made my dreams come true and paved the way for me to do more and have greatness."



Sponsorship Levels (cont'd)

Sous Chef Sponsor - \$3,500

Gifts at this level contribute to overall program expenses, such as groceries, knife kits, etc. Also helps support excursions including field trips and the capstone microrestaurant experience.

Chef de Partie Sponsor - \$5,000

Covers full training costs for one apprentice (tuition, materials, meals). Recognition on website and program materials. Invitation to Micro Restaurant Experience.

Executive Chef Sponsor - \$7,500

Supports one full apprenticeship, including job placement assistance and wraparound services. Recognition at graduation and on social media.





Graduate Highlight: Tito

Tito grabbed a bus ticket in Rhode Island and decided to stop at the end of the line in his search for a new life. He was at a low point emotionally, financially, and spiritually: he ended up at the Atlanta Mission while on his road to recovery. Until one day, when he noticed a flyer on the bulletin board: a free workforce development program for those aspiring to work in the culinary industry.

Ever since he was young, Tito had loved to cook. “I had experience working in kitchens, but I learned things I didn’t even know I didn’t know, and once I started classes at Open Hand I ended up just wanting to stay here all day and keep learning.” In early spring 2025, Tito became one of our very first graduates from our Culinary Workforce Development Program.

Chef Tito’s ultimate goal post-graduation is to run his own fusion food truck. Until then, you can find him on the lines in the Open Hand kitchen, cooking up love and nutrition. Best of all, merely a month after employment, Chef Tito proudly reported that he had moved out of Atlanta Mission and into a home of his own.

“How I was then, and who I am and now is a huge difference. I don’t know, I guess it’s a miracle that I met all the people over here at Open Hand and at Atlanta Mission. It couldn’t be better.”

Culinary Champion - \$10,000+

Gifts at this level contribute to overall program expenses, such as groceries, knife kits, etc. Also helps support excursions including field trips and the capstone microrestaurant experience.



Partnerships & Referrals

Our community partners are a key reason why we've seen such stellar success in our program. Not only are they providing referrals, but community partners are champions of our apprentices. Together, we make sure our apprentices are getting to class, and problem-solve together when obstacles arise.

This program is about more than simply learning kitchen skills or getting a job: it's about empowering our apprentices with the tools they need to start a lifelong career path.

Community Partners*

Aid Atlanta

Atlanta Mission

CHRIS180

Covenant House

NextGen

Partnership Against Domestic Violence

Project Community Connections

**Interested in becoming one of our community partners? Contact us!*



Contact Us



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 OpenHandAtlanta.org/WDP

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