

FOODSERVICE LEADER OF THE YEAR

cont. from pg 14

interview, there is a three-day trial in the kitchen, followed by another interview. Curtin proudly notes, "National job training programs result in about a fifty percent success rate. We have an 80 percent graduation rate once people are in the program, so we feel we are doing pretty well."

And where do the graduates go?

One hundred eighty-one people work at DCCK, 81 of whom are program graduates. Together, they prepare almost 13,000 meals per day — 5,000 for the community and 7,500 for schools. As Curtin notes, "That equates to a very big restaurant!" Other graduates work in local restaurants and with foodservice providers throughout the DMV region. In fact, though, job generation has gone well beyond that, Curtin says. Farms from southern Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley have benefitted from hundreds of thousands of



New DCCK Culinary Job Training (CJT) graduate (Jan. 2018) Dana Thomas

dollars of purchases to help meet the Kitchen's needs. "The economic ramifications of this are stunning," he says, "at every point along the supply line. We are an economic development generator. It's not free food for poor people, we are in the economic development business."

And the food...

For years, DCCK focused on food at the end of the food stream,

collecting what was left over at restaurants. Now, says Curtin, restaurants are a lot smarter, with much less going to waste. In fact, he says, less than three percent of the Kitchen's food is donated from restaurants. Sixty-five percent is donated from other sources, and the Kitchen concentrates heavily on going local. "Local farms have produce that is geometrically or aesthetically challenged, with little or no commercial value," he explains. "About 40 to 60 percent of what's grown on the farm never makes it off the farm because it's not the right shape or size. But once you cut up a cucumber that's too skinny or too fat, it's beautiful, no matter how it started!"

DCCK has a fleet of trucks to pick up food from a 200-mile radius of its D.C. location, in the shadow of the U. S. Capitol. Curtin is particularly excited about a brand new all-wheel drive van, donated by the World Bank, that can go anywhere in any weather. "We don't close during emergencies," he says. "In fact, we often have to double our production

for other homeless shelters when there is a snow emergency. We and the first responders are often the only ones out there."

Looking ahead...

...Mike Curtin hopes more restaurants will hire from the DC Central Kitchen talent pool. "What we hope to see is the Kitchen and the restaurant community grow together." He describes the Kitchen as a place where people gather around a common table. Food, he says, is one thing we all have in common, no matter who we are or where we come from — from a chef, to a taxi driver, to the president of the United States. "We all have something to give and something to learn. When different people come together around the table, we can see the change we want in our communities."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DC CENTRAL KITCHEN, please go to dccentralkitchen.org. For information on how you can hire its graduates, please contact Jamilah Al-Bari at jal-bari@dccentralkitchen.org, or 202-601-7321.

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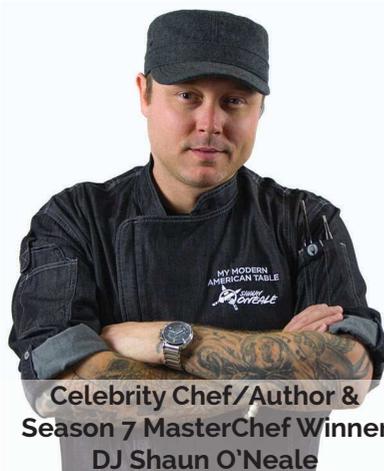
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An aerial photograph of a large, busy trade show floor. The floor is covered with various booths, displays, and people. The booths are decorated with colorful banners and signs. The overall atmosphere is one of a large-scale event.