



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Adriane De Ceuninck
Michigan Restaurant Association
(517) 482-5244



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS STIR UP EXCITEMENT AT MICHIGAN PROSTART® COMPETITION 64 Teams to Compete March 20 & 21 in Lansing

LANSING, MI – Sixty-four teams representing 20 career and technical centers from across Michigan will meet in Lansing on March 20 and March 21 for the annual Michigan ProStart® Competition. Hosted by the Michigan Restaurant Association Educational Support Foundation (MRA ESF), the student competition will take place at the Crowne Plaza Lansing West from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on March 20 and from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on March 21. The general public is welcome at this event.

“ProStart students represent the future of the restaurant and hospitality industry,” said Justin Winslow, Michigan Restaurant Association President and CEO. “This Competition is an incredible opportunity for those students to demonstrate the skills they’ve learned through the ProStart program, and their passion for this industry. We are excited to see the results from countless hours of preparation throughout the school year.”

According to the National Restaurant Association, restaurant industry is the nation’s second-largest private sector employer, providing career opportunities for one in 10 working Americans. In Michigan, restaurants are projected to employ 465,100 people by 2026, which equates to 10.3 percent job growth or 43,600 jobs over 2016. Yet restaurant owners report recruiting and retaining employees as a challenge to their business. The ProStart Program is one answer to that challenge as it gives students interested in foodservice careers a head start by teaching culinary techniques and management skills through an industry-driven curriculum. Upon successful completion of the ProStart Program, students receive an industry-recognized certificate – and employers get well-prepared, enthusiastic employees.

Competition Details

On Sunday, March 20, students will compete in the ServSafe® “Jeopardy!” style knowledge bowl sponsored by the Van Eerden Foodservice Company. This question-and-answer event tests the participants’ knowledge of critically important issues of food safety and sanitation. The culinary competition will also take place on Sunday and is sponsored by Sysco of Michigan. This portion of the competition challenges students to execute perfect knife cuts, develop a three-course meal in one hour (using only two butane burners), and cost-out the meal for menu pricing – all while being evaluated by industry professionals on their sanitation, teamwork, organization, and taste.

On Monday, March 21, teams will complete in the management/entrepreneurship portion of the competition, sponsored by Gordon Food Service. Students demonstrate their knowledge of the industry by developing a restaurant proposal, delivering a verbal presentation, and applying critical thinking skills to challenges that restaurant managers face in day-to-day operations. Also on Monday is the nutrition competition component. Designed to encourage the creation of healthy menu items for restaurants, students will create a menu and prepare a three-course meal that meets the National Restaurant Association’s Kids’ Live Well and USDA menu criteria. New to the Competition this year, menu design and table top design competitions will also be held on Monday.

Industry professionals as well as leading college and university instructors observe and rate all portions of the competition. Additional ProStart Competition sponsors include: Cleary University, Coca-Cola, Michael's & Associates, US Foods, and Valley City Linen.

The winning teams in the culinary and management/entrepreneurship portions will represent Michigan in Dallas, Texas, from April 29-May 1, 2016, competing against other teams from across the country at the 15th Annual National ProStart® Invitational. The national competition is hosted by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. In addition, more than \$500,000 in scholarships to help the students pursue careers in the foodservice industry will be shared by the Michigan winners.

Schools Participating in the Michigan Competition:

Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center
Branch Area Careers Center
Calhoun Area Career Center
Careerline Tech Center
Chippewa Valley Schools
Clare-Gladwin RESD
DCTC @ Riverview
Gaylord High School
Gratiot Isabella Technical Education Center
LISD TECH Center
Livonia Career Technical Center
Oakland Schools Technical Campus Northwest
Petoskey High School
Plymouth-Canton Educational Park
Roseville High School
Saginaw Career Complex
South West Washtenaw Consortium (SWWC) @ Saline
Tuscola Technology Center
Van Buren Technology Center
West Shore ESD

ProStart is a nationwide, two-year high school program that unites the classroom and industry to develop the best and brightest talent into tomorrow's restaurant and foodservice leaders. In Michigan, 68 high schools and career centers use the ProStart curriculum with 5,000 students participating. For more information about ProStart, contact Amanda Smith at 800-968-9668, visit michiganrestaurant.org/prostart, or find us on Twitter and Facebook.

Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) is the recognized leader of Michigan's hospitality industry, providing essential services to the foodservice community. Founded in 1921, the MRA represents nearly 4,500 Michigan foodservice establishments. The industry plays an integral role in Michigan's economy, employing more than 421,000 people and creating \$15.4 billion in annual sales.

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