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High School Students Create Stimulus Plan for the Senses at Annual State Wide Culinary Competition

(Columbia, MD) - With the hopes of impressing the senses of taste, sight and smell of top culinary judges from around the country, culinary students from 22 different Maryland high schools will be meeting in Greenbelt, MD on March 4, 2009 to compete in the 5th annual Maryland ProStart Student Invitational (MPSI). Hosted by the Restaurant Association of Maryland Education Foundation (RAMEF), Maryland's most impressive rising culinary and hospitality management students will compete for over \$600,000 in college and continuing education scholarships, state-wide bragging rights and the opportunity to represent the state of Maryland at the National competition in San Diego, CA in April.

Participating teams are all a part of the nation-wide ProStart® School-to-Career program used by over 80 schools in Maryland. RAMEF, in partnership with National Restaurant Association Solutions, established the program to prepare high school students for careers in the foodservice and hospitality industry. "ProStart teaches students the culinary and management skills necessary to compete for the best jobs", states Marshall Weston Jr., Executive Vice President of RAMEF. "ProStart students are well on their way to becoming the next great chef, owner of a restaurant or manage one of the top resorts in the country."

On March 4th, the high school teams will be displaying culinary skills, management ability and knowledge of the foodservice industry. In preparation for the culinary competition, each 4 member team has developed a three course menu item to be scrutinized by a panel of judges that include some of the finest chefs and chef instructors in the nation. Training diligently for months, students have practiced the execution and preparation of an appetizer, entrée and dessert from scratch in only one hour. Judges will be scoring participants on proper food safety and sanitation procedures, proper cooking methods, food taste, teamwork and menu difficulty. Each element of the competition is truly a test of collaboration and innovation. In preparation for the management competition, students will solve an industry written case study, present their solution to a panel of judges and also compete in a Jeopardy type quiz bowl.

When all is said and done, the first place teams from the culinary and management competitions will go on to represent the state of Maryland in the National ProStart Invitational on April 24-26, 2009 in San Diego, CA with all expenses paid for by RAMEF.

"Thanks to the generosity of our industry and its supporters, these students will have the opportunity of a lifetime at their fingertips. They are competing for scholarship money that rivals what is seen in high school sports and music programs" said Linda Eby, Chairwoman of the RAMEF Board of Directors.

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The following schools will be competing:

Baltimore City - Edmondson Westside High School; National Academy Foundation High School

Baltimore County - Carver Center for the Arts and Technology; Sollers Point Technical High School

Cecil County - Rising Sun High School

Garrett County - Southern Garrett High School

Howard County - Howard County Applications and Research Laboratory (ARL); Oakland Mills High School;
Howard High School

Montgomery County - Albert Einstein High School; Gaithersburg High School; Quince Orchard High School;
Springbrook High School

Prince George's County - Bowie High School; Crossland High School; Duval High School;
Fairmont Heights High School; Forestville Military Academy; High Point High School;
Laurel High School; Suitland High School

Washington County - North Hagerstown High School; South Hagerstown High School

MPSI is made possible by Platinum Scholarship Sponsor: McCormick and Company, Inc., Culinary Competition Sponsor: Whole Foods Market, Management Competition Sponsor: Anne Arundel Community College, Gold Sponsors: Riderwood Village, Prince George's Community College, Carey Sales and Services and Perdue Chicken. "It makes such a difference when students see that the industry in which they want to be a part of supports their hard work and effort." says Eby.

For additional information regarding MPSI please contact LaDeana Litchfield at 410.290.6800 x1015 or via e-mail at ladeana@ramef.org. Information can also be found at www.ramef.org.

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RAMEF serves as the preferred source of Education, Training, Resources and Research for Maryland's thriving Hospitality and Tourism industry. RAMEF focuses on Improving the Hospitality Industry through Education by training the industry employees in Food Safety, Responsible Alcohol Service and Management Skills. RAMEF also supports the future of the Industry by preparing High School Students for Careers through the ProStart Program and offering Scholarships to encourage students to pursue Hospitality as a Career.

The Restaurant Association of Maryland is the state wide trade association operated for the purpose of promoting, protecting and improving the foodservice industry.