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## My Time: 'Ladders to Success' grant earned by Light House shelter

bbBistro is project partner; Community Foundation of Anne Arundel gives \$25K

The Board of Directors of the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County has awarded the "Ladders to Success" grant in the amount of \$25,000 the Light House shelter in Annapolis for its culinary internship program in partnership with bbBistro in West Annapolis.

In an economic climate where even skilled workers are struggling to find good paying jobs, the majority of the residents of the Light House shelter are struggling to find jobs that will pay them enough to remain independent and support their families. More than 50 percent of LHS clients do not have high school diplomas or GEDs. Most LHS residents have educational and/or language barriers and little training to make them employable.

Programs such as "Ladders to Success" will help them gain skills in a structured, supportive environment while earning an income and gaining valuable work experience and references.

"The Light House shelter is thrilled to partner with the Community Foundation and bbBistro in West Annapolis," commented Elizabeth Kinney, president of the Board of Directors of the Light House. "Programs like this one are so important in helping people who are homeless and struggling to qualify for jobs. The 'Ladders to Success' grant will help the residents to regain and sustain their economic independence to live in their own community."



The Light House has partnered with bbBistro, 112 Annapolis St. and the "Ladder to Success" grant will be used to fund an internship program for five Light House clients. There will be two 16-week sessions, the first with two participants and the second with three participants.

The first two weeks of the program will include preparatory workshops and training at the Light House. The "soft skills" curriculum will teach participants the non-technical skills, abilities and traits that employees need to function in a workplace, including four sets of competencies problem solving, oral and written communication skills, professionalism and work ethic, teamwork and collaboration skills. The Light House will also work with Dress for Success to ensure the participants have appropriate clothing for their workplace experience.

The remaining weeks of the internship program LHS clients will be working at bbBistro side by side with the owners Carla Lucente and Stacey Jackowski. bbBistro recently celebrated its third anniversary. It is one of the first five restaurants in Annapolis to receive the Environmental Stewardship Award. The owners support local farmers and vendors, grow some of their own produce, recycle and produce only two cans of trash per week.

LaMorris "BeBe" Beatty, a resident of the LHS, is one of the first recipients of the internship. Beatty worked at bbBistro - learning all aspects of the restaurant/culinary industry including setting up the restaurants in the mornings, stocking, inventory, prepping, composting, baking, cooking and sanitation. In her first week on the job, Beatty made a peach pie that was a huge hit with the bistro's patrons.

During the course of the 16 weeks, Beatty was also to earn her "Safe Serve" certification from Anne Arundel Community College. This certification is a valuable asset for her as most food-related companies require it.

"I am very excited about this internship with bbBistro. I am learning skills that will help me to transition and get back into the work force. I am learning work habits and skills so that I will be able to pursue job opportunities. I feel very blessed that I was chosen to participate in the program."

The Light House shelter has provided emergency shelter, transitional housing, homelessness prevention and related support systems to the homeless and disadvantaged people in the City of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County since 1989.

The underlying causes of homelessness include the lack of marketable skills, income instability, untreated physical and mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence. In Anne Arundel County, the annual income needed to afford fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$41,480. At the present time, the average income of LHS residential clients is only \$9,744 annually. More than 70 percent of the Light House clients have no earned income at all.

The new Light House will house four separate facilities in one 24,000-square-foot green, secure and cost-efficient building; an emergency shelter, transitional housing, a resource and support center and a chronically homeless day center.

The new facility is scheduled to open later this year.

- Sharon Stewart