



## Light House Expands Job Training Program (B.E.S.T.)

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L to R: Chevelle Tucker (LH resident) Marcus Grant, LH employee in Kitchen Chef Linda Vogle, LH Culinary Arts Wendy McIntyre, event co-chairperson.

One year ago the Light House Homeless Prevention and Support Center in Annapolis moved into its new 24,000 square foot facility on Hudson Street. In addition to providing shelter to 45 individuals and five families, the Center has also expanded programming to include a series of 12 week job training programs (B.E.S.T. - Building Employment Success Training). The five disciplines include maintenance, clerical /administrative, kitchen /catering, retail and landscaping. Residents of the Light House must qualify to participate in the paid, hands-on training program that incorporates daily classes in basic and life employment skills while working in their discipline, all under the supervision of a job coach.

Recently while attending the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) Conference in Washington, DC, Elizabeth Kinney, Executive Director of the Light House, visited [DC Central Kitchen](#), a highly regarded social enterprise business and job training program that employs the homeless, unemployed and underemployed individuals. Last year graduates earned \$2.4 million. “I have great respect for the groundbreaking work of the DC Kitchen. It is a model that would be of great benefit to Annapolis and Anne Arundel County,” Kinney said. While there, Kinney met the Coordinator of their Culinary Arts Program, Executive Chef Linda Vogler. The two women instantly recognized they shared a vision to provide job training opportunities for those who are homeless.

During a visit to the Light House, Chef Vogler recalled, “I had a good feeling the minute I walked through the door. I could feel there is a soul here,” she said. “I was so impressed with the dedicated volunteers who are involved in the kitchen and pantry programs and the clients who work daily to support the operations.” As it turned out, she was looking for an opportunity to

start a new Culinary Arts training program and Elizabeth Kinney was looking for an opportunity to expand the piloted B.E.S.T (Building Employment Success Training) program. “It was a perfect fit,” Kinney said. “Chef Linda’s 28 years in the food industry and her most recent experience at DC Central Kitchen, coupled with her prior experience as Founder and Executive Director of the Community Culinary School in Charlotte NC, a non-profit job training program, she was the perfect person to take our B.E.S.T program to the next level”.

Chef Linda took the position of Executive Chef and Director of Culinary Training at Light House in September. Although only a short time on the job, she already has a clear vision of what she wants to accomplish. “The Culinary Arts field is a second chance industry. It is portable and the sky’s the limit if you work hard,” she said. “Opportunities are available at the entry level in places like hospitals, nursing homes, schools, restaurants and catering. I want to prepare our students for sustainable employment” she added. Chef Linda will be teaching a new class of students the basic cooking skills including preparation, knowledge of food and safe food handling, time management and kitchen equipment training. During their hands-on training, they will also be preparing meals and catering special events at the Light House. Vogler has joined the Chesapeake Chefs Association, a 20-year partner with the Light House.

Among her many achievements, Chef Linda is certified as an Executive Chef by the [American Culinary Federation](#) (ACF). She was named “Great Chef” by the [American Dairy Association](#), and “Chef of the Year” by the Charlotte Virginia Chapter of the ACF. Chef Linda has won over 10 professional recipe competitions and published nine original recipes. She is most proud of the award for “Women Who Inspire Community Service” presented by the Women Chefs and Restaurateurs for her work in helping train and empowering 700 adults in the culinary arts for life-changing careers.

Kinney added, “Chef Linda is going to be a gift from the Light House to our community. She has dedicated her life to helping others find new opportunities.”