



**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Providence Mayor Angel Taveras Helps Food Bank Celebrate Graduation of Community Kitchen Students**

*Culinary Job-Training Program Graduates 10 Adults as part of Class 42*

**PROVIDENCE, R.I.** – After 14-weeks of classroom curriculum, hundreds of hours learning to cook in a professional kitchen and the preparation of more than 20,000 meals for children at-risk of hunger, the 42<sup>nd</sup> class of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank’s Community Kitchen program has graduated.

During the last three months, the program's 10 students worked side-by-side as they learned the skills necessary to begin careers in the food services industry. As part of their hands-on cooking lessons, students prepared nutritious meals for distribution through Kids Cafe, an after-school feeding program for children at-risk of hunger in Providence and Newport.

“Community Kitchen is a way for individuals to obtain the training and skills necessary to get jobs that change lives,” stated Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, as he addressed an audience full of proud family and friends. “It’s incredible to think about everything that our students have learned and accomplished over the past 14-weeks.”

As part of the graduation ceremony, students were joined by Providence Mayor Angel Taveras who delivered the commencement’s keynote address.

“I am so proud of your hard work and my opportunity to be a part of this ceremony,” began Mayor Taveras. “What you have learned through Community Kitchen will not only have a positive impact in your family’s lives, but also in the economic growth of our state. You have the opportunity to take what you learned here and succeed in a new career.”

In addition to their meal production, classroom learning and life skills workshops, Community Kitchen graduates gained valuable work experience through internships at local businesses such as the Cactus Grille, Rhode Island School of Design, New Rivers Restaurant and Marriott Hotel to name a few.

As the ceremony wound down, graduate Vincent James Liguori, selected by his peers to deliver a class message, addressed the audience. “Coming into this class I quickly realized that it was much more than learning to cook. It was about life skills and learning all you need to know to take the next step in life. It was about people helping people and seeing the change and personal growth we all experienced.”

In the past year, the Community Kitchen program graduated 37 students. Over 80 percent of the graduates are currently working in area restaurants and catering services, despite the challenging economy.

**The Rhode Island Community Food Bank** is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank’s network of more than 250 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 9.7 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit [www.rifoodbank.org](http://www.rifoodbank.org).