

HCC-STCC partnership offers “Team Building Through Culinary” program

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HOLYOKE, MA | HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE | November 18, 2019 – Eighteen employees from four different area hotels competed last month in a friendly, “Chopped” style culinary competition at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute designed to enhance their professional development.

The participants, all management-level employees from the BK Investment Hotel Group, took part in a new one-day, four-hour program – “Team Building Through Culinary” – offered by Training and Workforce Options, otherwise known as TWO, a collaboration between Springfield Technical Community College and Holyoke Community College.

From the program’s customizable menu of options, the company chose “Sliced,” a culinary training exercise modeled after “Chopped,” one of the Food Network’s popular, competitive cooking shows. The training was led by chef and HCC culinary arts instructor Tracy Carter, whose professional experience includes working at the Food Network, where she prepared the ingredient baskets for “Chopped.”

“The cooking sessions at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute are designed to help employees who work closely together improve their communication, collaboration and problem-solving skills, while enhancing team cohesiveness and highlighting individual talents,” said Tracye Whitfield, TWO’s director of business development. “TWO’s mission is to provide area companies customizable training programs for their employees’ professional growth.”

The Oct. 17 program included management teams from four of the BK hotel group’s properties – Hampton Inn by Hilton in Chicopee; Residence Inn by Marriott in Chicopee; Tru by Hilton in Chicopee; and Holiday Inn Express in Brattleboro, Vermont – who learned cooking techniques while competing against each other in one of the HCC culinary institute’s teaching kitchens.

Under the direction of Chef Carter, each of the four teams worked together to create a meal using a basket of pre-selected, mandatory ingredients, which in this case included chicken (for the protein), brussel sprouts (vegetable), mozzarella cheese (starch) and guava paste (wild card), along with other items they could find in the kitchen’s pantries and refrigerators.

After the cooking was done, the participants sat down together to dine, sample each other’s creations and vote for the team whose food they liked best. Two teams tied for the win: Hampton Inn by Hilton, wearing blue aprons and self-proclaimed “Team Awesome,” and Tru by Hilton, wearing yellow.

“We had a lot of fun,” said Sandra Reed Hofstetter, BK’s regional director of operations. “Many thanks to Chef Tracy and the TWO team for the warm welcome and attention to detail.”

To learn more about “Team Building Through Culinary” and other TWO training programs, please contact Tracye Whitfield at (413) 221-4443 or twhitfield@twoworks.org.



Management team members from Hampton Inn by Hilton in Chicopee celebrate their culinary success during a team-building training program offered by TWO at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute.