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**NJDHS COMMISSIONER CAROLE JOHNSON TO SPEAK AT FOOD SERVICE TRAINING ACADEMY GRADUATION  
The Community FoodBank of New Jersey will Graduate 16 Students from its Culinary and Life Skills Program**

HILLSIDE, NJ—May 7, 2019

On Wednesday, May 8 at 6 pm, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey will add 16 new professionals to its ranks of Food Service Training Academy graduates, with New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson in attendance as the ceremony's guest speaker. The graduation will take place at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey's Hillside headquarters.

The Food Service Training Academy exemplifies the FoodBank's commitment to providing not only food, but also a recipe for a better life for those seeking a second chance. The free, fifteen-week culinary and life skills program teaches students about nutrition and healthy cooking, while challenging them to develop their communication skills. Students benefit from employment services to receive hands-on experience through internships and to help them find full-time jobs prior to graduation. The program graduates four classes per year and has an average job-placement rate exceeding 90-percent within one month of completion.

"We're excited to have New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson join us as the guest speaker at graduation, which is a very special evening for the students and their families," said FoodBank President & CEO Carlos Rodriguez. "The Food Service Training Academy is part of the FoodBank's commitment to go beyond feeding the pantry lines by working to shorten them through workforce development initiatives. Together with Commissioner Johnson and the Department of Human Services, we're empowering more of our neighbors in need with stable, fulfilling careers."

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey works with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, New Jersey's largest state agency, to provide access to SNAP and workforce development initiatives, like the Food Service Training Academy, to low-income residents.

"Across the Murphy Administration, we are working hard to improve economic opportunity for New Jerseyans. As the Commissioner of Human Services, my commitment is to helping vulnerable individuals and families get on the best possible financial footing – and we are taking important steps for these New Jerseyans by increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024," said Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson. "I am delighted to join in recognizing the graduates of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey's Food Service Training Academy who have worked hard and learned important skills that will serve them well in our state's growing economy."

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Commissioner Rob Asaro-Angelo will also attend the ceremony.

"The Community FoodBank of New Jersey is helping to carry out the Murphy Administration's vision for a stronger, fairer economy through their innovative training program," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. "This isn't simply about teaching new skills, it's about finding New Jerseyans meaningful employment, and creative efforts like this, coupled with the Garden State's increase toward a \$15 minimum wage, will produce even more inspiring results."

Major support for the Food Service Training Academy is provided by the Prudential Foundation, the ShopRite LPGA Classic, and United Airlines. Additional support comes from Capital One, CME Group Community Foundation, Rochkind-Wagner Foundation, RWJBarnabas Health, State Street Foundation, and Valley National Bank.

The ceremony will be followed by a dessert reception prepared by the graduating class.

For more information about the Food Service Training Academy, please visit **[cfbnj.org/foodservicetrainingacademy](https://cfbnj.org/foodservicetrainingacademy)**.

*The [Community FoodBank of New Jersey \(CFBNJ\)](https://cfbnj.org), a member of Feeding America®, has been delivering food, help and hope across the state for over 40 years. Last year, CFBNJ provided nutritious food for over 47 million meals through its network of more than 1,000 community partners including pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, mobile pantries, and child and senior feeding programs. For our hungry neighbors, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey is the powerful agent of change that fills the emptiness caused by hunger and provides resources that are essential to earning a sustainable living.*