



Text File

Introduced: 7/30/2019

Bill No: 2019-1930, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

WHEREAS, Café on the Corner is a full-service restaurant and catering business on the Northside of Pittsburgh. It's owners, Michael and Lateresa Blackwell, also formed a non-profit organization, Kitchen of Grace (K.O.G.) in conjunction with Café on the Corner. Its social mission is to empower residents with the realization of gainful employment and community development. Another mission is to develop skills in workforce readiness, general life skills, culinary and hospitality training, and educational opportunities to 16-20 year olds. With these skills, residents can apply entrepreneurial opportunities to operate small, community owned businesses and community revitalization missions; and,

WHEREAS, the first component of K.O.G.'s delivery approach involves academic instruction, hands-on skills development, mentoring, career and personal counseling, workplace readiness, and job placement assistance. Mr. Blackwell, along with volunteer instructors recruited for their special knowledge, will provide theory and practice information targeting industry standards for safety, sanitation, and food preparation; and,

WHEREAS, the second component, long-term goal of KOG is to incorporate an intensive one-year to 18-months apprenticeship program that will offer business skills building for entrepreneurial minded young people and adult residents in the Pittsburgh area. One-on-one career specialists are assigned as mentoring coaches to participants. Support is given to develop career plans, to assist with job searches, and to support in advancing careers. While the program is free of charge, the participants are paid and offered bus passes; and,

WHEREAS, the third component includes applied training and utilizes a tested service model. This component ensures that individuals develop marketable skills while enhancing teamwork skills, communications, and self-confidence. In addition, foodservice job skills training, life skills, wraparound services, job placement, retention services, and nutritional education of freshly prepared meals are added benefits. This results in the efficiencies and revenues of social enterprises being leveraged by providing trainees an opportunity to practice their skills in a "real life" setting. By participating in the annex kitchen at Café on the Corner, a Kitchens Network, our member organizations can also chart the direct impact each have in their community. That way, more time and resources are available to focus on growing the number of individuals that benefit from the community program; and,

WHEREAS, Kitchen of Grace has formed alliances with companies in the Pittsburgh area and the Pittsburgh Public Schools to provide on-site training and job opportunities as well as other types of cooperative and technical assistance. Kitchen of Grace (K.O.G.), has established volunteer instructors from local community leaders, the Allegheny County Health Department, New Hope Church, and a host of restaurant partners. Kitchen of Grace will work with local community-based organizations to offer community service placements, small business development agencies, civic organizations and businesses to provide internship opportunities for K.O.G., students post-in-house training; and,

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NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh commends Lateresa Blackwell and Michael Blackwell, Founders/Owners of Café on the Corner and Kitchen of Grace social enterprise, as well as the workforce program, the community organization, schools, residents and participants of the program, for bringing positive solutions and change in the City, instead of simply living in the problem.