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PCPS and Delaware North Form Partnership

The Chef Project

LURAY, Va. — Recently Page County Public Schools and Delaware North came together to form a partnership that would not only benefit Delaware North with their need of qualified cooks, but would offer opportunities to Page County Public School students that could lead to life long careers.

Dr. Paul Johnson, who now serves as Delaware North’s Human Resources Manager, recognized a shortage of qualified cooks for Skyland and Big Meadows in the Shenandoah National Park. Dr. Johnson requested that Delaware North fund supplies and provide Chefs to teach a course to students of both Luray and Page County High School. This program has the potential to lead to full-time employment and scholarship opportunities. “I knew the schools had been trying to get a culinary program off the ground for many years. Having known this and knowing the need of the properties in the park, I saw this as a win-win opportunity for both.” Dr. Johnson worked with Mr. Eric Benson, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Innovation, and Accountability, to promote the program and get students interested in the opportunities before them.

Dr. Johnson said he researched through the National Restaurant Association and patterned the program after “ProStart” that is already in existence. It was too late this year to adopt the curriculum; complete with textbooks, but what has been put together is similar. For Delaware North it is a chance to give back to the community and train entry-level cooks, while offering employment at the end of the program. For the students, it is an opportunity to learn a skill and gain employment that could ultimately lead to a future career.

Student who are beginning the program will learn from a chef from January to March. From April to June students will complete a paid internship to work in a restaurant kitchen, and from June forward, students

will begin their careers as cooks. This opportunity will lead to a 40 hours a week job on-site in Shenandoah National Park (transportation provided) upon graduation from high school.

Delaware North is a global company that grosses over 3.5 billion dollars per year, with over 55,000 employees around the world. Starting a culinary program could open world-wide opportunities including Sous Chef training and the chance to earn Delaware North Scholarships to Johnson & Wales University, as the company owns and operates fine dining facilities all over the world.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please call Tricia Runyan at (540) 743-3750 (option 3), or email at trunyan@pagecounty.k12.va.us.

** See attachment for pictures