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The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau launches campaign to recognize local hospitality workers

STATE COLLEGE, PA, July 25, 2022 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB) today launched a special campaign to support and appreciate Centre County’s hospitality industry employees.

“The hospitality industry was devastated by COVID, both financially and from a staffing perspective,” said HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith. “Given the challenges of the past few years, and those that remain for many of our establishments, the HVAB Board of Directors felt it was important to recognize those who have chosen hospitality as a career or who are working in the industry in some capacity, and let them know that the work they do matters.”

Smith said staffing remains a concern for the industry, with employment still down by about 800 Happy Valley hospitality jobs from pre-pandemic levels. Staffing shortages have resulted in some establishments limiting hours of operation or choosing to close on certain days of the week, among other operational changes.

The HVAB Board of Directors formed a Workforce Task Force to explore solutions to help with ongoing labor shortages that are plaguing the hospitality industry.

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The Task Force is chaired by Gary Hoover, who until recently served as the Executive Director of the Bellefonte Intervalley Area Chamber of Commerce. Hoover had a long career in workforce development. He has agreed to stay on to helm the Task Force until its mission is completed.

Hoover said the Workforce Task Force is exploring ways to assist businesses vital to the local economy, and better highlight the many attractive job and career track opportunities available within the hospitality industry.

“As the Task Force tackles the labor issue, there is consensus that an over-arching positive messaging campaign was needed to recognize the contributions of hospitality employees at all levels, and emphasize their importance to the HVAB’s destination marketing mission, the visitation economy in particular,” Smith said.

“Tourism is an important driver of our local economy, and the visitor experience is everything in tourism,” he continued. “As frontline ambassadors for our beautiful Happy Valley, PA, hospitality industry workers at all levels ensure that residents and visitors alike have the best possible dining, lodging or entertainment experiences. All positions are important to delivering that favorable experience.”

A key aspect of the Happy Valley Hospitality campaign is highlighting **“Profiles in Hospitality”** on the HVAB website, blog (Dispatch.HappyValley.com) and through multiple platforms.

“Many of those who work in hospitality will tell you it can be challenging industry, yes, but also a very rewarding one,” Smith said. “That message needs to resonate a bit more than it has. Our team has really enjoyed seeking out the great personalities working in our industry, why they have a passion for hospitality, how it has helped them grow personally and professionally, and where their career path has taken them.”

Another component of the campaign is the development and distribution of messaging directed toward those visiting Happy Valley for leisure, sports and business travel.

“We want visitors to remember that when they frequent a favorite Happy Valley dining spot, or attend an event or performance, or stay at a hotel or B&B that there is a team of talented, dedicated employees working hard behind the scenes to provide them with excellent service and great memories,” Smith said. “We want our visitors to appreciate our hospitality employees and what they have been through as much as we do.”

Happy Valley Hospitality messaging will be included in the HVAB’s visitor guides and publications, and given to hotel guests, etc. The messaging will also direct visitors to the hospitality campaign web page – www.HappyValley.com/hospitality -- to learn more about those providing service during their stay in Centre County.

The State College Spikes will also thank and salute hospitality workers at games on Monday, July 25 and Friday, July 29. The HVAB will be on hand to provide information about the campaign and special engagement opportunities, while some of the current hospitality profiles will be shown on the screen between innings.

In addition, the HVAB will introduce hospitality awards at its annual fall event. The awards will recognize both back-of-house and front-of-house employees in both food and beverage, and lodging, and an overall award for the broader hospitality industry.

Smith said while the goal of the effort is to appreciate hospitality employees, there is hope that the campaign will ultimately encourage more people to consider hospitality for a career, or full- or part-time general employment.

“Hospitality can take someone as far as they want to go, it can open exciting new doors, and it can build skills that translate to any profession,” he stressed.

Hospitality workers who want to share their story as a **Profile in Hospitality** should email LesleyK@happyvalley.com for consideration.

Learn more at www.happyvalley.com/hospitality.

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