

COMMENTARY

Hospitality jobs are revolutionary



By Pam Nabors and Robert Agrusa

Central Florida is known for its hospitality and as a travel and tourism titan across the globe.

With nearly 40% of Central Florida's workforce driven by the hospitality and tourism industry, it would seem as though this would create a path for sought-after careers and opportunities.

However, many leaders in our community have begun to share common misconceptions about jobs that are available within the hospitality industry. Perceptions range from low wages compared to other industries, limited career

growth, a lack of advancement opportunities and unreasonable hours and benefits.

Contrary to these beliefs, careers in hospitality and tourism, including right here in the Central Florida region, are booming with opportunities. Career-seekers can find jobs that offer life-changing benefits, high-paying salaries and can master customer service, management and many other transferable skills that will continue to advance them for lifelong careers with purpose.

After rebounding from the pandemic in 2022, Central Florida welcomed 74 million visitors, and reached an all-time high total economic impact of \$87.6 billion. With a surge of this magnitude, jobs and opportunities are prominent across the region and are paving pathways for individuals to thrive.

To help shift the narrative, the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association (CFHLA) and CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) recently joined forces to create the first-of-its-kind State of the Hospitality and Tourism Summit in Central Florida. Right in the heart of world-class theme parks, hotels and resorts, this summit brought together industry leaders, community experts, local media and elected officials to have conversations and create mission-driven solutions that will help change the perception of today's hospitality industry.

During the summit experts also shared in-depth analysis of the current economic impact and workforce trends of the hospitality and tourism industry.

There are nearly 450,000 hospitality professionals working in Central Florida and understanding the perceptions, challenges and opportunities will help create a path forward that will foster a renewed interest of a career in the hospitality industry.

Additionally, Central Florida is the home to several Fortune 500 companies, but it is also home to many successful startups, small family-owned businesses that rely on the economic success of the industry and crave the same talent and skills found within the hospitality industry.

Where do we go next? CFHLA and CSCF kick-started the conversation and now are urging leaders and experts to partner and engage with us on solutions that can redirect the conversations and bring more outstanding talent into the hospitality industry. By collaborating with other sectors, hospitality and tourism businesses will gain access to a talent pool with transferable skills applicable throughout the industry.

Management positions in different industries offer talent with team leadership, crisis management and customer relationship management skills.

Businesses in construction offer skilled talent in events design planning, project coordination, and aesthetics for hotels and resorts. These industries, and many others, allow businesses to recruit talent from diverse backgrounds.

The hospitality and tourism industry will always be a critical driver for economic growth and job creation in Central Florida. This is why CFHLA and CSCF are eager to collaborate and keep pushing the hospitality industry forward.

By elevating this dynamic industry and creating life-changing careers, we can build an even more unbelievably real region here in Central Florida and beyond.

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