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## **CFHLA FOUNDATION AWARDS \$187,550 IN STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS DURING ANNUAL GIVES LUNCHEON**

**ORLANDO, Fla.** (June 20, 2024) – Today, the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association (CFHLA), in partnership with the CFHLA Foundation, proudly announced that through the support of our members the organization has now awarded \$1,282,950 in Hospitality Student Scholarships since 2000.

This includes another \$142,600 that was distributed to 64 college and high school students during today's annual Gives Luncheon, held at the Embassy Suites Orlando Lake Buena Vista South.

In addition, CFHLA and the CFHLA Foundation awarded \$44,950 in hospitality education and community grants to six local educational institutions and organizations.

Also, part of today's program was the recognition of 104 CFHLA Members, consisting of Lodging and Allied Members, who took part in the Association's Adopt-A-School Partnership throughout the 2023-2024 academic year. This was a 17% increase from the 2022-2023 academic year and this program continues to make a positive difference within our community and at our Central Florida public schools.

"I am extremely proud of our CFHLA members who stepped up in a massive way, as we supported 64 of our local students with the opportunity to further their education in either hospitality management or culinary, especially several who may not have had access to an education without our financial support," stated Barb Bowden Chair of the CFHLA Board of Directors and Area Managing Director of Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando. "It's also amazing to see the dedication, generosity and fundraising efforts of our

Scholarship Committee and the membership as a whole, which continues to make a positive difference in the lives of so many individuals and numerous organizations within our community.”

Robert Agrusa, President and CEO of CFHLA expanded on Ms. Bowden’s comments, “This year, among the 64 scholarship recipients was sixteen Central Florida High School graduating seniors. This doubled last year’s totals and with workforce and career development included into our new CFHLA five-year strategic plan, we are thrilled to be able to support these hard-working students as they enter the next step of their educational journey that will prepare them to begin their future careers within the hospitality and culinary industry.”

Furthermore, the awards presented during the luncheon included the latest awarding of the Don and Lorraine Freeberg Foundation Scholarship. Recipients of this prestigious honor receive a \$40,000 Scholarship, with a disbursement of \$10,000 over the course of four years and a paid internship opportunity at the Caribe Royale Orlando, the Embassy Suites Orlando Lake Buena Vista South, and the Buena Vista Suites Orlando. This year’s recipient, Johan Miranda, recently graduated in May from Lyman High School and will continue his education this fall at Valencia College.

Included among the six grant recipients were two grants that were new awards for 2024. They include EmployU’s Hospitality Immersion Program for Youth with Disabilities, which supported five students with a one-week hands on work training and learning experience this summer that exposes students with disabilities (ages 14-21) to the diverse and viable career paths available within the hospitality industry and promotes the development of hard and soft skills - \$5,000; and the Osceola Arts which helped establish a summer camp scholarship program for 17 children of our local hotel employees to access a one-week summer camp that is designed to enrich kids with educational and creative arts experiences, while fostering personal growth, social skills, and community engagement - \$2,500.

Additionally, the remaining grant disbursements included \$25,000 to the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, which completes a 10-year commitment of \$250,000 in total; Oak Ridge High School’s Hospitality Program, which will create additional interactive hospitality simulations zones including mock hotel guest room and housekeeping closets - \$1,200; the Orange County Public Schools Culinary and Hospitality Competitions which will give Central Florida High School students the opportunity to showcase their culinary skills, hospitality knowledge and creative marketing strategies - \$8,750; and the School District of Osceola County which helped support their recent Osceola County High School Culinary Competition - \$2,500.

CFHLA also held a CARES Collection Drive prior to and during the event, with more than 27,000 donated items going to support Central Florida students in need throughout the region.

The Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association's mission is to represent the Central Florida Hospitality Industry, by setting the standard of excellence through advocacy, collaboration, education, recognition, and service. As the largest regional lodging association in the United States, CFHLA represents approximately 80 percent of the more than 129,500 hotel rooms throughout the Central Florida Region (including but not limited to Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk and Seminole counties) and more than 500 "supplier" organizations that do business with the hospitality and tourism industries.

For more information on the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association, please visit [www.cfhla.org](http://www.cfhla.org).

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