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Two Virginia Schools Receives \$5,000 Rachael Ray Foundation ProStart Grow Grant to Expand its Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management Program

The grants can be used to enhance the classroom experience with curriculum, supplies, and equipment.

RICHMOND, VA — Two high schools in Virginia were selected alongside 38 additional high schools nationwide selected to receive a \$5,000 grant from [The Rachael Ray Foundation](#) and the [National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation \(NRAEF\)](#) to enhance their ProStart culinary arts and restaurant management program with new equipment, curriculum, and experiential learning opportunities. Help us in congratulating PHILLIPS School in Annadale) and Wythe County Technology Center (WCTC) in Wytheville!

“Providing Grow Grants is one of my favorite times of the year. The educators who invest their passion and energy into their classrooms are inspiring. I love to see the impact their work has on the students who graduate from ProStart with the knowledge and excitement for the restaurant industry,” **said Rachael Ray.**

The funds from the Rachael Ray ProStart Grow Grant Program will be used to help launch the ProStart Program at PHILLIPS School, which has seen a high-level of interest in the culinary arts among students.

“Receiving the Rachel Ray Foundation grant allows us to enhance and improve the exploration of the culinary arts as a career option as well as an authentic work experience for our students,” **said Piper Phillips Caswell, President & CEO of PHILLIPS.** “Our students’ intense interest in the culinary arts and opportunity to immerse themselves in ProStart brings them personal and educational experiences that are inspiring to them. We see more interest in the culinary arts than any other career exploration area, and are thrilled to embark on becoming a certified Pro Start school.”

In Wytheville, the grant will go a long way in providing new kitchen equipment for the students at WCTC - which receives a Grow Grant for the second year in a row.

“Being awarded this grant will enable my students to learn the use of new equipment, make a products, price it, and market it to sell,” **said Chef Mary Alice Watson, the Culinary Arts Instructor at WCTC.** “ For the students to see this process from start to finish will give them real world experience. A BIG THANK YOU to Rachel Ray for investing in secondary education and our students!”

The ProStart Program, which is supported in Virginia by the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association Foundation (VRLTAF), unites the foodservice industry and the classroom to teach high school students culinary skills and restaurant management principles. ProStart educators play a pivotal role in the program’s success in more than 2,100 high schools nationwide, blending its core curriculum with hands-on industry engagement activities, including special speakers, class mentors, and tours of local culinary facilities. The 2024 grant application was open to existing ProStart schools, or those looking to join the program in the coming school year. The NRAEF anticipates that the grants will benefit more than 3,700 students and 42 teachers across 22 states.

In the last five years, 153 ProStart Grow Grants have been awarded to schools showing a strong desire to engage students through ProStart's industry-leading career and technical education program. In addition to classroom grants, The Rachael Ray Foundation and the Yum-o! organization have sponsored more than 260 scholarships for students pursuing post-secondary degrees in the restaurant and hospitality industry.

"ProStart Grow Grants are a gamechanger for many ProStart classrooms, providing the support to add crucial curriculum, equipment, and experiences for students. We're grateful for the partnership of The Rachael Ray Foundation, which is helping educators give their students a front row seat to all that a career in the restaurant industry offers," **said Rob Gifford, president of the NRAEF.**

ProStart has equipped more than 214,000 students with the essentials of culinary arts and restaurant management through its two-year CTE program, found at a mix of public high schools and career technical education centers across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Students completing the program gain restaurant-specific certifications and competencies, over 400 hours of practical work experience, and access to restaurant and hospitality apprenticeship and scholarship opportunities. [Learn more about ProStart here.](#)

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The [Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association](#) is the unified voice of the restaurant, lodging, travel and hospitality suppliers associations. VRLTA creates value for members by promoting the legislative interests of the industry, networking, educational opportunities, and protecting free enterprise. For more information, visit www.vrlta.org or call 800-552-2225.

As the supporting philanthropic foundation of the [National Restaurant Association](#), the [NRAEF](#)'s charitable mission includes enhancing the industry's training and education, career development, and community engagement efforts. The NRAEF and its programs work to Attract, Empower, and Advance today's and tomorrow's restaurant and foodservice workforce. NRAEF programs include: ProStart® – a high-school career and technical education program; Restaurant Ready/HOPES – Partnering with community based organizations to provide people with skills training and job opportunities; Military – helping military servicemen and women transition their skills to restaurant and foodservice careers; Scholarships – financial assistance for students pursuing restaurant, foodservice and hospitality degrees; and the Restaurant & Hospitality Leadership Center (RHLC) – accredited apprenticeship programs designed to build the careers of service professionals.

The [Rachael Ray Foundation™](#) (RRF) is a private foundation that is fully funded by the proceeds from the sale of Rachael Ray™ Nutrish®. RRF was launched by Rachael in 2016 to better support the causes she cares for most such as helping animals in need. Additionally, RRF works with organizations that support the mission of Yum-o!, Rachael's 501c3, in order to bolster and amplify their efforts through additional funding. Yum-o! empowers kids and their families to develop healthy relationships with food and cooking. It also teaches families to cook, feeds hungry kids, and funds cooking education, among other initiatives.