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**14TH ANNUAL PROSTART® STUDENT INVITATIONAL
SHOWCASES THE TALENT OF STUDENTS FROM ACROSS ILLINOIS – FEBRUARY 28, 2015**

On **Saturday, February 28th**, the [Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation](#) (IRAEF) will welcome fourteen culinary teams and eight management teams comprised of high school [ProStart®](#) students from across the state to compete in the **14th Annual Illinois ProStart® Invitational** – a full day of Culinary and Restaurant Management competitions. The event is hosted by the IRAEF, presented by title sponsor [SYSCO -Chicago](#) and will be held at [McCormick Place](#) (2301 S. Lake Shore Drive- Lakeside Building), a new location this year, from **8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Participating students prepare months in advance for to compete in the **ProStart® Invitational's** two exciting events: the Culinary Competition and Management Competition. New this year, to help hone their culinary and hospitality management knowledge, CPS teams had the opportunity to work with mentor chefs provided through partner businesses and restaurants, as well as [The Trotter Project](#).

- In the **Culinary Competition**, students in teams of two to four students must prepare two identical portions of a three-course meal consisting of an appetizer, entrée and dessert – all within a 60-minute timeframe. The students will also be judged on knife skills and poultry fabrication; method and technique; sanitation and safety; presentation; recipe costing; organization and teamwork.

- In the **Management Competition**, teams of two to four students will present a proposal for a unique restaurant concept in “ProStartville”, IL. Each team will be evaluated on their presentation communicating the concept, menu and marketing tactics, a visual display board as well as on critical thinking responses to foodservice, hospitality and business-focused questions covered in the first year of the ProStart® curriculum.

Both competitions will be judged by leading industry professionals and post-secondary schools as well as leading hospitality organizations and corporations.

Students placing first through third from each competition will be awarded prizes and scholarships to pursue post-secondary education in foodservice and restaurant management. The winning Culinary and Management teams will also receive the honor of representing Illinois at the National ProStart® Invitational held at Disneyland (Anaheim, CA) April 17th -20th. Illinois teams will compete against teams from 47 states.

The competing students have proven their commitment to the foodservice industry through participation in ProStart’s® Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management vigorous curriculum and industry connecting activities. The participating high schools encompassing both competitions include:

- **Benito Juarez Community Academy**
- **North- Grand High School**
- **Oswego High School**
- **Reavis High School**
- **Rich South High School**
- **Rolling Meadows High School**
- **Theodore Roosevelt High School**
- **Simeon Career Academy**
- **Technology Center of DuPage**
- **Thornton Fractional North High School**
- **Thornton Township High School**
- **West Aurora High School**
- **Wilco Area Career Center**

“The Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation prepares ProStart® students for the Invitational through mentoring, training and internships,” said Sam Toia, President and CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. “It is a culmination of the hard work, talent and skills they have honed throughout the year – both on-the-job and in the classroom.”

The Invitational will also include a **College Fair & Expo from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** in the SYSCO Lounge featuring admissions representatives from approximately eight, post-secondary culinary programs providing the students the opportunity to learn about their offerings. Host sponsor, [SAVOR Chicago at McCormick Place](#) will sponsor a SAVOR Demo Stage featuring chefs from McCormick Place and Kendall College to teach techniques and engage students and guests.

The competition will welcome special guests including representatives from Chicago Public Schools, celebrity chefs, politicians and other key industry leaders that are advocates for education and the ProStart® program.

ProStart® is a national school-to-careers program that prepares high school students for careers in foodservice and hospitality management. ProStart® in Illinois is administered by the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation to almost 4,000 students at 60 schools in the Chicagoland area. Students have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials and articulated credits for college while in high school. The Foundation provides work readiness training and connects students with industry professionals through job shadowing and internships to help students hone their skills in the foodservice industry. The ProStart® program is offered in 48 states encompassing more than 100,000 high school students in more than 1,700 high schools. For more information, visit www.nraef.org.

About SYSCO

Sysco is the global leader in selling, marketing and distributing food products to restaurants, healthcare and educational facilities, lodging establishments and other customers who prepare meals away from home. Its family of products also includes equipment and supplies for the foodservice and hospitality industries. The company operates 185 distribution facilities serving over 400,000 customers. For more information about Sysco visit www.sysco.com.

About SAVOR

[SAVOR](#), a leader in convention center catering, concessions and special events, took over McCormick Place foodservice operations September 28, 2011. SAVOR is part of SMG, the largest public facilities management company in the world including McCormick Place as of August 1, 2011. In 2010, 17 convention centers where SAVOR provides food and beverage service won prestigious Prime Site Awards from *Facilities & Destinations*.

SAVOR is an industry leader in introducing green standards and programs to public facilities. As the food and beverage provider to facilities with some of the most stringent environmental policies in the world, we have researched the matter extensively and work closely with community and facility managers to develop environmentally friendly operations focused on minimizing carbon footprint by purchasing locally produced, sustainably raised product, using non-petroleum-based packaging and recycling or composting waste whenever possible. Visit www.savorchicagomcpl.com for more information.

About Chicago's McCormick Place

McCormick Place, the largest exhibition and meeting facility in North America, is comprised of four state-of-the-art buildings, the North, South and West Buildings, the Lakeside Center, and the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place hotel. Combined, McCormick Place offers 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space, 173 meeting rooms, the 4,249-seat Arie Crown Theater and one of the largest ballrooms in the world.

Located on Chicago's lakefront just minutes from downtown, McCormick Place is owned by the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority and managed by SMG, a worldwide convention facility management company. For more information, please visit www.mccormickplace.com or on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About SMG

Since 1977, [SMG](#) has provided management services to more than 220 public assembly facilities worldwide, including arenas, stadiums, theatres and performing arts centers, equestrian facilities, convention, congress and exhibition centers, science centers and a variety of other venues. Across the globe, SMG manages more than 14 million square feet of exhibition space and more than 1.75 million arena and theatre seats. As the recognized global industry leader, SMG provides venue management, sales, marketing, event booking and programming, construction and design consulting, and pre-opening services. SMG also offers food and beverage operations through its concessions and catering division of SAVOR, currently serving more than 100 accounts worldwide. For more information, visit www.smgworld.com.

About the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

The Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation is a 501c(3) dedicated to building the Illinois hospitality workforce through career exploration, workforce development programs and scholarships.

About the Illinois Restaurant Association

Founded in 1914, the Illinois Restaurant Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, educating and improving the restaurant industry in Illinois. For more information, visit www.illinoisrestaurants.org or the organization's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels.

Interviews and photography available

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