

PHILABUNDANCE OPENS COMMUNITY KITCHEN OFFERING ADULTS CULINARY TRAINING AND LIFE SKILLS

6ABC PHILADELPHIA • September 22, 2020

BY SARAH BLOOMQUIST



Philabundance Community Kitchen is a 16-week culinary training and life skills program providing opportunities to adults with little to no income who need not just a job, but a second...

PHILADELPHIA (WPVI) -- Governor Tom Wolf and First Lady Frances Wolf helped cut the ribbon on a brand new Philabundance Community Kitchen in North Philadelphia on Tuesday.

PCK is a 16-week culinary training and life skills program providing opportunities to adults with little to no income who need not just a job, but a second chance at life.

PCK promotes the self-sufficiency of its students by preparing them for and connecting them to work in the food service industry and allows them to give back by preparing meals for those in need.

“In a year that has contained a great deal of hardship, it is wonderful to have the opportunity to celebrate a new beginning,” said Governor Wolf. “Nothing could be more appropriate than celebrating with the Philabundance community. Philabundance has remained a steadfast partner in my administration’s commitment to ensuring that every Pennsylvanian has access to plentiful, nutritious food.”

The 20,000 square foot facility includes classrooms for life skills education and a commercial kitchen where participants will learn valuable culinary arts skills.

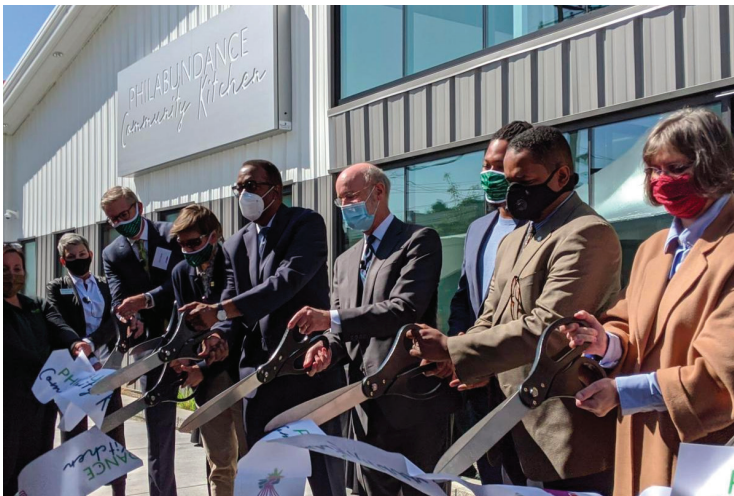
Since 2000, PCK has graduated more than 920 students. This is PCK’s first location in its 20-year history that is not shared with another organization or company.

PCK also has its own catering program that helps fund programming, and they provide food to homeless shelters around the city.

“It’s a culinary arts workforce development program that helps teach culinary arts and life skills and then helps employ folks that may have had trouble getting employment in the past,” said Melanie Cataldi, Philabundance Chief Impact Officer. “And we follow them for a minimum of two years to make sure they have whatever they need to stay employed. So it’s really a transformational program.”

PHILABUNDANCE CONTINUES FREE CULINARY INDUSTRY CLASSES DESPITE PANDEMIC

The Philadelphia Tribune • September 22, 2020
BY MICHAEL D'ONOFRIO TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER



After getting laid off from his retail management job years ago, Hernandez was searching for something new and took a shot with Philabundance's Community Kitchen (PCK), a months-long program that prepares adult students for a career in the food service industry.

The program ignited his interest in the culinary arts. He graduated from the program in 2018 and began working in restaurants throughout the city.

"I'm very very passionate about it," Hernandez said about cooking. "I didn't know until I got here."

Now Hernandez, 30, has made his way back to PCK. Today he works as an assistant chef instructor at the nonprofit's new state-of-the-art facility PCK facility that recently opened on the 2200 block of 10th Street in North Philadelphia. Hernandez teaches new students going through the program and helps prepare meals for the needy.

Hernandez was among those working inside the \$12 million, 20,000-square-foot building on Tuesday for its grand opening. The ribbon cutting drew out Gov. Tom Wolf, First Lady Frances Wolf, Council President Darrell Clarke, and other state and local officials.

Launched in 2000, PCK provides culinary arts training and life skills for low-income adults, as well as formerly incarcerated individuals.

The new facility, which broke ground in May 2019, is embedded in the neighborhood among row houses

and near Ebenezer Baptist Church. The development was a public-private, which was awarded the land and \$4 million from the city, along with state aid.

The building will create a permanent home for the PCK program, which was operating out of a city women's shelter in North Philadelphia the past 15 years. A new PCK class of more than 20 students began at the end of August.

The larger building has allowed Philabundance to increase both the length of the training program, number of classes, and class size. In addition, the building will boost the number of free meals Philabundance offers from its previous max of about 300,000 a year to 2 million.

Philabundance Chief Executive Officer Loree Jones said the nonprofit, one of the region's largest anti-hunger organizations, worked with the community to design the project. The facility also will offer community space for residents in the neighborhood.

"We wanted to partner with the community to help transform the community in the same way we transform lives," Jones said.

African Americans make up 81% of the population of the Census Tract where the PCK facility is located, according to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates from 2018. The average inflation-adjusted median household income for the tract was \$12,839 in 2018, far below federal poverty levels.

The Rev. John Payne, senior pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church for 15 years, said the church worked with Philabundance to bring the facility to fruition to a neighborhood that suffers from gun violence, poverty, food insecurity and gentrification.

Payne applauded Philabundance's commitment to listening to members of the community on the development of the project. To win local support, Payne said the neighborhood has to extend an invitation — not the other way around. He said the new facility was a major investment that will help keep residents in the community.

"People have lived here for generations so they've seen the rise, the decline, now they're seeing the rise again," Payne said.

Tom Wolf said the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic has disrupted lives and increased food insecurity, creating even more of a need for the new facility.

"The culinary training and life-skills program at PCK for low- and no-income adults allows members of the community with very few resources to get the fresh start we need them to get," the governor said.

Clarke, who represents District 5 where the new facility is located, said Philabundance's facility was part of rebuilding that community.

PHILABUNDANCE CONTINUES FREE CULINARY INDUSTRY CLASSES DESPITE PANDEMIC

*KYW Newsradio • September 24, 2020
BY JOHN MCDEVITT*



Gov. Wolf visits Philabundance for community kitchen grand opening

PHILADELPHIA (KYW Newsradio) — A hunger relief organization in Philadelphia is expanding its reach in a variety of ways.

Philabundance now has a new \$12 million facility in North Philadelphia for culinary industry job training and meal production.

The new state-of-the-art Philabundance Community Kitchen (PCK) is 20,000 square feet. It has three kitchens and is equipped with the latest tools to train low-income adults in the culinary industry.

Its free job training program is now in its 20th year, and despite COVID-19, a limited number of students are participating in a 16-week in-person course.

Samir Hernandez, 30, graduated from the program in 2018 and worked in kitchens in several Philadelphia restaurants.

When COVID-19 hit, he lost his two kitchen jobs. He now teaches at Philabundance, and food safety in a COVID-19 world is part of instruction.

“All of that goes into safe food handling. It’s just another ripple to be able to explain to them: this is our reality, this is what we are going to be dealing with for a very long time. You might as well get with it now so that way, six months to a year from now, to have those skills and be prepared to handle any kitchen space like that,” he said.

PCK’s manager of employment Jennifer “Jae” Williams said they track their students’ progress for two years, and many are getting placed in hospitals, schools, and restaurants.

The meal production space at the facility will be for catering, and the profits will be put back into the program.

The next set of courses start on Jan. 11, 2021.

The program is also reentry friendly.

[Listen to KYW Newsradio Audio On-Demand](#)