

CREATIVITY AND SKILL PAY OFF FOR WILSON CENTRAL AT NATIONAL CULINARY COMPETITION
Team Takes Third Place at 17th Annual National ProStart Invitational in Restaurant Management

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island – After months of practice and a win at the statewide competition the Wilson Central High School culinary team earned third in the nation at the 17th Annual ProStart Invitational, presented by the National Restaurant Association’s Education Foundation.

The four-person team, all juniors, beat out stiff competition from leading hospitality programs around the country to take third-place honors in the Management category. They came home with thousands in scholarship offers that will set their educational and career paths for the future.

“This is a big win for Tennessee, as our peers in other states have built equally impressive programs that allow students to begin preparing for careers in hospitality with hands-on experience through their high school years,” said Greg Adkins, CEO of the Tennessee Hospitality & Tourism Association (TnHTA). “They learn the technical skills as well as what it’s like to perform under pressure, and this team is very talented.”

Led by instructors Nicole Roning and Jeremy Jernigan, the team included Courtney Hyder, Ebony Leavell, Ciara Hite and Tyler Lewis. Their concept, “Wings in Motion,” featured chicken wings prepared *sous vide* and presented in several custom sauces. The students created a business concept and marketing plan including a full investor proposal, presentation and series of seven-minute rounds where the team was tested on their industry knowledge.

TnHTA Education Director Austin Schneider says the focus on education and scholarships helps create the workforce pipeline for the state.

“We want these students to understand both the culinary side and the management side of the industry, and these programs and competitions deliver that experience,” Atkins said. “They are now being pursued by the top culinary institutes and have numerous scholarship offers. Our objective through our partnership with the National Restaurant Association’s ProStart program in Tennessee, and through the TnHTA’s Foundation, is to provide the opportunities to these talented students to develop rewarding careers.”

Altogether, the team has earned nearly \$100,000 in offered scholarships thus far, as they look toward their senior years in 2018-19. Past National ProStart Invitational winners have gone on to establish careers at some of the best restaurants in the world, including Blue Hill at Stone Barns in New York and Alinea in Chicago.

As the philanthropic foundation of the National Restaurant Association, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation’s (NRAEF) mission of service to the public is dedicated to 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 – partnering with community based organizations to provide “opportunity youth” 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 Hospitality Sector Registered Apprenticeship project – a partnership with the American Hotel & Lodging Association providing a hospitality apprenticeship program for the industry.

For more information, visit [ChooseRestaurants.org/ProStart](https://www.chooserestaurants.org/prostart). To learn more about the work of the Tennessee Hospitality & Tourism Association to advance one of the state's leading industries, go to www.tnhta.net.

###