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Collaboration Key to Success for Westchester First-Time Business Owner MWBE Business Owners Support Each Other

(WESTCHESTER, February 17, 2019)— Starting a new business is daunting for even an experienced entrepreneur but for Rosa Ramirez, a novice MWBE business owner, support from the “village” of Westchester County helped make the path to success less bumpy. Looking to leverage her passion for food and gift giving, Rosa Ramirez, a 30-year retired veteran, who most recently served in Afghanistan, launched Westchester County’s first Honey Baked Ham franchise in Hartsdale in the fall of 2018.

Seeking guidance and assistance with staffing, Rosa reached out to the Business Council of Westchester (BCW), the largest business membership organization in Westchester, for advice. BCW immediately connected Rosa with Madison Approach Staffing (MAS) whose staff reached out to local agencies Children’s Village, The Guidance Center, Westhab, and WestCOP with information about job openings and an upcoming job fair at the Mount Vernon Career Center. MAS then coordinated with all the agencies and individuals to ensure a large pool of prospective candidates would be available for interviews. MAS, also a MWBE business owner, with a passion for giving back and supporting the underserved in the local community saw the potential “win-win” for Rosa and the agencies.

MAS’s efforts resulted in 13 individuals being hired for the 2018 holiday season and two were eventually permanently hired. These individuals learned new skills in food preparation, operating a cash register/POS system, customer service, restaurant/health code standards, and franchise operations, which can hopefully lead to future employment. MAS’s efforts didn’t end with the holiday hiring. In fact, MAS helped Rosa create and manage her shift schedules and gave her advice and resources to navigate overtime laws, shift break requirements, uniform requirements, and other human resources matter that often surprise first time business owners.

“MAS went above and beyond to help me get my business up and running,” said owner Rosa Ramirez. “It was much more than just helping us source good workers. It was helping us set the foundation for successful long-term management. We are indebted to MAS for their tireless efforts to help us launch Honey Baked Ham in Scarsdale.” Ramirez’s experience in the military as a transportation officer equipped her with the management skills and organization experience to run her own business. “I would tell other veterans to believe in themselves, work hard and go for it.” She offers 10% off for other veterans who come into the store.

“The Mount Vernon Career Center job fair was an incredible opportunity to meet with job seekers face to face. Online resume portals present a big barrier to employment for people whose skills don’t fit perfectly into a specific algorithm. The agencies we reached out to all serve individuals with barriers to employment who are long-term under- or unemployed,” said Valerie Swatz of MAS, “and to be able to connect these individuals to a

business with an immediate and urgent need for workers proved quite beneficial to both Rosa and those who found employment with her.”

“The value of networking and collaboration can not be understated for a new business owner,” stated Marsha Gordon, President of BCW, “and especially a novice franchisee who needed to be fully staffed quickly to take advantage of the holiday gift-giving season. BCW has been long-time collaborators with MAS and knew they’d be the perfect organization to help Rosa meet her workforce needs. Allison Madison, MAS’s founder and president, and her staff are particularly passionate about help the underserved populations of Westchester County.”

“We see the value of teamwork and partnership every day in the Career Center Network,” added Thom Kleiner, WPWDB Executive Director, “where a broad array of organizations and agencies like The Guidance Center, Westhab, WestCOP, BCW, and MAS are dedicated to working with the Career Center staff to seamlessly serve Westchester and Putnam job seekers and employers.”

“This job is helping me to support my family and has taught me more about myself as a person. My advice to others would be to take risks and don’t be scared to try new things and believe in yourself,” stated employee Darnell Glover.

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About Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board

THE WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WPWDB) is comprised of leaders and staff of state and county government agencies, non-profits, public education, and the private sector who work together to strengthen the partnerships between business, education, and service providers within the “Career Center Network” to meet the needs for a skilled workforce. The WPWDB pursues funding opportunities and develops model programs and leading-edge practices. The “Network” is made up of four Career Centers (White Plains, Mount Vernon, Peekskill, and Carmel) as well as partner agencies that provide state-of-the-art technology, training, resources, and services to youth, adults and employers. For more information, visit www.westchesterputnamonestop.com.

About Madison Approach

Madison Approach Staffing helps businesses find the people they need, when they need them, to help organizations increase productivity and growth. The company’s services include direct hire, temp staffing and temp-to-hire placements as well as business needs assessment and customized training modules to help small and mid-sized business develop themselves and their people. Madison Approach Staffing also works with community-based organizations to help adults and youth learn the skills and find the opportunities they need to become productive members of the workforce. www.madisonapproach.com

About Business Council of Westchester

The Business Council of Westchester is the county’s largest and most prestigious business membership organization representing more than 1,000 members, including multinational corporations, hospitals, universities, biotech pioneers, not-for-profits, entrepreneurs and companies of all sizes. As the most influential economic development and advocacy organization in Westchester, The Business Council of Westchester’s

members enjoy unparalleled access to today's top thought leaders, diverse business development opportunities and lawmakers at all levels of government. The BCW Data Exchange provides the latest demographic research to help guide smart business decisions. The LEAP program, a one-of-a-kind initiative, gives members direct access to lobbying efforts at the county, state and national levels on issues that directly affect their businesses. www.thebcw.org

About The Honey Baked Ham Co.

Harry J. Hoenselaar had a passion for ham that led to the launch of the Honey Baked Ham Co. IN 1936, Harry built a prototype for the first spiral-slicing machine and he filed a patent for it in 1944. Harry also created a special curing and cooking procedure for hams and the combination of the cooking and the spiraling helped make Honey Baked Hams a staple at holiday dinners and parties. Harry opened his first store in 1957 in Detroit and today, the company, still family-owned has 400 year-round retail outlets in 40 states as well as a vibrant online business.





Pictured front left to right: Valerie Swatz, Strategic Sales & Planning, Madison Approach Staffing; Rosa Ramirez, Business Owner, Honey Baked Ham; Allison Madison, President & Owner, Madison Approach Staffing; Pictured back: Darnell Glover, new employee.