

## A NATURAL FIT TO GROW YOUR TEAM By Billye Potts

### **CERTIFICATION CONCIERGE—AT YOUR SERVICE**

To support your team on its certification journey and to help you and your employees navigate the program, ACF offers a Certification Concierge Service that:

- Provides a dedicated expert to work with your group to streamline the certification process.
- Identifies the level of certification best suited for each employee and establishes a tailored action plan.
- Assists in identifying the written and practical certification testing sites.
- Provides tracking tools to help employees meet recertification requirements.

It is our goal to provide a customized program for you or your designated ACF liaison that will promote teamwork and camaraderie among your qualified certification candidates.

For more information, go to [www.acfchefs.org/Concierge](http://www.acfchefs.org/Concierge).

We all know that foodservice is a fast-paced, fast-adapting industry. Consequently, each and every facet of the industry faces a unique set of challenges. For those in the health care foodservice segment, the challenges chefs face include creating nutritionally balanced meals for a range of special diets while offering exceptional variety, freshness and flavor in the dishes they serve.

The Association for Healthcare Foodservice (AHF), Louisville, Ky., represents hundreds of facilities where professionals in the self-operated health care foodservice industry handle these kinds of challenges daily. Self-operated health care foodservice facilities have the freedom and flexibility that comes with having in-house culinary teams. This means that chefs can focus on regional menus, respond to diverse customer needs, and make sure foodservice is close to the core missions of health and wellness.

AHF was seeking to elevate the profile of health care chefs, and took a natural step toward providing certification in collaboration with the American Culinary Federation (ACF), the only comprehensive and accredited certification program for chefs in the U.S. More than 20 chefs expressed interest in certification, with two of them, Ryan Conklin, executive chef at Rex Health Care, Raleigh, N.C., and Eric Eisenberg, executive chef at Swedish Health Services, Seattle, successfully earning Certified Executive Chef® (CEC®) designations.

James McGrody, director of food and nutrition at Rex Health Care, encouraged Conklin's desire to be certified. "I felt that Ryan being certified as a CEC® would not only help him professionally, it would also provide validation to our program," McGrody said. "Certification through the American Culinary Federation sends a message of quality, not only to your peers in the industry, but to our patients and customers, as well.

"Since Ryan received his certification, he has engaged the rest of us to do so. We are all looking forward to going through the certification process."

To Conklin, the certification process wasn't a test, but, rather, a validation of skills. "It's about confidence, skill and the ability to work relentlessly. Then you will have the recipe for success in the certification journey," he said. "I am a firm believer in the certification process. These days, the word 'chef' can be used rather loosely, and by certifying (with ACF), you are given the opportunity to validate your credentials."

Eisenberg said if it wasn't for ACF's partnership with AHF, he wouldn't have pursued certification, although it's something he's been meaning to do for two decades.

There is a lot of buzz around this new partnership, and we are expecting more participants in the coming year as we make certification part of our programming. Plans are already underway for our next group of certification candidates.

Clearly, we all have much to gain from this collaboration. ■



Ryan Conklin, left, and Eric Eisenberg receive their Certified Executive Chef® certificates at the 2013 AHF Annual Conference, June 5-8, New Orleans.

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