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La Cocina VA and Whole Foods Market Launch Partnership in Three Northern Virginia Stores.

June 3, 2015, Arlington, VA – Whole Foods Market, a leading natural and organic foods grocer, is partnering with La Cocina VA, a bilingual culinary training program, to provide hands-on, on-site training that will result in full-time employment for students who successfully complete a one-month paid internship.

“We are very excited about this partnership, which will provide our students with the training and skills to secure stable, well-paid jobs in their chosen field,” said Paty Funegra, Founder and CEO of La Cocina VA. “In return, La Cocina VA is providing Whole Foods Market with motivated, well-trained employees who will be an asset to its business. It’s truly a ‘win-win’ for both organizations.”

Three students from La Cocina’s current class are interning at Whole Foods Market locations in Arlington, Alexandria and Vienna. Two are rotating through several food stations, while one is specializing in baking and pastries. La Cocina VA expects that all of the students will be offered positions with the company upon completion of their internships.

“Our Team Members truly are our ‘secret sauce’ when it comes to Whole Foods Market,” said Jane Mueller, Executive Coordinator of Operations for Whole Foods Market Mid-Atlantic region. “We’re always on the lookout for the next great Team Member – someone who is passionate about food and making a difference in the world. Having them come from La Cocina is a great way to do just that.”

La Cocina VA (www.lacocinava.org) is a nonprofit organization that generates workforce and economic development for unemployed immigrants in Northern Virginia. Following a rigorous selection process, successful candidates participate in 14 weeks of classes, which include training in culinary skills with a professional chef, English instruction and a one-month internship with a local food service business. Students who complete the program attain certification from Northern Virginia Community College and the National Restaurant Association. The program is hosted by Mount Olivet United Methodist Church in Arlington, Virginia.
The students participating with Whole Foods Market are part of La Cocina VA’s second session. Students in the first class, which graduated in January 2015, are now working in full-time jobs at the Hyatt Arlington Key Bridge, Le Méridien Arlington and NMS Healthcare in Silver Spring, Maryland. Interviews for the third session have just begun.

La Cocina VA also includes a Food Assistance program to support health and nutrition in its community. Since September 2014, students have prepared 5500 meals that have benefited low-income and homeless individuals and families in Arlington.

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