Laurel, Amory and Biloxi take Top Culinary Honors at Mississippi ProStart Invitational
Clarksdale’s Cal Keen Vocational Center Wins Management Division

Jackson, MS  Teams from all over the state met in Jackson, MS, on Monday, February 6, 2012 for the Third Annual MS ProStart Invitational. The statewide competition held at the Old Capitol Inn included culinary and management divisions.

“This competition gives students the opportunity to bring to life the culinary and management skills they have gained through the ProStart program,” said Mike Cashion, Executive Director, MS Hospitality & Restaurant Association. “The competing students have spent countless hours throughout the academic year preparing with the help of their educators and industry mentors, and we are incredibly impressed with the performance of the winning teams.”

The culinary competition allowed student teams to demonstrate their creative abilities through the preparation of a three-course meal in 60 minutes, along with executing knife and poultry-fabrication skills. The management competition allowed student teams to demonstrate their knowledge of the restaurant and foodservice industry by developing a restaurant proposal, delivering a verbal presentation, and applying critical-thinking skills to challenges managers face in day-to-day operations.

Student performance during the competition was observed and rated by judges from leading colleges and universities, such as The Culinary Institute at MUW, Louisiana Culinary Institute, and Johnson & Wales University, and hospitality industry professionals.

In addition to naming winners of the 3rd Annual MS ProStart Invitational, the MRAEF also announced the ProStart Partner of the Year Award, Executive Chef Steve Bonasia of Sanderson Farms. Chef Bonasia gave of his time and talent throughout the past year to benefit the entire ProStart program. Chef Bonasia was actively involved in all aspects of the ProStart program through product donation, skills demonstrations, educator development, and also mentored this year’s Culinary Champion, Laurel High School.

Laurel High School and Carl Keen Vocational Center will be sent to Baltimore, MD to compete against 48 other teams from across the country at the National ProStart Invitational taking place April 28-30, 2012, where they will compete for over $1.2 million in scholarships.

Winning teams at the MS ProStart Invitational were awarded over $500,000 in scholarships to post-secondary colleges, universities and culinary schools.
The Mississippi ProStart Invitational is sponsored by the Mississippi Restaurant Association Education Foundation and the Mississippi Poultry Association.

Nationwide, 90,000 students in 47 states, territories and districts are served by ProStart, a two-year curriculum supported by the National Restaurant Association and state restaurant associations across the United States that blends classroom learning with mentored work experience to teach high school students the management and culinary skills needed for a career in the restaurant and foodservice industry. When students meet academic standards, complete a checklist of competencies, and work at least 400 hours in the industry, they are awarded the ProStart National Certificate of Achievement that signifies they are well qualified to enter the industry workforce. The career-building program is managed nationally by National Restaurant Association Solutions, a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Restaurant Association. For more information on the MS ProStart program, please visit www.msra.org and National ProStart Invitational, please visit www.prostart.restaurant.org.

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The Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association is a non-profit association composed of food service operators, lodging properties, attractions, convenience stores, casinos, suppliers, manufacturers, and other professionals who realize the importance of working together for the good of our industry. The mission of the association is to promote and protect the hospitality and foodservice industries, and provide education and training programs for all hospitality industry employees and students.