

Soulcial Kitchen Earns Fifth U.S. Dept of Labor Apprenticeship Credential with Launch of Hospitality Leader Program

New three-level program, co-developed with Emmy-nominated Master Chef Lasse Sorensen, builds on America's first Food Truck Apprenticeship—now adopted nationally

SWANSEA, IL, UNITED STATES, February 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Soulcial Kitchen](#), the award-winning social enterprise that has served more than 381,000 free hot chef-prepared meals to communities in need since 2021, today announced it has been awarded its fifth U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeship credential with the launch of its new Hospitality Leadership Development Program. This milestone further cements Soulcial Kitchen's position as a national leader in workforce development and hospitality innovation.



The Chef & The General Unite to Develop a New Generation of Hospitality Leaders

The announcement comes as Soulcial Kitchen's pioneering work continues to gain national recognition. Its flagship Food Truck Apprenticeship Program—the first of its kind to be certified by the U.S. Department of Labor—has now been adopted nationally by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF), extending its reach to aspiring hospitality professionals across the country.

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Chef Lasse Sorensen

The new Hospitality Leadership Development Program was co-developed by Soulcial Kitchen founder Brigadier General (Ret.) John Michel and award-winning Master Chef Lasse Sorensen, host of the eight-time Emmy-nominated

television series Food is Love. Chef Sorensen, who will also lead the program's rollout, brings

decades of culinary expertise and a deep commitment to mentorship that aligns with Soulcial Kitchen's mission of transformational service.

"In my years as a chef, a restaurateur, and a storyteller, I've learned that the best hospitality leaders aren't just managing operations—they're feeding people's souls," said Chef Lasse Sorensen. "This program is built on a belief John and I share deeply: that food is love, and leadership is the act of pouring into others so they can pour into the world. What we've created together gives aspiring leaders a pathway from the kitchen to the boardroom—without ever losing the heart that brought them to hospitality in the first place."

A Three-Level Pathway from Supervisor to Director

Grounded in Soulcial Kitchen's proprietary "[Currency of Caring](#)" curriculum, the Nine Keys to Leadership, and the Ten Commitments of Hospitality, the program features 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning and 200 hours of related technical instruction across three progressive modules:

Module 1 — Hospitality Supervisor

The foundation. Apprentices build the character, communication, and service excellence skills that define hospitality at its best. Rooted in servant leadership principles, this level transforms frontline operators into leaders others want to follow. Core coursework includes Foundations of Servant Leadership, Guest Experience Excellence, and Communication & Conflict Resolution—all anchored by the belief that there is no such thing as a throwaway life.

Module 2 — Hospitality Manager

The multiplier. Building on the supervisor foundation, this module develops competencies in people development, financial management, and operational excellence. Apprentices learn to develop their teams, manage resources with integrity, and create cultures of accountability and care. Coursework includes Developing Your People, Financial Stewardship for Leaders, and Operations Management.

Module 3 — Hospitality Director

The visionary. The capstone level challenges apprentices to think and lead strategically—developing organizational vision, managing stakeholder relationships, and driving social impact. Coursework includes Strategic Leadership & Vision, Stakeholder & Community Leadership, and a Leadership Legacy Capstone Project. Graduates emerge prepared to lead at the highest levels of the hospitality industry while remaining anchored in values-based, purpose-driven leadership.

First Cohort Launching Spring 2026

The program's inaugural cohort will begin in Spring 2026 at the Soulcial Kitchen Commons Hospitality Training and Community Service Campus in Swansea, Illinois. The campus serves as the operational headquarters for Soulcial Kitchen's growing portfolio of workforce and

entrepreneur development initiatives and community feeding programs, and will provide apprentices with immersive, hands-on learning in a real-world hospitality environment.

About Soulcial Kitchen

Soulcial Kitchen, the operational arm of The 501c3 Soulcial Solutions Foundation comprise a social enterprise founded by Brigadier General (Ret.) John Michel and his wife Holly, dedicated to addressing food insecurity and creating pathways to purpose through hospitality. Operating the Currency of Caring Food Truck Network, Soulcial Kitchen has served more than 381,000 free meals since 2021 while developing America's first U.S. Department of Labor-certified Food Truck Apprenticeship Program. The organization has been recognized with the American Express Community Champion Award and the National Restaurant Association's award for innovation in workforce development. Soulcial Kitchen is guided by the belief that there is no such thing as a throwaway life.

About Chef Lasse Sorensen

Born and raised on the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark, Chef Lasse Sorensen is an internationally acclaimed Master Chef, restaurateur, and television host. The son of a pastry chef to the Danish royal family, Chef Lasse completed multiple apprenticeships in Europe, represented Denmark on the Culinary Olympic Team, and moved to the United States in 1989. For more than 20 years, he and his wife Mary Jane have owned and operated Tom's Place, a beloved fine dining restaurant in Southern Illinois. His eight-time Emmy-nominated series Food is Love celebrates the stories behind the food and the people who make it, embodying his belief that "telling the story of the person cooking is really telling the story of the food."

John Michel

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