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Church's® Introduces System-wide Company-funded Education Program *First Graduating Class Celebrates Success*

ATLANTA, GA – *Church's*® – the Texas born, Southern bred brand known best for serving up hand-battered fried chicken and signature honey-butter biscuits - is celebrating the first graduating class of its Stride for Success program. Aware of the integral and powerful nature of education, the chicken giant is today announcing a national program allowing company-owned restaurant employees the opportunity to “earn their learning” and finally achieve their educational goals. In collaboration with Penn Foster, the chicken brand will soon be unveiling a similar program that franchisees can elect to offer their employees.

“Stride for Success”, the brainchild of Chief Executive Officer [Jim Hyatt](#) and Chief Human Resources Officer [Ed Brett](#), is yet another way that the *Church's* brand contributes to education. The company-funded program works in conjunction with [Penn Foster](#) and is designed to assist crew members in reaching educational milestones and advancing within the company. *Church's* employees, who have been unable to attain their high school diploma due to reasons such as financial burdens, now have the chance to achieve educational success with *Church's Chicken*® providing them the tools they need to grow both personally and professionally. With the program's burgeoning success, *Church's* is dedicating even more resources to Stride for Success.

“Our people are and always have been our strongest assets,” expressed Hyatt. “Laying the foundation for our employees to reach integral milestones and harness their potential will serve to both enrich their lives personally and strengthen our brand as a whole.”

One of the requirements in becoming a manager at company-owned *Church's Chicken* restaurants is to hold a high school diploma. In an effort to help crewmembers achieve this goal, *Church's* covers 100% of the cost associated with the program. Penn Foster worked to develop a comprehensive curriculum that can be accomplished online at each individual's convenience, assisting in lessening those burdens considerably.

“We are always dedicated to supporting student success and so we are especially pleased to celebrate these graduates of the “Stride for Success” program at *Church's* today,” said Frank Britt, CEO of Penn Foster. “Through this partnership, we support *Church's* as the company builds a bridge to career growth for a group of people who are often left behind because they began to work before achieving their high school diploma. Now, with their diploma in hand, the doors are open to endless possibilities for them to pursue their dreams.”

This week, *Church's Chicken* hosted the first three graduates of its high school diploma program, "Stride for Success", at their corporate headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. The traditional commencement ceremony took place on March 16th, and offered the graduates the opportunity to savor their success, as well as experience a behind the scenes look at the daily endeavors of the corporate team. In addition to the traditional graduation ceremony, which was complete with caps, gowns and pomp and circumstance, the Stride for Success graduates sat in on a field operations call and *Church's* monthly town hall meeting. Immediately following the awarding of diplomas, all three were treated to a sit-down lunch with *Church's* executives.

The graduates themselves are dedicated *Church's* employees, each having been a part of the *Church's* family for several years. Brittani Seymour, currently serving as a Shift Leader, started working at a South Florida *Church's Chicken* restaurant in 2009. Joann Jaso, the first to complete the curriculum, has been diligent in her position at *Church's* in Raymondville, TX for the last five years. Her earnest resolve at work undeniably translated to her studies. "I never thought I'd have the opportunity to get my high school diploma at this stage in life. The "Stride for Success" program has allowed me to pursue my goal of earning my diploma, which makes me eligible for further career advancement," shared Jaso. Joann currently works as a Training Manager at her restaurant. The third graduate, Sherray Harley, is a two year veteran at a *Church's* restaurant in Atlanta, GA. Securing her high-school diploma in just under six months through the Stride for Success program, she is now enrolled as a college student at Full Sail University, where she studies audio production. Harley says she is thankful for the opportunity and hopes that her success will encourage her colleagues.

"We are extremely proud of our employees whose passion for knowledge and hunger for growth has driven them to finally reach this educational milestone," said Ed Brett, Chief Human Resources Officer at *Church's Chicken*. "It is a true honor to be able to break the barriers that have blocked their paths and to assist our graduates in their personal growth. There's no better way to demonstrate our commitment to the *Church's* family than this."

About *Church's Chicken*

Founded in San Antonio, TX in 1952 by George W. Church, *Church's Chicken* is one of the largest quick service restaurant chicken chains in the world. *Church's* specializes in Original and Spicy Chicken freshly prepared throughout the day in small batches that are hand-battered and double-breaded, *Tender Strips*[®], sandwiches, honey-butter biscuits made from scratch and freshly baked, and classic, home-style sides all for a great value. *Church's* (along with its sister brand *Texas Chicken*[®] outside the Americas) has more than 1,650 locations in 25 countries and international territories and system-wide sales of more than \$1 billion. For more information, visit www.churchs.com. Follow *Church's* on Facebook at www.facebook.com/churchschicken and Twitter at www.twitter.com/churchschicken.

About Penn Foster

Students, employers and partner organizations rely on Penn Foster to build the skills and knowledge to power the 21st century workforce. For over 125 years, Penn Foster has been dedicated to helping people lead more meaningful and productive lives and to improving social outcomes through education. Penn Foster provides career pathways for opportunity youth and adult learners through diverse and affordable online diploma, certificate and degree programs, offered via its high school, career school and college. With more than 30,000 graduates each year, Penn Foster's online and blended learning programs are delivered in a self-paced, competency-based model wrapped by comprehensive academic, professional and personal support and coaching. For more information, visit <http://partners.pennfoster.edu/>

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