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Chef Collective KC Launches The Community Meals Project
Local Chefs Tackle Hospitality Unemployment and Hunger

Kansas City, MO (May 2020) Today, Chef Collective KC, a network of Kansas City chefs, food industry partners, and growers, has launched a city-wide workforce preservation and hunger relief effort, The Community Meals Project. Together, with founding funder, Bank of America, supporting sponsor, the Visit KC Foundation, and support from area business and food industry leaders, this initiative will keep participating restaurants' doors open and sustain hospitality industry jobs by putting these people to work to produce thousands of healthy and nutritious meals for Kansas City's food insecure each day. At the same time, a more resilient long-term model will be created to optimize the food system and improve local, chef-led restaurant stability. Bud Light, Charlie Hustle, and J. Rieger & Co. have pledged their support to the cause through contributing sponsorships as well.

Chef Collective KC was launched by Jon Taylor of Reach Collaborative, a community problem-solving organization, in collaboration with three Kansas City chefs and restaurants: Chef Howard Hannah of Crossroads Community Kitchen/The Rieger, Chef Michael Foust of Black Sheep, and Chef Brandon Winn, formerly of the Webster House. With [more than 1 million restaurants](#) in the United States and almost 16 million hospitality industry workers, The National Restaurant Association is expecting between five and seven million hospitality service workers to lose their jobs in the next three months.

"This crisis shines a light on existing food system vulnerabilities many on our team have been thinking about and working on for several years. Through The Community Meals Project, we are addressing the rise in food insecurity while, in tandem, building a new sustainable model that will help local growers and restaurants emerge stronger than they were before," said Jon Taylor. Chefs Howard Hanna of The Rieger, and Michael Foust of Black Sheep, have transitioned their restaurants into emergency community kitchens and are now partnering with Chef Collective KC. Each restaurant is developing a more sustainable model that is stable, funded, and safe for their culinary teams to continue producing large quantities of free meals.

Sourcing food from a network of food distributors, and local and regional growers, both packaged and perishable items will be delivered to **Kanbe's Market**, a centralized receiving, processing, and distribution center. Once inspected, ingredients are then allocated to participating kitchens and prepared into meals that will be delivered to select locations throughout the community. First meal distribution locations will include City Union Mission, Lykins Neighborhood, Sheffield Neighborhood, and Morningstar Youth & Family Life Center. In addition, four initial restaurants will be hosting Industry Nights as part of the Project to feed hospitality workers. Those restaurants include: Room 39, Brewery Emperial, Waldo Thai and District. The first Industry Night will take place Monday, May 4 at Room 39 thanks to Ted Habiger, chef and owner.

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As this project continues to move forward, funding from new sponsors will allow for broader collaboration between restaurants and nonprofit kitchens to meet our community's growing need. Sequentially, this will allow for more jobs in the hospitality industry and the opportunity to provide more meals for hunger relief. Currently, first phase of fundraising is underway with the goal of \$1 million-a small portion of what will become a national initiative with the overall goal of raising \$5 million to end hunger.

"Working closely with our local partners, Bank of America remains committed to finding the most effective ways to address critical needs in our community during this time," said Matt Linski, Kansas City Market President, Bank of America. "As a founding funder, we are dedicated to supporting the work of The Community Meals Project as they provide much-needed relief for hospitality workers, first responders, seniors and others who are currently facing food insecurity in the Kansas City metropolitan area." To learn more about or to support the Community Meals Project, go to www.chefcollectivekc.com. Chef Collective KC's Community Meals Project is a sponsored project of Community Capital Fund (CCF), a nonprofit organization that invests in innovative and measurable community development in the Kansas City region. Learn more about the Community Capital Fund at www.ccfkansascity.org.

"In the simplest terms, Visit KC and the Visit KC Foundation exist to make our city a better place. And in this time of uncertainty, our thoughts go to those who work alongside us in the hospitality industry, which numbers almost 48,000 strong and \$1.8 billion in wages," said Jason Fulvi, President & CEO of Visit KC. "Each January, the hospitality community helps us raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for local charities during Kansas City Restaurant Week, and now it's our turn to support them. We are proud to play a small role in launching The Community Meals Project and, together with Bank of America, applaud their dedication to workforce preservation and feeding those among us who are deeply affected by this crisis."

About Bank of America

At Bank of America, we're guided by a common purpose to help make financial lives better through the power of every connection. We're delivering on this through responsible growth with a focus on our environmental, social, and governance (ESG) leadership. ESG is embedded across our eight lines of business and reflects how we help fuel the global economy, build trust and credibility, and represent a company that people want to work for, invest in and do business with. It's demonstrated in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products, and services we offer our clients, and the impact we make around the world in helping local economies thrive. An essential part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocacy groups, such as community, consumer, and environmental organizations, to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve more significant impact. Learn more at about.bankofamerica.com, and connect with us on Twitter ([@BofA_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News)).

Bank of America has delivered more than \$2 billion in philanthropic investments since 2009, with approximately \$250 million in 2019 alone. In April 2019, the company announced a \$5 billion Bank of America Community Homeownership Commitment™ to benefit low- and moderate-income homebuyers and communities across the U.S. over the next five years. Also, in 2019, the Bank of America Community Development Banking provided a record of \$4.88 billion in loans, tax credit equity investments, and other real estate development solutions. Between 2005 and 2019, Bank of America financed 202,800 affordable housing units. To meet the unique needs of its 12 million small business owners, the company provides advice, solutions, and dedicated support. Bank of America maintained its position as the nation's top small business lender at the end of 2019, with \$38.9 billion in total outstanding small business loan balances (defined as business loans in original amounts of \$1 million and under), up 7% year over year. For more Bank of America news, including dividend announcements and other important information, visit the [Bank of America newsroom](#) and [register for news email alerts](#).

About Visit KC

Visit KC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to ignite global passion for Kansas City. Through marketing, sales, and service of the convention and tourism industries, Visit KC supports a vital component of the local economy—supporting more than 48,000 jobs and \$5.6 billion in estimated economic impact in 2019. For more information about Kansas City, go to VisitKC.com. For more about the Visit KC Foundation, go to VisitKC.com/foundation.

For more information about this project, please visit the website at www.chefcollectivekc.com or contact Jenny Kincaid Julian at (816) 550.4382/jenny@socialworxpr.com.