

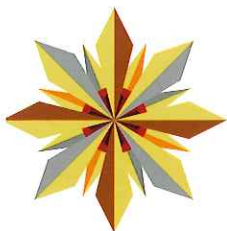
DOWNTOWN **albany digest**

A quarterly publication of the Downtown Albany Business Improvement District



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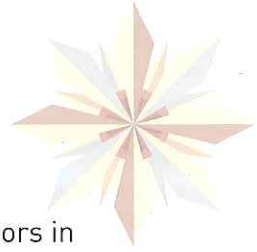
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Creating Opportunity One Towel at a Time



In 2007, the year the Hampton Inn and Suites opened its doors in downtown Albany, a collaboration to create and manage a Work Experience Program was born between the hotel, The Albany Housing Authority (AHA) and the Community Technology Initiative (CTI). The idea was simple. Create a train-to-work program giving participants an opportunity to learn necessary skills to build careers, develop confidence and grow as individuals. At the same time, The Hampton Inn and Suites gains a pool of valuable employees, builds a strong community, improves the hospitality workforce and capitalizes on benefits for the company.

Over the past six years, the work experience program has averaged 28 individuals annually. Participants who enter the two to four week intensive work training experience at the hotel, are given a uniform, and put to work shadowing and assisting employees in hotel departments such as housekeeping, breakfast bar, laundry and hotel public areas. The hands-on experience allows participants to gain quick skill sets that can be put into immediate use and presents opportunities to impress the host organization for possible future employment.

The program benefits for the Hampton Inn and Suites are three-fold. First, the partnership supports the local community by offering much needed job training opportunities. Additionally, fresh and eager individuals are introduced to the hotel as a way to replenish the workforce and keep it stable. Lastly, the corporate entity of the Hampton Inn receives tax incentives as a program participant.

According to Todd Reichelt, General Manager, Hampton Inn and Suites, Albany-Downtown, "The hospitality industry has a history of being a good corporate citizen and giving back to our local communities. The work experience program with AHA and CTI allows us to continue that tradition while enhancing our workforce."

Training new people costs time and money for any business. Hotel management embraces this fact and trains program participants to be successful.

"For most, the job is a tremendous stepping stone," explains Reichelt, "We have a core of housekeeping and front office associates that have been here for a number of years. So they rub shoulders with these people and make friends and sometimes, that's what they need more than anything. Other people they can

relate to that have been somewhat successful at what they do so they can be a role model for them."

A position at the Hampton Inn is not guaranteed, but many successful participants in the training program are considered for serious employment. Some even go on to train others.

"We slow down to make sure they get it right," said Brian Williams, Operation Manager, Hampton Inn and Suites, Albany-Downtown, "The idea is simple. Ensuring their success, ensures our success."

The program has been widely accepted by Hampton Inn hotel employees, giving the staff an opportunity to teach and be a leader.

"Everyone is willing to lend a hand and help out with training," said Nancy Lenseth, Sales Manager, Hampton Inn and Suites, Albany-Downtown, "I think it does make the staff happy to help someone and that they understand for some of these participants, this is their first real job opportunity."

"This program is a true win-win venture," suggested Sandy Paben, Director, Community Technology Initiative, "The extra manning from the program allows the hotel to maintain a higher level of service with less down time, and our program participants have a starting point to gain experience and learn in productive environment. The results continue to be impressive."

Feedback from the work experience participants find the program to be beneficial and most are grateful for the opportunity to be trained in a live business setting.

"It is very touching when five years later someone runs into you and gives you a hug and says, 'you made a big difference in my life - thank you.' It's very moving," said Reichelt.

DOWNTOWN news

WhoSay, headquartered at 418 Broadway was one of only two companies in the Capital Region to secure venture funding in the third quarter, according to the latest Price Waterhouse Coopers Moneytree Report. **WhoSay** created a social media platform for celebrities that allows them to post pictures and content for fans, while maintaining ownership of those images. The social media startup group landed \$11.6 million in venture capital funding from Comcast Ventures, the private investment affiliate of the Philadelphia-based cable company, Comcast Corp. The funding will allow the firm to expand its global reach to film and television stars and sports figures.