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**MIAMI HOMELESS WOMEN CARVE PATH TOWARD
INDEPENDENCE...THROUGH THE KITCHEN**

Graduates of food prep course at Lotus House Women's Shelter tearfully celebrate new skills and brighter futures with garden-side luncheon

MIAMI– It was a sight that brought many to tears. On Saturday, April 10, at [Lotus House Women's Shelter](#), located in the heart of Miami's poverty-stricken Overtown neighborhood, eight women, residents of the facility, lined up to receive diplomas for completing an intensive five-day course (40+ hours) in food service job training. For the graduates, who culminated the week by preparing a gourmet luncheon in the shelter's garden for dozens of Lotus House staff and supporters, it was a chance to show how they had 'sharpened' their skills, essentially carving a path toward job opportunities in the food industry – opportunities that otherwise might have seemed impossible to achieve.

“We are so proud of the accomplishments of our food prep graduates for their hard work, commitment and team work, all critical skills for success in the work world,” said Constance Collins Margulies, Director of Lotus House Women's Shelter. “Our graduates are not just looking for jobs, they are looking for careers and eager to be strong contributors to their new employers.”

For one week straight, the students, under the guidance of experienced professional chef Pamela Manresa, who was the Corporate Chef at Gardner's Food Market for 16 years, sliced, diced, minced and chopped their way through the basics including kitchen safety and food handling, cooking techniques, knife skills, flavor profiling and the all-important team building. The students studied and tested for their state required SafeStaff Food Handlers Certification, which was presented on graduation day, along with the certification of graduation. The gourmet meal they prepared for the luncheon was a unique and delectable display of their growth. The menu included cold carrot and ginger soup, salmon with orange vinaigrette, brown rice salad with spring vegetables, berry and peach cobbler with ice-cream and a nonalcoholic drink called the “Flip Flop,” a Miami twist on the Long Island Iced Tea.

Since the course first started being offered at the shelter in 2008, four times a year, there have been 75 graduates.

Lotus House, founded in 2006, is a unique resource center and residential facility that provides free housing, meals, clothing and wrap-around support services to approximately 150 women and infants annually. A haven for hundreds of homeless women and children in Miami's Overtown, one of the poorest inner-city neighborhoods in the United States, the shelter's mission is to empower women to improve the quality of their lives on every level and achieve greater self-sufficiency as they transition to permanent homes off the streets.

Interested employers can call Pamela Manresa, course instructor, at 305-438-0556. To learn more about how you can help, visit the Lotus House website at www.lotushouseshelter.org or call 305.365.2478 for more information.

Lotus House

The Lotus House (www.lotushouseshelter.org) is a prototype resource center and transitional housing facility for homeless women and children in the heart of Overtown, one of the poorest inner-city neighborhoods in the United States. The Lotus House Women's Shelter provides free housing for up to one year in addition to meals, clothing and a wide range of support services and resources.