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## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT VISION REALIZED VIA SALT SCHOOL THE ASBURY TO HIRE 60 OF THE 110 GRADUATES FOR ITS MAY 26 OPENING

By Michelle Gladden

Workforce development became a part of the municipal conversation almost as soon as the Mayor and Council took office last year. On Saturday, a part of that conversation was realized when 110 area residents – 90 percent of them from Asbury Park and Neptune, graduated from hotelier David Bowd's Salt School.

"I want to congratulate all the graduates; this was a commitment and it was a commitment by all," Mayor John Moor said following the graduation ceremony. "They started in February and after working so hard, some 10 to 12 weeks later, they have graduated. I just hope everyone gets a job out of this"

Moor called the program a home run in terms of what city officials envisioned for a workforce development component from waterfront redeveloper iStar and The Asbury's hotelier David Bowd.

"This is the commitment with development in the city that we are looking for," Moor said. "This project was fantastic. It far exceeded my expectations. And with future projects, we will expect the same if not better, although I don't know if you can top this one."



As each new Payment In Lieu of Tax application came before the governing body, officials asked for a workforce development component.

"The Salt School is a great example of how the City and developers can collaborate to work toward our overall goal of increasing workforce development in Asbury Park," Deputy Mayor Amy Quinn said in a written statement. "The Salt School should be a model for developers to use and modify for their projects big or small. iStar worked with the City and the community and did an amazing job with the Salt School. Kudos to all the graduates."



Waterfront redeveloper iStar, responsible for bringing the first hotel to Asbury Park in over 50 years, collaborated with Bowd and the Boys and Girls Club of Monmouth County to allow the 10-week course to be held at latter's Monroe Avenue facility.

"David Bowd and the Salt Hotels is a fantastic partner for iStar," said iStar's Brian Cheripka, Senior Vice President of Land and Development. "We are very proud of David and what he has done for the community. In many ways this was a great combination with the great idea that David had and our support as a partner.

"We see this as just the beginning," said Cheripka, [at right in conversation with a graduate]. "We think there are ways to take the lessons we have learned from the Salt School and apply it to other projects down the road, in terms of when you think about construction projects, job mentorship programs, apprenticeships, job training, and the use of local subcontractors and local labor through cooperation and coordination through other subcontractors that will come from outside the city.



"We look at this as the first step in a very long process, just like rebuilding the waterfront," he continued. "We are very proud of the community and the fact that 80 to 90 percent of the graduates coming from Salt school are from Neptune and Asbury Park and that so many of them will be offered a position in The Asbury Hotel."

The course including guest lecturers from Apple, Morgans Hotel Group, and Standard Hotels, who spoke on all aspects of the hospitality industry.

Bowd, who got his start at age 15 as a bellman, said the diverse student body ranged in age from 15 to 60. He said the students readily shared their own connections to the city, lending invaluable insight into its history and connection to music.

"It's been completely groundbreaking for us," Bowd said at the graduation ceremony. "I will never open a hotel the same way again. We've learned a lot about the neighborhood. We've learned about what the hotel should be and therefore what it is going to be."

The first of its kind, for the city and for Bowd [at right], the free course offered 150 out of 300 applicants a tutorial on the service industry.

"This is so much more than a hotel opening for us," he told those who packed the Asbury Yacht Club during Saturday's graduation ceremony. "The Salt School will change the way we will open a hotel again in the future. The enthusiasm and the dedication of all of the graduates has just been incredible. They were asked a lot about the community and to me – Salt School has become a community. I hope that most of you will take what you've learned and keep this within your own community of graduates. You have been an absolute delight and we couldn't be more honored to be in Asbury Park to open a hotel and to have so many of you with us as a team and so thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

