

Restaurant Associates and Permira Foundation partner with Refettorio Felix in collaborative employability programme to support vulnerable people

24 October 2019

Leading premium hospitality providers Restaurant Associates has teamed up with global investment firm Permira to collaborate with the charity Refettorio Felix on ‘Step Up To The Plate’ – a seven-week culinary and life skills course, set up to create a guided pathway to employment within the hospitality sector.

Refettorio Felix serves meals to vulnerable people in a home-from-home environment and turns 1,280 kilos of food, that would otherwise be destined for landfill, into delicious lunches. Over 1,000 vulnerable people benefit from the services of the centre each year. The support from the Permira Foundation, Restaurant Associates and Social Business Trust (SBT) builds on strengthening the sustainability of Refettorio Felix as well as creating an imaginative skills programme for the vulnerable people they serve.

With the support of Restaurant Associates and Permira, Refettorio Felix has been able to design ‘Step Up To The Plate’ which helps individuals at the centre to learn more about nutrition, cooking and also encourages a pre-employability programme for those potentially interested in working in hospitality. The programme launched with 12 candidates in early September and included modules on culinary skills, health & safety, barista and front of house training, as well as CV writing and interview skills. After an initial induction, the three-hour weekly sessions were delivered over six weeks. In a celebratory finale, the 12 participants were challenged to plan and execute a three-course meal as part of their graduation ceremony on 22nd October.

Alice Woodwark, Managing Director of RA Group commented: “We’ve supported the excellent work that Refettorio Felix has been doing for over two years and when Permira presented us with an opportunity to further assist some of the vulnerable people that Refettorio Felix support, we jumped at the chance. We believe everybody deserves the same opportunity and by working together we hope we can successfully help in providing opportunities for these individuals. Our aspiration is that by providing mentoring and training we will help them on the start of a successful career path within hospitality.”

Alistair Kingsley, CEO of Refettorio Felix, added: “This has been an incredible opportunity for our vulnerable community to learn valuable culinary and life lessons from true professionals and to feel so supported on their journey to possible employment. It’s been a life changing experience for everyone who took part.”

The Permira Foundation is delighted to be involved in this project as it provides an opportunity to support vulnerable and socially isolated individuals in central London. Michail Zekkos, Partner and Head of Permira London said: “The culinary and lifeskills programme at Refettorio Felix is a fantastic way to engage with a broad spectrum of individuals who have found themselves isolated by society. This initiative provides a clear purpose and direction for a more promising future.”

Permira and its Foundation works closely with Social Business Trust to support and grow outstanding charities and social enterprises. SBT is proud to have included Refettorio Felix in its network. SBT will help to improve Refettorio Felix’s marketing, sustainability, income generation and provide additional grant funding.

Adele Blakebrough, CEO of SBT, commented: “It’s fantastic to be involved with a charity who is serving some of our most needy citizens. We are so pleased to be able to further support The Permira Foundation and the Restaurants Associates Group in their engagement with Refettorio Felix. We all look forward to deepening our relationship with this exceptional charity.

ENDS

For further information please contact Compass Group UK & Ireland Communications Team on 01895 554 999 or email uk.communications@compass-group.co.uk

About RA Group

The RA Group is a collection of specialist food and guest services companies, bound together by the shared purpose of delivering exceptional customer experiences. By harnessing the individual brilliance of these companies, we deliver personalised and intuitive hospitality to our clients; from prestigious corporate organisations to iconic cultural and heritage venues. RA Group is part of Compass UK & Ireland.

About Permira

Permira is a global investment firm. Founded in 1985, the firm advises funds with total committed capital of approximately US\$47.4bn (€43bn) and makes long-term investments, including majority control investments as well as strategic minority investments, in companies with the objective of transforming their performance and driving sustainable growth. The Permira Funds have made over 250 private equity investments in five key sectors: Technology, Consumer, Financial Services, Industrial Tech and Services, and Healthcare. Permira employs over 250 people in 14 offices across North America, Europe, and Asia.

About Refettorio Felix

For nearly 30 years, St Cuthbert's Centre has operated as a community hub, dedicated to improving the lives of marginalised, homeless and vulnerable people in West London. Over 60% of its guests are rough sleepers or homeless and over 50% have some degree of mental health issue, substance misuse issue or both (dual diagnosis). Many face social stigma, discrimination and live in a state of food poverty and financial insecurity.

St Cuthbert's operates under the mission 'proving the community cares', promoting dignity, community and well-being. In a safe and restorative environment, the Centre provides supportive and therapeutic services such as counselling advice, a mental health service, shower and laundry facilities, free clothing, daily free or subsidized lunch and teas and coffees for all who attend. The Centre also has a wide-ranging activity programme including computer skills and CV-building sessions, a culinary skills workshop, advice on employment and rehousing as well as reading groups, art classes and nutrition workshops.

About Compass Group UK & Ireland

We're the UK's leading food and support services provider: the people behind the food, hospitality and services that brighten your day, make you smile and put a spring in your step. Operating in some 15,000 locations across the UK & Ireland, we had revenues of £1.7 billion in the year to 30 September 2018 with our parent company, Compass Group PLC earning annual revenues of around £23 billion.

We're 60,000 talented people bringing you the delicious food, memorable experiences and vital support services that can transform every day into a great day. All of the little things that make the world of difference and boost the wellbeing of millions. We're here to inspire, protect, nourish and energise.

For more information, please visit:

