



## **Laura Norris Nominated by Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association as ProStart Educator of the Year**

**[Richmond, VA] – [March 18, 2019]** – Today, the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association named Laura Norris its 2019 ProStart State Educator of Excellence for outstanding achievement in high school culinary and restaurant management education in the state of Virginia.

ProStart®, a nationwide high school program that unites classroom and industry to develop the talent of tomorrow's workforce, reaches nearly 150,000 students in more than 1,500 high schools across 50 states, the Territory of Guam, and at Department of Defense Education Activity schools in Europe and the Pacific.

To get her students real-world experience, Laura organizes a walking food tour of the Church Hill neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia every year. "These field trips provide valuable experience for my students. They see the relevance of the ProStart curriculum in practice. The school board has seen a presentation of the trip and as a result, the Economic Development Director has called on my students to cater events for the county. We hosted former governor Terry McAuliffe at three events last year."

Laura was selected for the award from over 60 ProStart educators across the state and will be recognized in May at the [National ProStart Invitational](#) (NPSI), where over 400 ProStart students and educators from across the country showcase their culinary and restaurant management skills in a live-action competition for over \$200,000 in scholarships.

"Laura embodies everything that makes ProStart educators successful: She has the ability to inspire and lead the foodservice leaders of tomorrow," said Jim Wilson, the Director of Education for the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association. "Her passion for the industry, education and her students, and her strong work ethic and commitment to the ProStart program, made her a clear choice for the 2019 Virginia ProStart Educator Excellence Award."

Upon being nominated, Norris is now a finalist for the National Educator of Excellence Awards (NEEA) sponsored by Golden Corral. NEEA winners are recognized one of the following ways, by category (Classroom Expertise, Best Practice/Knowledge Sharing and Industry Connection), where each category winner will receive \$3,500, or as a finalist for the James H. Maynard Teacher of the Year Award, where one winner will receive \$10,000.

The complete list of State Winners will be announced at the Educators of Excellence Awards program in Washington, DC on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

For more information on the ProStart program, visit [NRAEF.org/ProStart](http://NRAEF.org/ProStart) or [VRLTA.org/ProStart](http://VRLTA.org/ProStart); or find us on Twitter ([@VAProStart](https://twitter.com/VAProStart)) or Facebook ([facebook.com/VAProStart/](https://facebook.com/VAProStart/)).

***About the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association Education Foundation (VRLTAEF)***

*As the educational arm of the Virginia, Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association, the VRLTA exists to enhance the restaurant and hospitality industries' through education and encouraging youth to pursue post-secondary education in the culinary and hospitality fields. This is primarily done through the coordination of the Virginia ProStart program and the administration of a scholarship program. For more information on the VRLTAEF, visit [VRLTA.org/VRLTAEF](http://VRLTA.org/VRLTAEF).*

***About the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association (VRLTA)***

*The Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association is the only unified voice for the restaurant, lodging, travel and hospitality suppliers associations. VRLTA creates value for members by promoting the legislative interests of the industry, networking, educational opportunities, and protecting free enterprise. Inquiries about membership and VRLTA services should be directed to VRLTA at (804) 288-3065 or [VRLTA.org](http://VRLTA.org).*

***About the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF)***

*As the philanthropic foundation of the National Restaurant Association, the NRAEF exists to enhance the restaurant industry's service to the public through education, community engagement, and promotion of career opportunities. The NRAEF works to attract, develop, and retain a career-oriented professional workforce for the restaurant industry. For more information on the NRAEF, visit [NRAEF.org](http://NRAEF.org).*

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