



Averett Elevates Hospitality Excellence with Free Regional Training Program, Receives Grant Funding from City for New Initiative

DANVILLE, Va. (Nov. 8, 2023) – Restaurant, hotel and other hospitality leaders in the region have a new opportunity for professional development to enhance service excellence and develop their workforce at no cost to themselves or their employers.

The City of Danville granted [Averett University](#) \$250,000 for the creation of a [hospitality leadership training program](#) being offered for free to participants beginning next week. This initiative comes on the heels of the University launching its new hospitality management and tourism program, which started classes this fall.

Through this new initiative, Averett will prepare mid- to high-level hospitality management and business leaders with necessary skills, procedures and tactics to better manage employees and improve quality of services to guests through the “Elevating Hospitality Excellence” program. Participants will have opportunities throughout the series to sit for nationally recognized certifications offered through the [American Hotel and Lodging Association](#) (AHLA) and the [National Restaurant Association](#), including:

- AHLA Certified Hospitality Manager
- AHLA Guest Service Gold Certified
- AHLA Start Program
- AHLA Certified Hospitality Department Trainer
- National Restaurant Association Serve Success Certified

“We are grateful to the City of Danville for this demonstration of support and for all the ways Danville and the surrounding region uplift our hometown university,” said Averett President Dr. Tiffany M. Franks. “Averett’s commitment to the regional hospitality industry begins with workforce development, and we are grateful to already have established programs and strategic partnerships to train and help prepare not only those in our region, but students from all over for successful and fulfilling careers in hospitality.”

Participants of the program will range from all levels of hospitality management from a diverse array of establishments, such as hotels, restaurants, tourist destinations and more. The group will meet on the first Tuesday of every month from 9-11 a.m. at rotating locations throughout the region, with the first session on Tuesday, Nov. 14.

This program follows the “train the trainer” model, in which participants who complete the program will be poised to bring much needed resources back to their businesses and teach employees these skills. The first six-month session will concentrate on preparing participants

to sit for the AHLA Certified Hospitality Manager certification, which will explore topics like recruiting and hiring, employee engagement, revenue management and more.

“As the hospitality industry continues to grow throughout the Southern Virginia region, it is imperative that we provide our local business community with the resources and tools necessary to be successful,” said Corrie Bobe, director of Economic Development of Tourism for the City of Danville. “Through this strategic partnership with Averett University, our regional hospitality workforce will have access to an enhanced level of leadership and customer service training, along with receiving nationally recognized credentials. Skills learned through this program will help elevate the visitor experience and better position our region as a premier tourist destination.”

Averett’s undergraduate concentration and minor in Hospitality Management and Tourism launched this fall for [on-campus](#) and [Averett Online](#) students. Housed under the University’s existing undergraduate Business Management program, the concentration includes courses like Introduction to the Hospitality and Tourism Industry; Lodging Operations; and Food and Beverage Management, with electives such as Casino, Resort and Club Management; and Facility Design. Students will end the program with a capstone internship opportunity with local hospitality partners.

“At Averett, we are steadily looking for innovative ways to contribute to the overall growth and success of the hospitality and tourism industry across the region,” said Thomas F. Perugini, Averett’s program director for Hospitality Management and Tourism. “This leadership training program will afford managers the tools to advance their own leadership skills as well as lift up their staff through additional certification opportunities directed at hospitality workers at all levels.”

The grant program for this initiative is funded through the City of Danville’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation, a federal economic stimulus bill designed to support small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The City allocated a portion of its ARPA funding to help improve economic opportunity for people and businesses in Danville,” said City Manager Ken Larking. “The use of these funds to help improve the hospitality industry made sense because of how the pandemic impacted it and the fact that we have a growing tourism sector.”

In addition to the free training and ability to sit for the certifications, participants will receive membership to AHLA at no charge, and will receive a \$50 gift card for travel expenses. To register for the program, [click here](#).

“We know that over the next few years, significant new development is expected to drive a dramatic increase in area visitation, asset development and business expansion that, when fully leveraged, has the capacity to positively impact every citizen, business and visitor to our community,” said Lisa Meriwether, tourism manager for the city.

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About Averett University and the Averett Hospitality Management and Tourism Program:

Since 1859, Averett University has grown and developed into a dynamic institution that serves students of all ages, offering more than 40 undergraduate majors with a number of concentrations and minors, along with 12 graduate programs with several concentrations. Dedicated to preparing students to serve and lead as catalysts for positive change, the University's historic main campus is embedded in the heart of Southern Virginia with regional learning centers throughout Virginia and online. Averett enrolls a diverse student body, and boasts an alumni network that spans the globe.

About the City of Danville Office of Economic Development and Tourism

The City of Danville's Office of Economic Development and Tourism recruits and retains businesses for the Danville area. The office provides information on available sites and buildings, incentives and other financial resources and offers a website designed for the business community: www.discoverdanville.com.

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