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James Beard Foundation Launches Inaugural Chefs Boot Camp for Policy & Change

*Pilot Program Builds Powerful Community of Chef Advocates for Safety,
Healthfulness, and Equity of America's Food System*

New York, NY (July 10, 2012) – More than a dozen chefs from around the country gathered at the James Beard Award-nominated Blackberry Farm in Walland, Tennessee, at the beginning of July for the [James Beard Foundation](#)'s first **Chefs Boot Camp for Policy & Change**. The pilot program has been designed to provide chefs with the tools and support they require to lead and advocate for food-system change. Chefs Boot Camp for Policy & Change is envisioned as a model for future gatherings, designed to grow a cohort of effective chef advocates who are dedicated to improving the safety, healthfulness, wholesomeness, sustainability, and equity of America's food system. The two-day boot camp was made possible with financial and programming support from the Pew Charitable Trusts.

"For years the James Beard Foundation has worked to shine a spotlight on chefs and other artisans improving the quality of the food we eat," said Susan Ungaro, president of the James Beard Foundation. "Now that they have become celebrities in their own right, the opportunity for chefs to influence thought leaders and advocate for policies more in line with their values is a natural evolution of our role."

The program throughout the two days of the pilot Chefs Boot Camp for Policy & Change included policy and media training by experts from Washington, D.C., a harvest from the sustainable garden and farms at Blackberry Farm, a collaborative dinner prepared by the participating chefs, issues education about antibiotic overuse in livestock and the Farm Bill, and strategic brainstorming about important and impactful next steps.

"Chefs have a great ability to improve the quality of the food we eat," said Erik Olson, director of food programs at the Pew Health Group. "We are excited to work with the James Beard Foundation to help chefs be even more effective advocates for issues such as food safety, school nutrition, and the appropriate use of antibiotics in livestock production."

The Chefs Boot Camp for Policy & Change is part of the James Beard Foundation's broader program to encourage dialogue between diverse stakeholders in the food system while providing an opportunity for the values of the country's best chefs to help influence food decisions for the larger American population. Other programs include conducting a national dialogue on food-system issues at regional salons in cities around the country; an annual national food conference held each fall that brings a diverse group of food-system stakeholders together; and an annual Leadership Awards program recognizing visionaries helping create a more healthful, sustainable, and safe food world.

"Our goal is not to advocate for one position or solution over another," said Mitchell Davis, Ph.D., executive vice president of the James Beard Foundation. "Instead we want to help educate chefs and consumers about the complexities of the issues our food system faces, help them find the issues that resonate with their own personal values and beliefs, and then support them to become better advocates for change."

The inaugural Boot Camp was conducted under the direction of James Beard Foundation trustees Michel Nischan, chef of the Dressing Room and co-founder of Wholesome Wave, and Eric Kessler, founder of Arabella Advisors. Participants were selected based on geographic diversity, areas of interest, culinary regions, and scheduling. They included:

Hugh Acheson, Five & Ten, Athens, GA
Michael Anthony, Gramercy Tavern, New York, NY
Jeremy Barlow, Tayst, Nashville, TN
Jeremy Bearman, Rouge Tomate, New York, NY
Sean Brock, McCrady's, Charleston, SC
Josh Feathers and Joseph Lenn, Blackberry Farm, Walland, TN
Colby Garrelts, Bluestem, Kansas City, MO
Rock Harper, DC Central Kitchen, Washington, D.C.
Maria Hines, Tilth Restaurant and Golden Beetle Restaurant & Bar, Seattle, WA
Mike Isabella, Graffiato, Washington, D.C.
Ed Kenney, Town, Honolulu, HI
Andrea Reusing, Lantern Restaurant, Chapel Hill, NC
Sam Talbot, AOL's GMC "Trade Secrets," New York, NY
Cathy Whims, Nostrana, Portland, OR
Alex Young, Zingerman's Roadhouse, Ann Arbor, MI

To keep abreast of the Foundation's work in food advocacy and the chefs' progress during the Chefs Boot Camp for Policy & Change, follow hashtag #JBFLeds on Twitter and visit the James Beard Foundation's blog at jamesbeard.org.

About the James Beard Foundation

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation is dedicated to celebrating, nurturing, and preserving America's diverse culinary heritage and future. A cookbook author and teacher, James Beard was a champion of American cuisine who helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts. Today the Beard Foundation continues in the same spirit by offering a variety of events and programs designed to educate, inspire, entertain, and foster a deeper understanding of our culinary culture. These programs include educational initiatives, food industry awards, an annual national food conference, Leadership Awards program, culinary scholarships, and publications. In addition to maintaining the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a

“performance space” for visiting chefs, the Foundation has created a robust online community, and hosts tastings, lectures, workshops, and food-related art exhibits in New York City and around the country. For more information, please visit jamesbeard.org. You can find insights on food at the James Beard Foundation’s blog [Delights & Prejudices](#), become a JBF member at jamesbeard.org/join, like the James Beard Foundation on [Facebook](#), and follow the James Beard Foundation on [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#).

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