



Assembly Member SANDRÉ SWANSON

News Release

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Oakland Restaurant Honored For Hiring Locals, Putting At-Risk Youth To Work

(Sacramento) – Jack London Square’s “Home of Chicken and Waffles” restaurant was recognized yesterday for its practice of hiring and training local workers, many of whom are at-risk youth. The restaurant’s owner, Derrick Johnson, was honored with other small businesses from throughout the state at the annual California Small Business Day —“A Salute to Small Business”. Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda) nominated the business as his district’s honoree of the year.



Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda) with honoree Derrick Johnson, owner of Home of Chicken and Waffles.

“As a small businessman, Derrick Johnson has created an enterprise that is not simply a financial success, but a community achievement as well. By hiring local residents, particularly those who often have difficulty finding work, Home of Chicken and Waffles contributes to our economy while creating a better quality of life for many people. I was very pleased to nominate such a deserving business” Assemblymember Swanson announced.

Derrick Johnson opened the restaurant five years ago in Jack London Square. He noted that one in five of his employees are at-risk youth with troubled backgrounds, with many more of his 41 member staff having been “close to the edge.”

When asked why he chose to hire such individuals despite the large number of potential applicants in the job market, he stated, "First, this is my way of giving back to the community. Even though there are so many who are qualified, I still focus on those who need the job most. Secondly, I have found it is much easier to train those with no experience. If they want to leave the streets, they will learn, and they will learn the way you teach them."

Although originally from Oakland, Johnson's father and uncles opened a small chain of restaurants in L.A. called Roscoe's House of Chicken and Waffles. In the late 90's, his cousins invited Johnson, who was then living in Florida, to invest in the first Roscoe's restaurant in Oakland. That investment eventually turned into ownership, with Johnson eventually moving, renaming and reopening the restaurant in Jack London Square.

When asked what brought him back to Oakland, Johnson replied, "I came out to give back to my home community. Many people are prejudiced against people on the street, but I found that most have a strong desire to work if given the opportunity. By hiring young people as well as those who are often thought of as unhirable, I could make a difference in people's lives." Johnson noted that many of his younger workers graduated from Oakland High School in 2003 or 2004. While most started as bussers or dishwashers, several are now in leadership positions at the restaurant.

"Derrick's business proves that people can invest in their own community and not only survive, but succeed. Home of Chicken and Waffles is an enterprise that serves as an excellent example for other businesses in the community. Best of all, they provide the community with an excellent menu that is both exciting and delicious," Assemblymember Swanson concluded.

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