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MEDIA CONTACT:
Rachel Austin, 713-305-0419
rachel@hometownsocial.net



RESTAURANT U TO CONNECT AT-RISK HOUSTON KIDS WITH WORLD-CLASS EATERIES

PROGRAM FOUNDED BY HOMEMADE HOPE AND GREATER HOUSTON TEXAS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION WILL LAUNCH WITH VISIT TO GATLIN'S BBQ

HOUSTON, TX (July 14, 2021) – A new program will introduce some of Houston's most vulnerable children to a world of culinary possibilities. Entitled **Restaurant U**, the initiative is a partnership between local non-profit **Homemade Hope** and the **Greater Houston Texas Restaurant Association** that will take area at-risk kids aged 4-18 years old on immersive field trips to top-tier eateries, where they will eat delicious food as they talk and learn with the best chefs, owners, and service team members in the restaurant industry.

Every two weeks throughout the summer of 2021, Restaurant U participants will visit a different restaurant. The series kicks off with a stop at award-winning **Gatlin's BBQ**, where star pitmaster **Greg Gatlin**—seen most recently in the acclaimed Netflix series *High on the Hog: How African-American Cuisine Transformed America*—will spend time discussing his life, barbecue, and business with his young guests.

Founded in 2014, Homemade Hope helps children living in Houston's network of shelters and affordable housing projects through a variety of programming, all anchored in food. Lessons in nutrition and cooking are delivered alongside loving communal experiences of breaking bread together. The outreach has helped thousands: Attendance of Homemade Hope's in-person and virtual programs totaled nearly 11,050 in 2020 alone.

Throughout Restaurant U, at-risk children will counter the threat of societal detachment by building community, both with one another and with contributing restaurants. In addition to learning valuable life and culinary skills, kids will experience Houston's cultural diversity firsthand, explore new foods and ingredients, practice restaurant etiquette, discover career opportunities, and more. Homemade Hope will provide transportation and teachers to facilitate all activities, which will range from cooking demonstrations and cooking classes, to behind-the-scenes looks at restaurant operations.

"Houston is the greatest food city in the world, and anyone can be part of it," says Cameron James, President of the Greater Houston Texas Restaurant Association. "Our restaurant community is so excited about the opportunity to connect with young people through mouthwatering food, mentorship, and interactive experiences that don't just illustrate the professional opportunities that exist for them in our industry, but actually put them on the paths to seize them."

"We believe in the power of food," says Blair Bentley, Homemade Hope Executive Director. "For so many of the children Homemade Hope serves, food can be a source of uncertainty. These children live in food deserts and don't get adequate nutrition. We want to show them how food can not only nourish their bodies and souls, but

also can bring people together. Learning about the culinary world and restaurant business can empower these children in tremendous ways.”

ABOUT HOMEMADE HOPE

Homemade Hope, a 501(c)(3) established in 2014, provides hands-on cooking classes, holiday celebrations and field trips for at-risk Houston children. While learning about nutritious foods, children acquire cooking skills, develop self-esteem, receive emotional and academic support and delight in the joy of homemade meals. To learn more, visit www.homemadehope.org.

ABOUT THE GREATER HOUSTON TEXAS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

Proudly representing more than 3,900 members of the restaurant industry, the Greater Houston Texas Restaurant Association (GHTRA) works to grow the health and strength of the restaurant industry in Houston and beyond through education, public awareness, and governmental affairs. The GHTRA serves as a vital foundation, ally, and point of contact for restaurants. For more information regarding membership with the GHTRA or its parent organization, the Texas Restaurant Association (TRA), visit www.ghra.com or www.txrestaurant.org.

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