

Chef Carl Watts is Cooking Up Confidence in Alachua County Youth



On April 19th, Underground Kitchen, along with partners Working Food and Greater Duval Neighborhood Association, hosted the Young Chef's Pop-Up Restaurant. The event gave the Greater Duval Cohort, who had been attending Underground Kitchen enrichment sessions all spring, a chance to show their families all that they had learned.

Chef Carl Watts has been a chef for over a decade, but in the past five years has expanded his reach to start having a positive impact on the youth of Alachua County.

The Underground Kitchen Young Chefs program brings both the kitchen and culinary training to youth. As a Children's Trust funded enrichment program, Chef Carl travels to locations across the county with camping stoves and coolers full of ingredients to educate youth about healthy eating while teaching them the integral life skill of cooking.

It is clear to see the impact of this program as you enter the kitchen to see the teens expertly dicing herbs and stirring sauces as Chef Carl walks around instructing them and commending them on their progress.

Many of the teens in this cohort have been a part of the Young Chefs program for years and have developed a close relationship with Chef Carl, sharing inside jokes and stories as they cooked together.

Chef Carl hopes that every teen leaves his program with knowledge of how to take control of what they put in their bodies. In addition to teaching them cooking skills, he also aims to educate his students on the nutritional aspects of cooking and healthy dietary practices.

"Over the years, I've seen how food plays an essential role in youth development & behavior." Chef Carl said, "Our goal is to make sure that we are empowering our youth to eat healthy by not only giving them the knowledge they need to make an informed decision on their eating habits, but also letting them cook and see the process and their results themselves."

If your organization is interested in receiving Underground Kitchen's Young Chefs enrichment sessions, please fill out a request using the form [here](#).

ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY

The Children's Trust of Alachua County funds and supports a coordinated system of community services that allows all children, youth and their families to thrive. Its funded programs and partnerships address three main goals: that all children and youth are healthy and have nurturing caregivers, can learn what they need to be successful, and live in a safe community.

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