



# Workforce Insider

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By Tony Burton • Jan 14, 2026

Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins...1017 words

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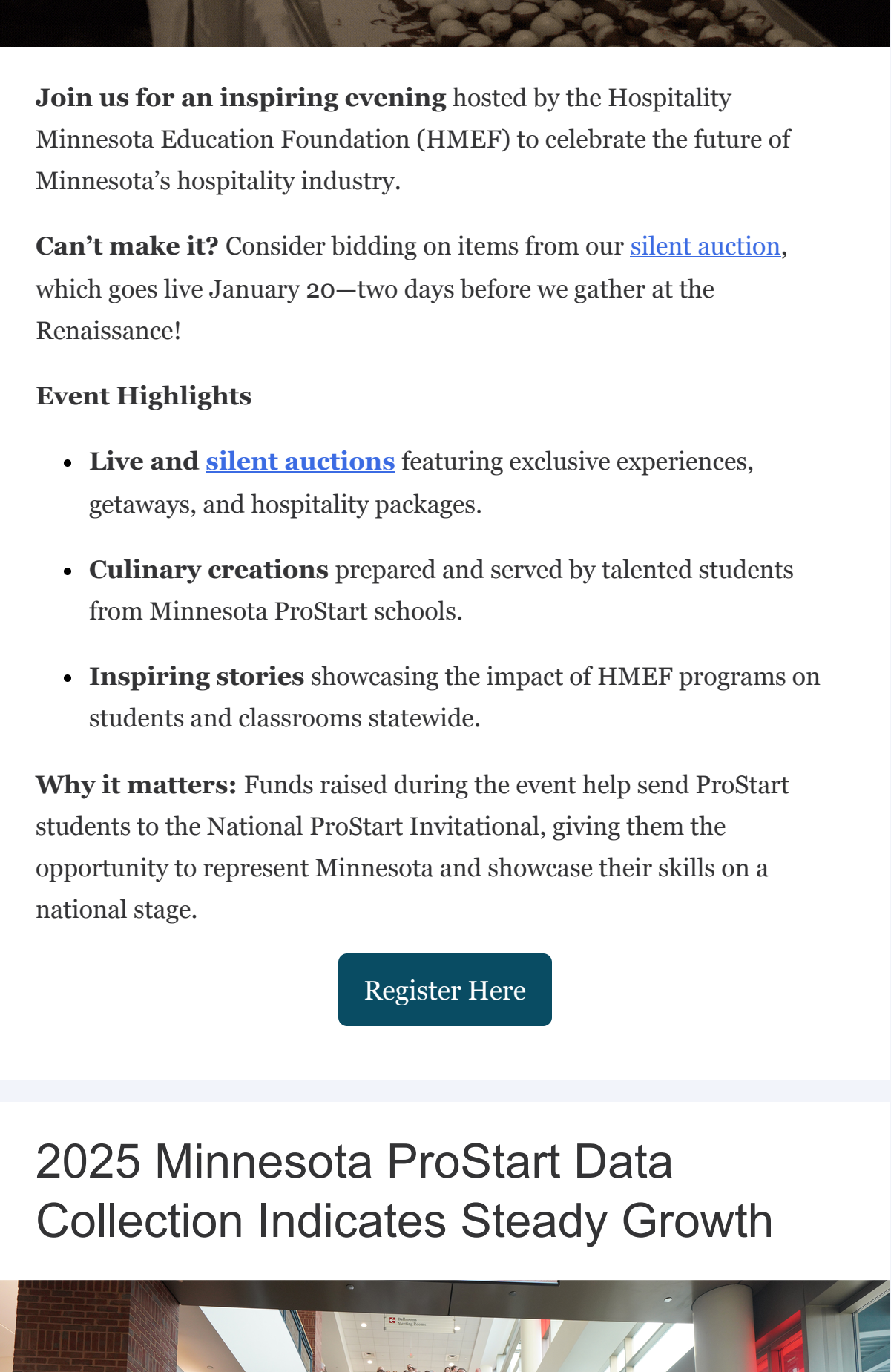
- Next Week: Stars of the Future at the Renaissance Depot
- A Growing Program: 2025 Minnesota ProStart Data Collection
- Reentry Hiring Fair — Employers Needed
- Mentors & Judges Needed for ProStart Invitational
- Part-Time Roles to Fill? We Have Candidates Ready Now
- Get ServSafe Certified At a Class Near You!

Interested in sponsoring this newsletter? [Reach out to us](#) to get started.

Support the Foundation and its work of investing in our industry's future by training the workforce of today and inspiring the leaders of tomorrow:

**DONATE TO HMEF**

## Next Thursday: Join Us at Stars of the Future



**Join us for an inspiring evening** hosted by the Hospitality Minnesota Education Foundation (HMEF) to celebrate the future of Minnesota's hospitality industry.

**Can't make it?** Consider bidding on items from our [silent auction](#), which goes live January 20—two days before we gather at the Renaissance!

### Event Highlights

- **Live and [silent auctions](#)** featuring exclusive experiences, getaways, and hospitality packages.
- **Culinary creations** prepared and served by talented students from Minnesota ProStart schools.
- **Inspiring stories** showcasing the impact of HMEF programs on students and classrooms statewide.

**Why it matters:** Funds raised during the event help send ProStart students to the National ProStart Invitational, giving them the opportunity to represent Minnesota and showcase their skills on a national stage.

**Register Here**

## 2025 Minnesota ProStart Data Collection Indicates Steady Growth



**New data available:** The 2025 ProStart data collection reveals an expanding footprint for the program across Minnesota, connecting a record number of students with career-ready hospitality and culinary education.

### Significant Program Growth

- **Total programs and students:** The program continues its strong upward trajectory, reaching 74 confirmed ProStart programs in 2025. This expansion serves an impressive total of 13,254 students across the state, up from 12,989 in 2024.
- **Average program size:** The average number of students per program is now 179, demonstrating the high demand for culinary and management education.

### Commitment to Industry Certification and Experience

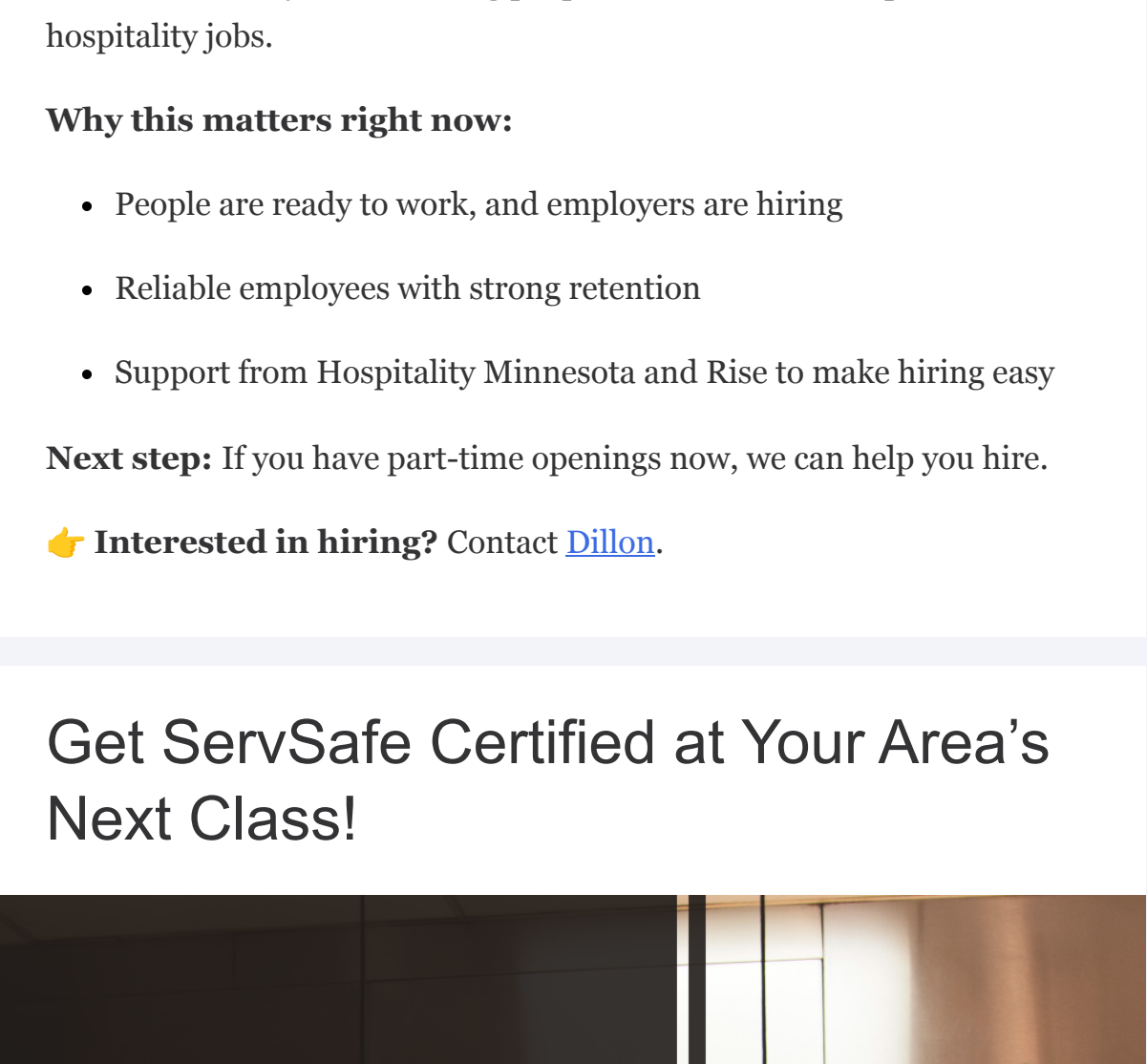
- **ServSafe® certification:** 29% of Minnesota's ProStart programs are providing students with the opportunity to earn the industry-recognized ServSafe® certification, ensuring they enter the workforce with essential food safety knowledge.
- **Competition participation:** The number of schools utilizing competitive events as a key learning tool increased from last year, with 35.2% of current programs confirming student participation in either culinary, management, or both competitions.
- **School breakdown:** The ProStart network is growing increasingly diverse. While 91.89% of Minnesota's programs are taught in traditional high schools, 8.11% of the state's programs are taught in career centers, technical centers, or other educational environments.

**Why it matters:** These figures underscore the vital role ProStart plays in cultivating the next generation of hospitality leaders and filling the talent pipeline for Minnesota's industry partners.

- **Thanking our instructors:** The Hospitality Minnesota Education Foundation thanks all ProStart Coordinators, educators, and sponsors for their dedication to these student-centered achievements.

**What's next:** Stay tuned for how Minnesota's ProStart Programs stand in comparison to the rest of the country in future updates!

## Calling All Employers - Join Us At Reentry Hiring Fair



The Minnesota Department of Corrections is hosting a **Second Annual Fair Chance Reentry Job Fair** — a proven way for employers to fill open positions.

### Why it works:

- Many candidates have prior experience in culinary and other hospitality-relevant roles
- Participants are ready to work and actively seeking jobs
- Employers consistently find this an effective way to hire

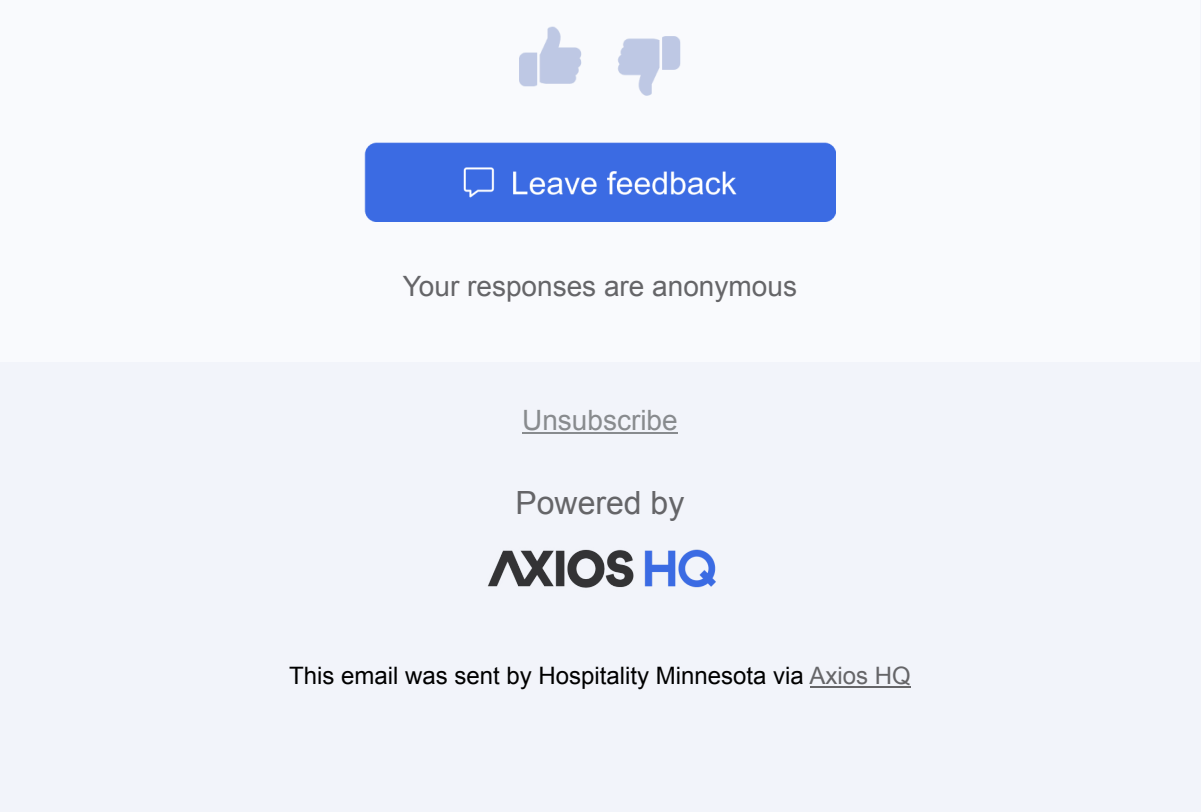
### Details:

**February 4, 2026** | 🕒 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

📍 **MINNCOR Industries**, Roseville

**Interested in tabling?** Contact [Dillon](#) to get connected.

## Mentors & Judges Needed for ProStart Invitational: Share Your Industry Experience



**Calling all hospitality professionals:** The 2026 Minnesota ProStart Invitational will be held on Thursday, March 12, 2026, at the St. Paul RiverCentre.

**About the event:** This event proudly showcases the culinary and entrepreneurial skills of high school students enrolled in a ProStart program. The Minnesota ProStart Invitational includes two competition divisions:

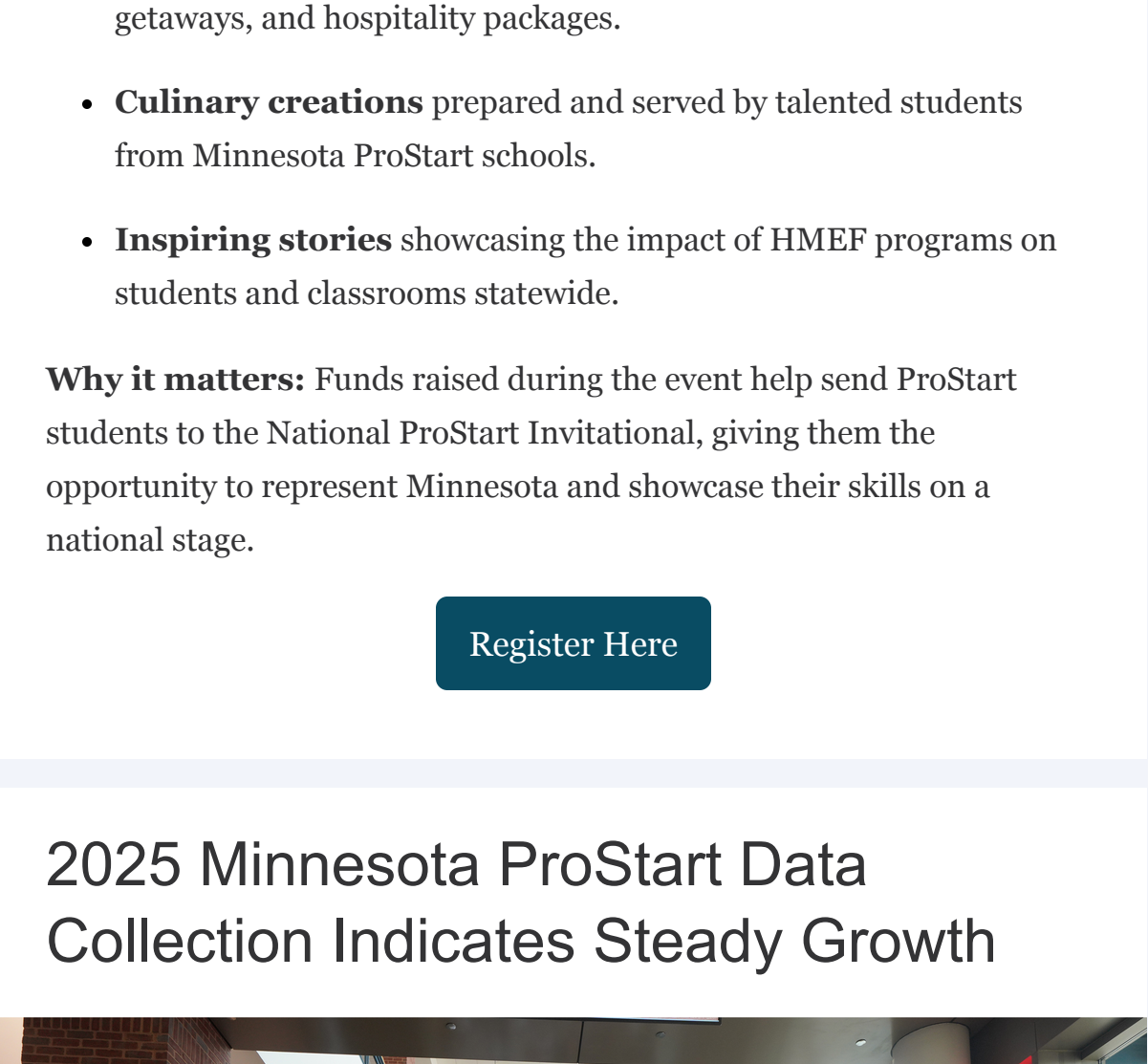
- **Culinary:** Teams of future foodservice professionals put their culinary knowledge and skills to the test. Teams have one hour to prepare a three-course meal and are judged on knife skills, teamwork, sanitation, presentation and taste.
- **Management:** Teams demonstrate their knowledge of the hospitality industry by developing a business proposal for a new restaurant concept. They are judged on concept, menu/costing, operations, marketing and critical thinking.

**What's at stake for the teams:** The winners of each division will represent Minnesota at the National ProStart Invitational in Baltimore, MD, on April 24-28, 2026.

**How you can help:** We would love to have you share your food service experience and expertise at this event by being a judge this year.

- **What to expect:** The time commitment is from about 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. on March 12, depending on your role.
- **All hospitality professionals welcome!** We are looking for a wide variety of skill sets to fill culinary chef judges, management judges and timing positions. [Let Victoria know](#) if you are interested and available to participate!

## Let Us Guide You to Your Next Employee



► **Watch (1 min):** A quick success story from Rise featuring a local McDonald's hire and is now thriving on the job. The video shows how this works in real life — for both employees and employers.

- **VIDEO:** [Alice is Stillwater's Secret Ingredient](#)

**The big picture:** Hospitality Minnesota, in partnership with Rise, runs Restaurant Ready — connecting people with disabilities to part-time hospitality jobs.

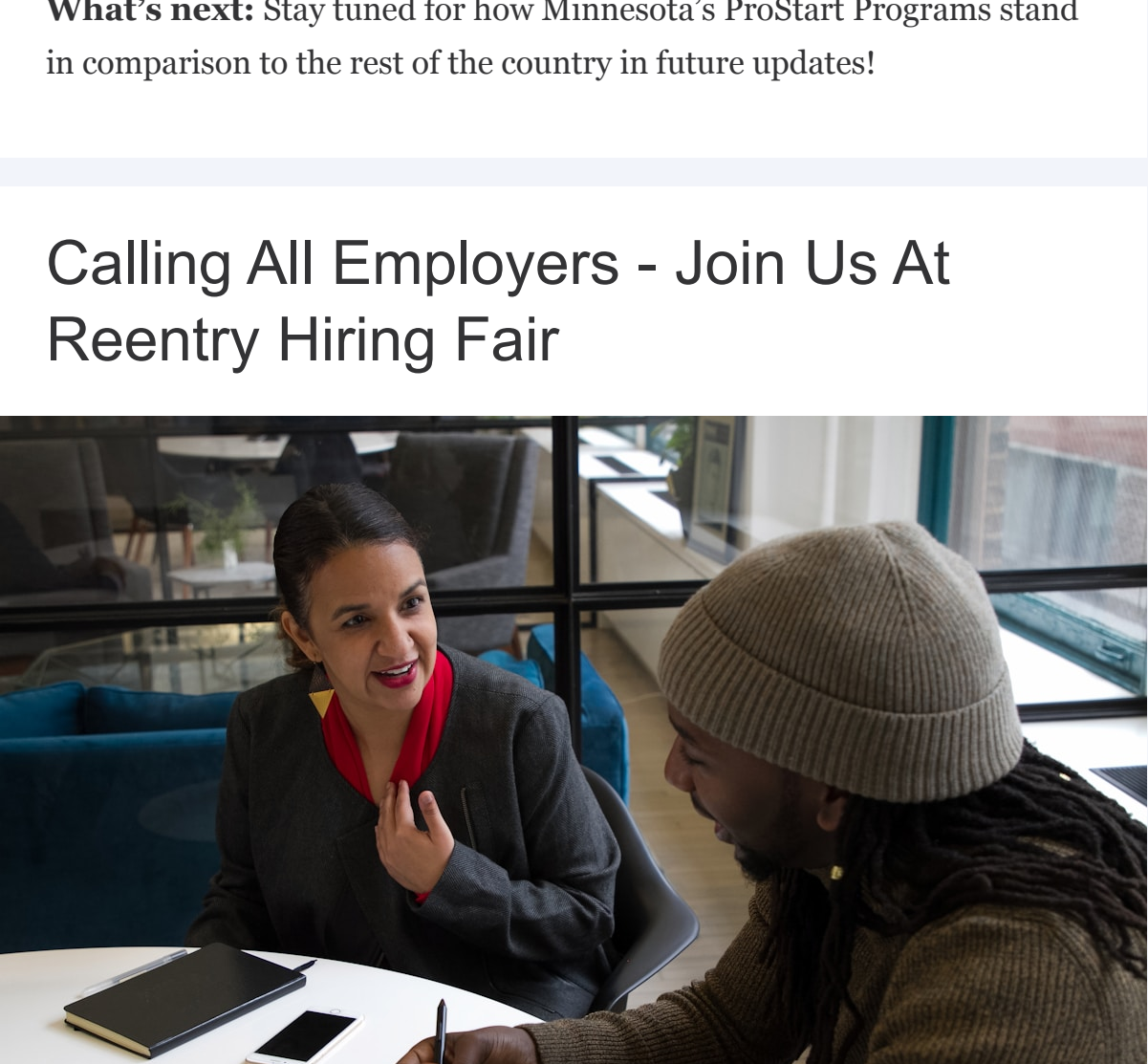
### Why this matters right now:

- People are ready to work, and employers are hiring
- Reliable employees with strong retention
- Support from Hospitality Minnesota and Rise to make hiring easy

**Next step:** If you have part-time openings now, we can help you hire.

👉 **Interested in hiring?** Contact [Dillon](#).

## Get ServSafe Certified at Your Area's Next Class!



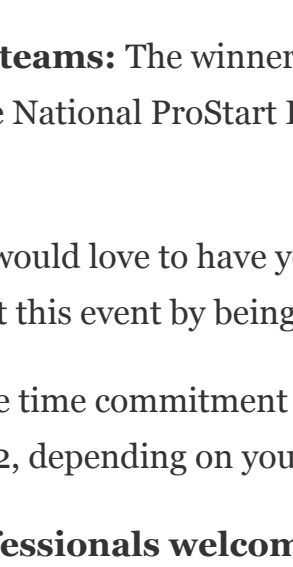
**SERVE WITH CERTAINTY:**  
**MINNESOTA SERVSAFE CERTIFICATION CLASSES**  
**NOW AVAILABLE**



**Did you know:** Minnesota law requires at least one certified food manager on staff at nearly every food establishment. We've partnered with Food Safety Guy to make certification simple—check our Event Calendar for upcoming ServSafe classes!

- [Roseville - January 20](#)
- [Saint Cloud - January 21](#)
- [Winona - January 22](#)
- [Mankato - January 27](#)
- [Minneapolis - January 27](#)

**Go deeper:** Click here to explore ServSafe products & courses: [Click HERE](#)



For more on our education and workforce initiatives, visit [our website](#).

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