

By Tony Burton • Jul 08, 2026

Smart Brevity® count: 3.5 mins...914 words

In this month's Workforce Insider:

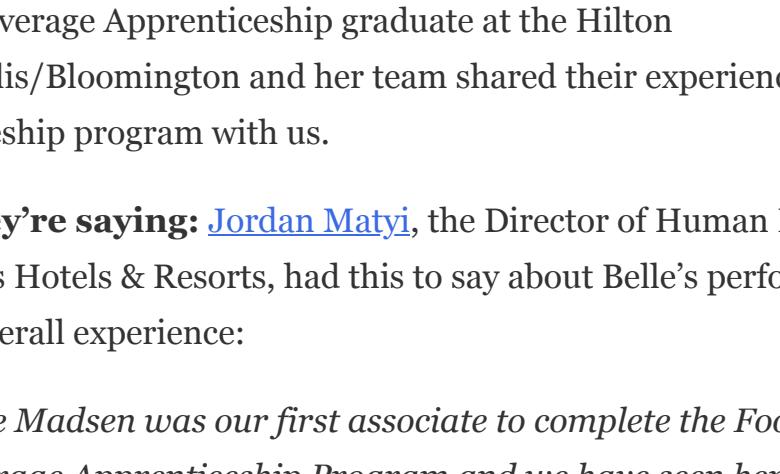
- **Congratulations are in order:** [Belle Madsen of Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington Becomes First Food & Beverage Apprentice Grad](#)
- **Minnesota Hiring Trends:** [Despite Loosened Labor Market, Employers Still Struggle to Acquire Workforce](#)
- **Workforce Feature:** [Restaurant Ready Graduate Thrives in Position with Pizza Ranch](#)
- **Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program:** [Next Phase of Enrollment Begins](#)
- **Mark Your Calendars for November 19:** [2026 Stars of the Future](#)
- **Ensure Food Safety:** [Get ServSafe Certified At a Class Near You!](#)

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Apprenticeship Spotlight - Belle Madsen of Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington



Belle Madsen, Food and Beverage Apprenticeship Graduate, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington

Celebrations are in order! Last month, Belle Madsen became the first Food & Beverage Apprenticeship graduate at the Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington and her team shared their experience with the apprenticeship program with us.

What they're saying: [Jordan Matyi](#), the Director of Human Resources for Marcus Hotels & Resorts, had this to say about Belle's performance and the overall experience:

"Belle Madsen was our first associate to complete the Food & Beverage Apprenticeship Program and we have seen her grow tremendously in the last year. Not only has she gained knowledge across different areas of F&B, but she has also gained confidence and leadership skills that will prepare her for the next step in her career."

"This program really gives us an opportunity to recognize our associates potential and actively create a development path for them that is structured and supportive."

"I look forward to expanding this program further and developing the next generation of hospitality leaders."

Interested in starting your own apprenticeship program? Learn more about [Hospitality Sector Registered Apprenticeships](#) here and reach out to [Dillon](#) to get started.

Read More About Belle!

MN DEED Publishes Findings on Workforce Allocation Struggles



The big picture: Despite a cooling broader labor market, Minnesota employers are still hitting a wall when trying to recruit and retain the talent they need.

By the numbers:

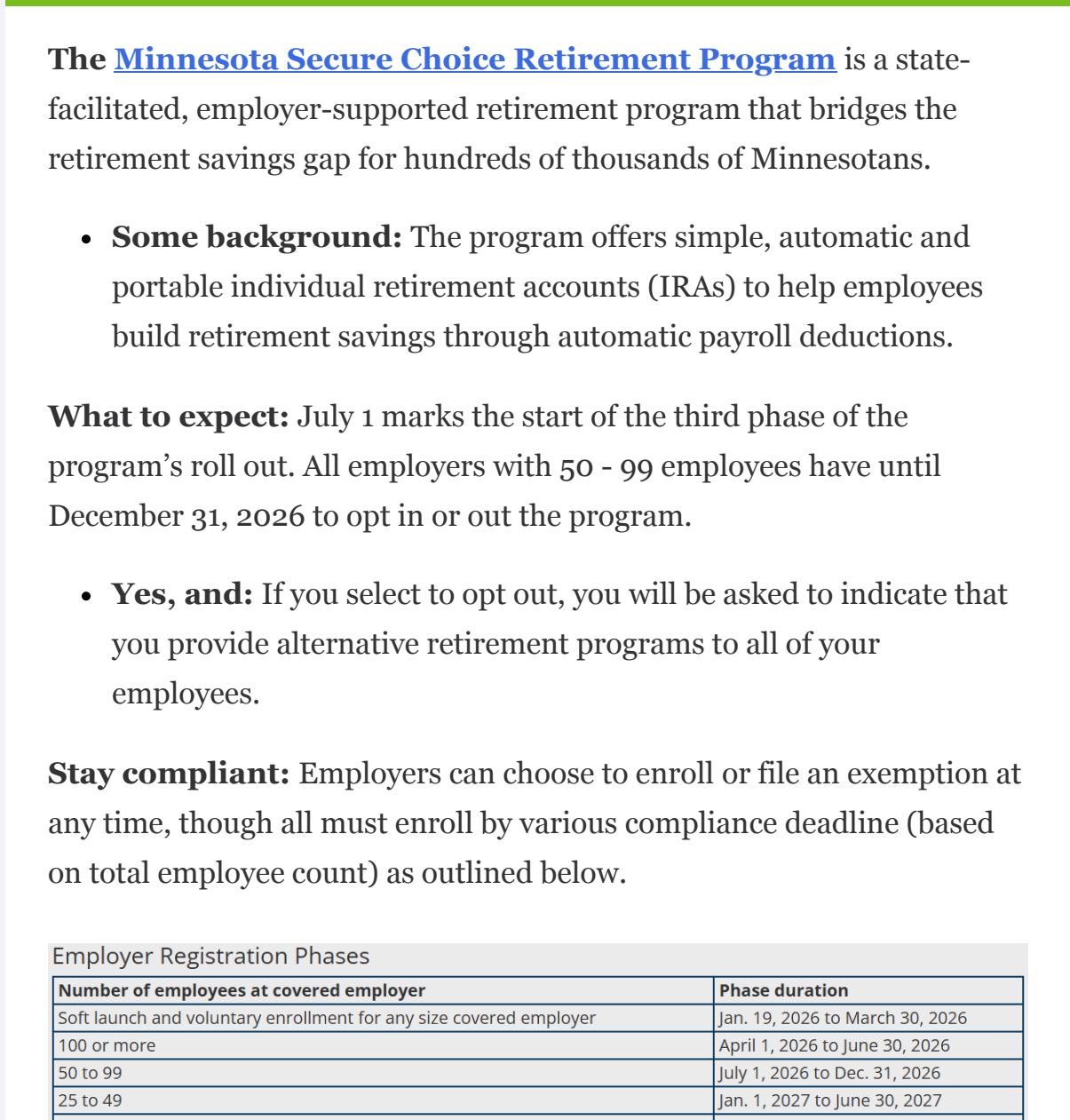
- **The puzzle:** A cooling economy traditionally makes hiring easier, but hyper-local and sector-specific talent mismatches are keeping job vacancy friction high.
- **The core issue:** Employers continue to experience a severe disconnect between the specific skills required for open roles and the current background of available job seekers.

Why it matters: For workforce leaders, macro employment numbers are hiding micro realities.

- **What they've found:** High job posting volume no longer guarantees a matching applicant flow. To win talent now, organizations must look past generalized data and pivot toward targeted upskilling and local market alignment rather than relying solely on broader labor market cooling to solve their hiring bottlenecks.

Read the Article

Workforce Feature: Pizza Ranch Finds Perfect Employee with Restaurant Ready



Pizza Ranch employee and Restaurant Ready Graduate Andrew found the perfect position thanks to a partnership between Hospitality Minnesota and Rise.

"Everywhere in the world, people need pizza and chicken."

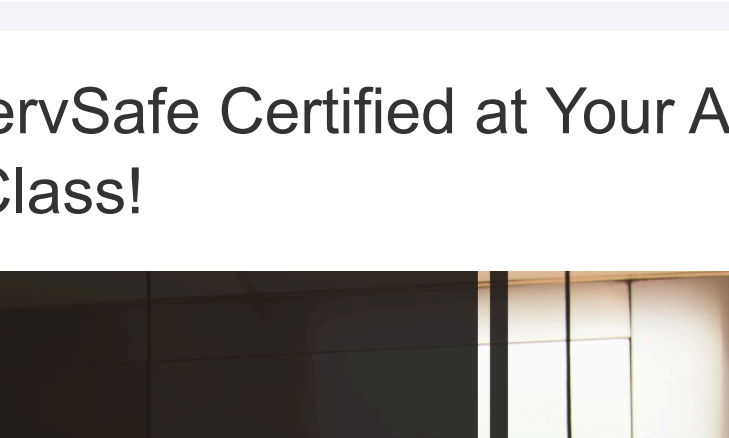
Why it matters: That's how Andrew describes his career at Pizza Ranch after completing Restaurant Ready through Hospitality Minnesota's partnership with RISE.

- **About the program:** [Restaurant Ready](#), a national program from the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, connects employers with motivated, job-ready talent while creating career pathways for job seekers.

Go deeper: [Read Andrew's story](#), [learn more about Restaurant Ready](#), and contact [Hospitality Minnesota](#) if you're interested in hiring Restaurant Ready graduates.

Read Andrew's Story

Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program: Next Employer Phase Begins



The [Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program](#) is a state-facilitated, employer-supported retirement program that bridges the retirement savings gap for hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans.

- **Some background:** The program offers simple, automatic and portable individual retirement accounts (IRAs) to help employees build retirement savings through automatic payroll deductions.

What to expect: July 1 marks the start of the third phase of the program's roll out. All employers with 50 - 99 employees have until December 31, 2026 to opt in or out of the program.

- **Yes, and:** If you select to opt out, you will be asked to indicate that you provide alternative retirement programs to all of your employees.

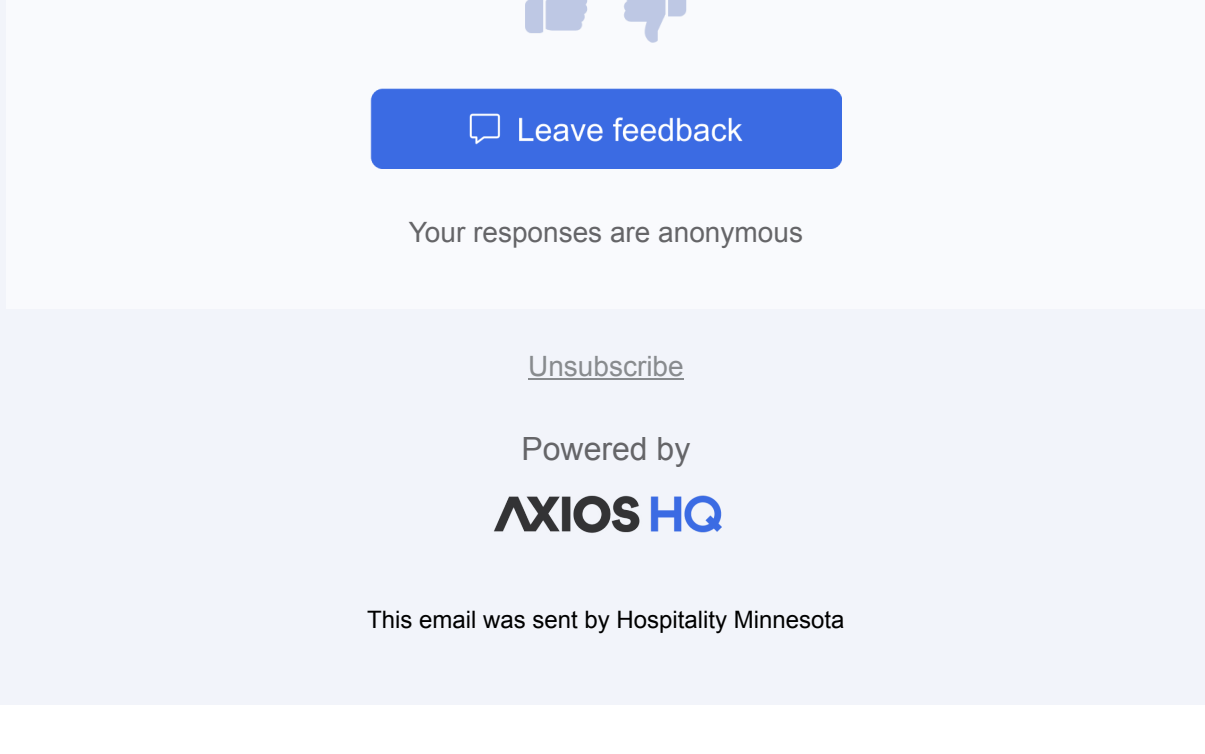
Stay compliant: Employers can choose to enroll or file an exemption at any time, though all must enroll by various compliance deadline (based on total employee count) as outlined below.

Employer Registration Phases	
Number of employees at covered employer	Phase duration
Soft launch and voluntary enrollment for any size covered employer	Jan. 19, 2026 to March 30, 2026
100 or more	April 1, 2026 to June 30, 2026
50 to 99	July 1, 2026 to Dec. 31, 2026
25 to 49	Jan. 1, 2027 to June 30, 2027
10 to 24	July 1, 2027 to Dec. 31, 2027
5 to 9	Jan. 1, 2028 to June 30, 2028

The Employer Registration Phases of the Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program

Learn More!

Join us for Stars of the Future on November 19, 2026



Stars of the Future Returns! After postponement earlier this year, we are excited to announce that Stars of the Future is returning November 19, 2026 at the Renaissance Depot.

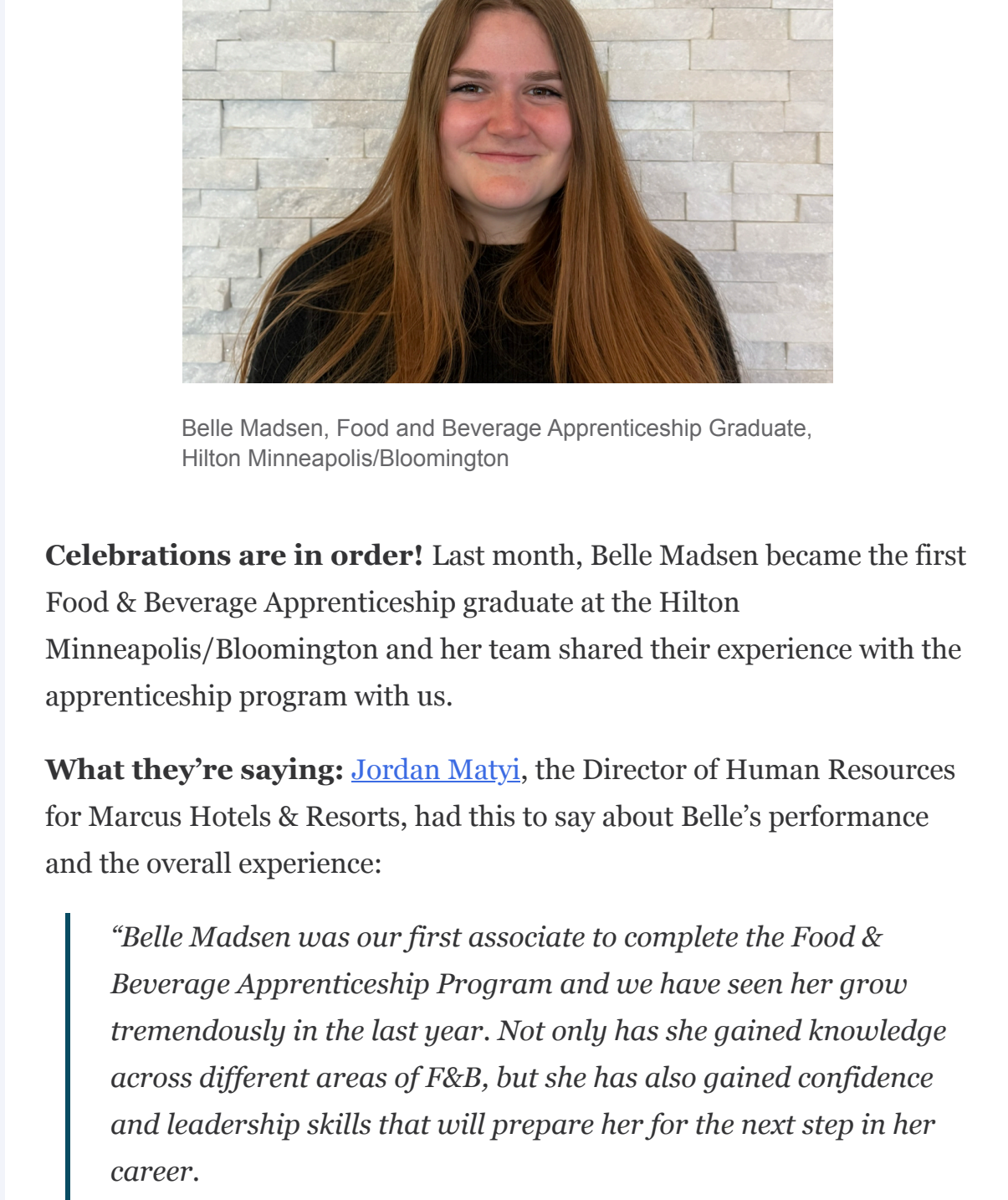
- **Important detail:** All tickets purchased for the originally scheduled event will be honored for the rescheduled date. Please reach out to [our team](#) if you cannot attend the new event date.

Haven't got a ticket yet? No worries! You can still register to join us for an inspiring evening celebrating the future of Minnesota's hospitality industry.

Why it matters: This event is more than a fundraiser to support Minnesota students pursuing their dreams in culinary, lodging, tourism, and hospitality management, it's a night to celebrate the spirit, drive, and potential of our industry's future workforce.

Register today!

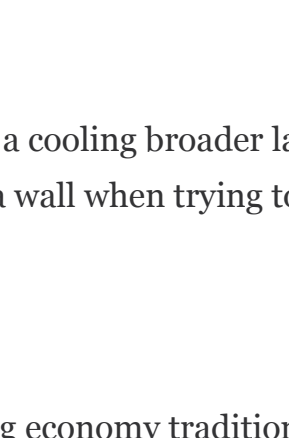
Get ServSafe Certified at Your Area's Next Class!



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!

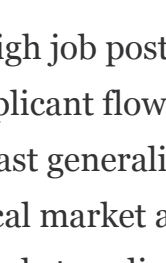
- [Winona - July 13](#)
- [Minneapolis - July 14](#)
- [Windom - July 15](#)
- [Marshall - July 17](#)
- [Mankato - July 20](#)
- [Plymouth - July 21](#)
- [St. Cloud - July 22](#)
- [Roseville - July 27](#)

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

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