

**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### **Wando culinary students win fourth place at Prostart Invitational**

#### **Wando High School**

**Anita W. Huggins, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Sherry Eppelsheimer, Ed.D.**  
Associate Superintendent of the  
High School Learning Community

**Chas Coker**  
Principal

**Mount Pleasant, SC** — Wando High School's South Carolina Management Team came home as National Prostart Champions. They won fourth place in the nation at the National Prostart Student Invitational (NPSI) in Baltimore, Maryland April 28, 2024.

Chef Molly Gordon and students Cooper Stapleton, Sarah Dzielinski, and Ramell Bagtas from Wando's Management Team represented South Carolina in the restaurant management competition against 47 other states. The students had to present their restaurant concept, floorplan, operations, menu, marketing, and answer on the spot critical thinking questions from judges. This is the first year Wando has appeared at NPSI under the leadership of Chef Gordon.

"It is so amazing to experience the joys of our team's victory," said Gordon. "We were the underdogs going into the state competition and we blew the competition out of the water and won first place. Going to nationals was a dream and we are so grateful to the South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association for sponsoring our trip. We practiced our alchemy for hundreds of hours, and all of that work was rewarded on the national stage when we heard our name called."

Students received positive feedback from judges and ultimately took home the fourth place trophy and medal. The students returned home with pride and thousands of dollars in scholarship money. Once returning home, the students along with their Culinary Arts Management II peers raised over \$2,000 through three dinner services.

NPSI is the country's premier secondary school competition focused on restaurant management and culinary arts. Annually, more than 400 student competitors put their skills to the test in front of industry leaders.

"Placing in the top five as a first time instructor with a rookie team is pretty unheard of, but the other teams couldn't fight Wando's winning streak," added Gordon. "I am blessed to lead such incredible young adults each day; this win is just another feather in our cap from this amazing year."

For more information, contact Principal Chas Coker at (843) 849-2830.

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**About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military; dual credit; and many more.