



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES EMPLOYEE RELIEF FUND TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO INDUSTRY WORKERS IN CRISIS THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS

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CHICAGO, IL (August 13, 2020) – As the restaurant industry continues to face the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, executives at the **Illinois Restaurant Association (IRA)** announced today the establishment of the **Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (IRAEF) Restaurant Employee Relief Fund**. A statewide emergency assistance fund that will provide direct financial support to restaurant industry workers, the IRAEF Employee Relief Fund is possible thanks to the generosity of founding donors at Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits, Telemundo, Associated Beer Distributors of Illinois (ABDI) and EMPLOYERS.

The IRAEF is the IRA’s long-standing, non-profit organization 501(c)(3) created to prepare Illinois’ hospitality workforce through career exploration, professional development, industry training and scholarships. Since its inception, it has provided more than \$3 million in scholarships to students in need. Creating a separate fund addressing the urgent needs of individuals working in the industry was a natural extension of the organization’s mission.

“This fund expands upon the IRAEF’s efforts to ensure the future of our restaurant community statewide,” said **Sam Toia**, President & CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. “While the development of aspiring industry professionals remains the IRAEF’S core mission, it is urgent that we do all we can to secure the stability of our current workforce to ensure opportunities for those to follow. With support, we stand to help workers in all corners of the state, from Rockford to Carbondale and Quincy to Danville.”

In addition to the generosity of its founding donors, funding for the IRAEF Restaurant Employee Relief Fund comes from personal donations, corporate partnerships and proceeds from Chicago Gourmet’s Hamburger Hop and “Go Gourmet” Dining and Virtual Event Series taking place September 1-30, 2020. **Anyone can contribute.**

“This fund is a ray of light during a dark time for our industry,” said **Dan Raskin**, owner of the iconic Manny’s Deli in Chicago’s South Loop and Board Chairman of the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. “Restaurants are the heartbeat of every town and city, and without our team members, the spirit of hospitality will disappear. We encourage anyone who loves their neighborhood restaurant to contribute any amount possible. Every bit helps.”

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The IRAEF Restaurant Employee Relief Fund will provide one-time financial support to restaurant employees in Illinois facing unforeseen hardship due to COVID-19. Grants will help cover basic living expenses such as rent, food and utilities as someone works through crisis. Restaurant Employee Relief grants will be evaluated in the following order of priority for restaurant workers who are:

- Diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19), or a caregiver for an immediate family member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or quarantined with a doctor's note
- Out of work for three weeks or more with no unemployment benefits

"This is an important and positive initiative for our industry," said **Lupe Ibarra**, general manager at Moe's Cantina in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood. "Many of my industry friends are still facing unemployment or caring for loved ones affected by the virus. They are struggling to make ends meet, and the longer the pandemic draws out, the more critical their circumstances become. This fund will provide some relief at a time when people need it the most."

The goal is to support as many in the restaurant community as possible. All qualified grant requests will be reviewed. Restaurant Employee Relief grants are awarded to eligible individuals based on available funds and limited to one per individual. Grants are not taxed.

Applications for the IRAEF Employee Relief Fund will open in October.

Donate here now. Donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

For more information, visit www.illinoisrestaurants.org.

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Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits is the world's pre-eminent distributor of beverage alcohol, and proud to be a multi-generational, family-owned company. The Company has operations in 44 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, Canada, and the Caribbean, and employs more than 20,000 team members. Southern Glazer's urges all retail customers and adult consumers to market, sell, serve, and enjoy its products responsibly. For more information visit www.southernglazers.com. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at [@sgwinespirits](#) and on [Facebook](#) at [Facebook.com/SouthernGlazers](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGlazers).

About American Beer Distributors of Illinois (ABDI)

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The Associated Beer Distributors of Illinois is the unified voice of Illinois beer distributors. For more information, visit <http://www.abdi.org/>.

About EMPLOYERS

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their state funds. Insurance is offered through Employers Insurance Company of Nevada, Employers Compensation Insurance Company, Employers Preferred Insurance Company, Employers Assurance Company and Cerity Insurance Company, all rated A- (Excellent) by the A.M. Best Company. Not all companies do business in all jurisdictions. See www.employers.com and www.cerity.com

About the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

The Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (IRAEF) is a 501 (c)(3) dedicated to building the Illinois hospitality workforce through career exploration, workforce development programs and scholarships. Since its inception, the IRAEF has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships to deserving students. ProStart[®] is a national school-to-careers program that prepares high school students for careers in foodservice and hospitality management. ProStart[®] in Illinois is administered by the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation to over 4,000 students at 62 schools in the Chicagoland area. Students have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials and articulated credits for college while in high school. The Foundation provides work readiness training and connects students with industry professionals through job shadowing and internships to help hone their skills in the foodservice industry. The ProStart[®] program is also offered in all 50 states encompassing more than 140,000 high school students in more than 1,800 high schools. For more information, visit www.nraef.org.

About the Illinois Restaurant Association

Founded in 1914, the Illinois Restaurant Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, educating and improving the restaurant industry in Illinois. The IRA owns and produces [Chicago Gourmet](#) – the annual food and wine festival uniting hundreds of restaurants, chefs and beverage experts for a weekend filled with food and drink tastings,



entertainment, cooking demonstrations, book signings, interactive seminars and more. The Association is also a proud co-host of the [James Beard Foundation Awards](#), which will be held in Chicago through 2027. For more information, visit www.illinoisrestaurants.org.

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