

**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE WAFC
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



WAFC REACHES 5,000 GRADUATES

In 2001, the WAFC built a certificate program in partnership with community colleges on the west coast to help people in our industry get the skills and education needed to become future leaders. The program is the Retail Management Certificate, and in July 2023, the program achieved a milestone of 5,000 graduates.

“Supporting future leaders through education is our mission. Congratulations to all the graduates! And thank you to our donors who support our mission,” said Paul Gianetto, WAFC 2023-2024 President and Chairman, and Senior Vice President of Sales & Merchandising at Raley’s.

The WAFC is a non-profit organization and the Food Industry’s hub for education. It supports workers in our industry with education opportunities, and one of its essential programs is an 8-course community college certificate program, the Retail Management Certificate. The intent is to support employees by building skills, fostering business acumen, and giving them the confidence to continue beyond the certificate to an associate degree. A recent survey by the WAFC found that over 50% of graduates moved on to get a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The Retail Management Certificate courses are taught at local and national community colleges, are self-paced to accommodate a full-time worker’s schedule, and do not require a high school diploma. Therefore, it’s flexible for those wanting to learn and develop personally and professionally. Over 80% of program graduates surveyed said the program is correlated with a job promotion and/or salary progression.

A contributing factor to the success of this program is leadership support. “The WAFC wants to recognize our board members and Cherie Phipps, the Senior Director of the Retail Management Program, for being the driving force behind the program,” said Pat Posey, Chief Operating Officer of the WAFC.

Cherie Phipps started the program and is proud of where it is today. “Amassing 5,000 Retail Management graduates across the U.S. is quite a milestone. The WAFC is grateful for the unwavering support of our food industry leaders and their dedicated HR teams, who use the RMC to grow future leaders in our industry. We also honor our community college partners who help us serve our students. Finally, we applaud the graduates for persevering through this robust 8-course program to achieve their education and career goals,” said Phipps.