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NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR CELIAC AWARENESS ANNOUNCES GLUTEN-FREE CREDENTIALING TO ADDRESS WIDESPREAD CONFUSION IN RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

New Credentialing Designed to Increase Food Safety Practices for those with Celiac Disease, Gluten Sensitivity and Gluten-Free Nutritional Preferences

Ambler, Pa. – April 25, 2012 – National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA), the non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and improving the lives of those of celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity, announces a gluten-free credentialing program that will enable restaurants to manage the growing interest around gluten-free menu items. There are inconsistent standards, a lack of understanding of the medical elements of a gluten-free diet and too often, a lack of transparency about kitchen practices within the restaurant sector that has put the health of patients with celiac disease and gluten sensitivity at risk.

“Gluten-free families, especially those who are newly diagnosed, struggle with maintaining the diet even at home,” says Dr. Ritu Verma, Pediatric Gastroenterologist at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of NFCA’s Medical and Scientific Advisory Board. “While eating out is such an integrated part of our social fabric, the lack of consistent standards creates a stressful experience that erodes confidence and leaves many families preferring to opt out. I even see families that choose to forgo vacations and traveling because they can’t be sure that safe food will be readily available.”

Having trained chefs and restaurants across the U.S. for five years with its Gluten-Free Resource Education and Awareness Training, GREAT Kitchens, NFCA releases today an expansion of this program. Its focus is on the restaurant sector, which is highly motivated by the gluten-free movement but doesn’t deploy consistent practices and cross-contamination controls. The updated and expanded online training program will go live on May 15, and will include five multimedia modules providing comprehensive education and real-world tools that will enable restaurants to accommodate a diverse population of people who are eating gluten-free and have individualized needs.

“Comprehensive tools are needed to train both the front and back of the house in a way that brings consistency to this ongoing challenge,” states Chef Carlyn Berghoff of Berghoff Restaurant & Catering Group in Chicago. “The more confident a restaurant and its staff are about their gluten-free offerings, the better it will be for the celiac diner and their loved ones.”

GREAT Kitchens addresses the lack of understanding about gluten-free food preparation and proper serving practices within the restaurant industry. NFCA, which operates the URLs [CeliacCentral.org](http://www.CeliacCentral.org), [CeliacLearning.com](http://www.CeliacLearning.com) and [GlutenFreeHotProducts.com](http://www.GlutenFreeHotProducts.com), created GREAT Kitchens with a focus on tools to educate the entire kitchen staff on safe gluten-free food handling. In conjunction with the new training program, NFCA has also created a consumer based tiered credentialing system to guide those with celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity to fully understand a restaurant's gluten-free practices. Restaurants that complete the training will be credentialed with NFCA's Great Kitchens Amber or Green designations.

"Our program stresses the essentials of gluten-free safety from field to fork for restaurants nationwide," states Alice Bast, President of the NFCA. "It's a complex issue that many with celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity face. I know I face it on a daily basis. Dining out is always a challenge and many of us prefer to dine at home rather than put our families at risk. There is an element of trust that one must have with the restaurants they patronize. We need to keep our families healthy. Our hope is that this educational program will lead to safer foodservice practices in restaurants nationwide so that customers may have full confidence in their favorite establishments."

Whether a customer suffers from celiac disease or has non-celiac gluten sensitivity, the GREAT Kitchens program addresses customer needs with this new credentialing system that focuses on a restaurant's ability to consistently provide a gluten-free meal. The credentialing system includes:

- Green Designation – This designation is for restaurants with robust gluten-free protocols that meet the needs of diners with celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity. They have comprehensive training of wait staff, managers and kitchen staff, have verified the gluten-free status of incoming ingredients and have instituted strict cross-contamination controls. Current restaurants that are Green credentialed are Bar Ferdinand in Philadelphia and Berghoff Restaurant & Catering Group in Chicago
- Amber Designation – This level requires ingredient verification and basic training of wait staff and managers. Kitchen practices may vary with this designation, level one of the tier system, meaning those with celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity should ask questions and exercise judgment when dining at an establishment with an Amber Designation. Currently, the Green Sage Café in Asheville North Carolina is credentialed at this level.

"We want to bring as much transparency as possible to kitchens across the country, so that those we support have the utmost trust in the dining choices they make," continues Bast. "Our goal will always be to make gluten-free food affordable, accessible, safe, tasty and understood."

For more information on the GREAT Kitchens program visit <http://www.CeliacCentral.org/GREATexpansion>

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About the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA)

Through empowerment, education and advocacy, the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) drives diagnoses of celiac disease and other gluten-related disorders and improves the quality of life for those on a lifelong gluten-free diet. NFCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a leading resource for information on celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity, offering free information and support materials for patients and families, as well as accredited training for food industry professionals and healthcare providers. Visit www.CeliacCentral.org for information.