On Your Mark, Get Set...

If chopping, dicing and shopping are in your future career path, get ready to go!

July kicked off The Open Door’s new On Your Mark 12-week job training and workforce readiness program for youths aged 16-21 by welcoming five students from Gloucester, Manchester and Rockport.

The 12-week hands-on learning program brings Life and Knife Skills that offers both culinary and retail tracks. Classes are held at our two Gloucester locations at Emerson Avenue, and Pond Road at Second Glance.

“We are so excited to build on our service learning opportunities for youth,” says Executive Director Julie LaFontaine, acknowledging that for the past 10 years, The Open Door has provided college internships, FirstJobs for students during the summer, plus job training opportunities through the North Shore Education Consortium, and Gloucester High School STEP program. “On Your Mark will help youth find successful employment opportunities while also helping to feed local people.”

Along with professional culinary and retail training, On Your Mark students learn fundamental skills to work in a kitchen or a retail store while supporting programs of The Open Door.

Three weeks into the new program and 18-year-old Tyrell Moulton has learned kitchen and food safety, beginning Life Skills, and areas associated with “back of house.” A 2017 Gloucester High School graduate, Tyrell wants to combine his four years in ROTC and culinary programs to become a chef in the military. “I like being in the kitchen, and learning new types of skills,” he says. Ever since his dad taught him to grill, he has been interested in cooking.

The five students are all busy when they are not in class. Tyrell works part-time as a security guard and coaches street hockey; Ben Shrimpton, 16, has a lawn care business with a friend; Carissa Luce, 18, hopes to publish a graphic novel; Kayleigh Dunn, 17, is a self-taught musician but interested in retail, and Robert Buckley, 16, volunteers. All enjoy the practical lessons from On Your Mark. “Hands-on is easier for me to learn,” says Carissa. “It’s good to give back while learning some culinary skills.”

Students spend two four-hour classes in a hands-on setting in the kitchen for the culinary track, or at Second Glance for retail, and then spend Fridays learning Life Skills that ensures students thrive in the workplace. Subjects include teamwork, professionalism, time-management along with job specific skills like resume building and “adulting” that includes financial management.

Throughout the three-month program, guest presenters include nutritionists, chefs, business leaders and job recruiters. Along with practical job training, students receive a weekly $75 stipend plus job application or further-education support after completing the program. Culinary track students also receive ServSafe training and exam.

If he wasn’t enrolled in On Your Mark, Tyrell admits he would probably still be filling out applications for fast food restaurants. “On Your Mark will get me closer to being a chef,” says Tyrell, “and hopefully I’ll get into a school.”
Period Partners

The Open Door is pleased to announce that for the next 12 months we are fiscal sponsor and distribution partner for a new local organization, Period Partners, that will provide menstrual hygiene products to those in need on Cape Ann. Access to these items is a basic survival need, but for many it goes unmet as they cannot be purchased using WIC or SNAP (Food Stamps). This can have a negative impact in a variety of ways—missing work or school, or having to resort to unhygienic practices. Homeless shelters and food pantries rarely have adequate supplies of tampons or pads because it is something we rarely talk about. Period Partners will provide a year’s supply of menstrual products to The Open Door for distribution to Cape Ann clients and partner organizations.

To kick off its fund-raising efforts, Period Partners will hold a product drive at Stop & Shop, 6 Thatcher Road, Gloucester, on Saturday, August 12, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Mobile Market Comes to Winthrop Elementary in Ipswich

Mobile Market, The Open Door’s 12-site free farmers market that connects low-income people to fresh healthy produce and protein choices where they live, learn, and play, is coming to Winthrop Elementary in Ipswich during the new school year.

“Working with The Open Door to provide a Mobile Market and a healthy snack program will broaden access to healthy food options, shifting student focus from their stomachs to the learning in front of them,” says principal Sheila McAdams.

The Open Door Mobile Market currently serves more than 2,640 people at public housing neighborhoods, schools, and senior centers. At Winthrop Elementary, one in four children is eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The new Mobile Market site and new Snack-Pack program builds on a three-year collaboration between The Open Door and Winthrop Elementary that provides free Summer Meals for kids at Agawam Village. Mobile Market will ensure families have access to healthy food all year round.