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## **Darden Supports More Than 850 Nonprofits Across the Country Through its Restaurant Community Grants Program**

*Program awards more than \$1.9 million in its second year to local organizations in the U.S. and Canada*

ORLANDO, FLA., April 3, 2013 – The [Darden Foundation](#), the charitable arm of [Darden Restaurants Inc.](#), today awarded more than \$1.9 million to more than 850 nonprofit organizations in the United States and Canada as part of its Restaurant Community Grants program. The program empowers each restaurant in the Darden family of brands to help award a \$1,000 grant to support local community programs that align with three [focus areas](#): access to postsecondary education, preservation of natural resources and hunger.

The grants program is designed to deepen local connections through continued investment in the communities where Darden employees live and work. With more than 2,000 restaurants in North America, employees at each restaurant are given the opportunity to identify specific needs unique to their region and select a nonprofit to support and address those local issues.

“Our employees are incredibly passionate about the communities where they live, and our restaurant teams are in a position to understand and help address the needs of their communities,” said Drew Madsen, Darden Restaurants’ president and chief operating officer. “We’re all proud to build on that passion through the grants program and bring real, local citizenship to life by enabling each restaurant to make a difference in their backyard.”

Darden’s Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52, The Capital Grille and Eddie V’s brands participated in the program. Many restaurants and brands worked together to award one nonprofit organization with a larger grant and make a greater impact in their community.

Following are examples of grant partnerships across the country including in Washington D.C., Atlanta, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Houston.

- **Capital Area Food Bank** – In Darden’s largest donation to a single nonprofit, 23 surrounding Red Lobster, Olive Garden and Seasons 52 restaurants are partnering to support Capital Area Food Bank in Washington D.C. with a \$23,000 grant. This Feeding America food bank helps feed 478,100 food-insecure people annually.
- **Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta** – Twenty-eight Red Lobster, Capital Grille, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse restaurants are partnering to grant \$28,000 to multiple branches of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta to provide vital postsecondary education programs that enhance student performance and encourage high school graduation, college attendance and career exploration.

- **Orange County CoastKeeper** – Six Olive Gardens in the greater Los Angeles area are working together to support Orange County CoastKeeper, a public, interactive, educational space, with a purpose to preserve our natural resources by promoting sustainable landscaping practices. The 2.5-acre garden is a unique setting where people can learn about the region's local ecology and principles of environmental stewardship.
- **Philabundance** – Twenty-one Capital Grille, Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze and LongHorn Steakhouse restaurants in Philadelphia are collaborating to award a \$21,000 grant to Philabundance, a Feeding America food bank, to support the Philabundance Community Kitchen program. This program is a 14-week culinary arts job training program for low-income individuals to gain the skills needed for sustainable employment in the food service industry.
- **Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston** – Seven Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse and Eddie V's restaurants collaborated to support Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston. For more than six decades, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston has provided educational programming designed to enable thousands of youth ages seven to 18 to achieve academic success, graduate from high school and develop college readiness.

“Darden’s Restaurant Community Grants program is a great example of the collective dedication to ensuring our young people achieve academic success,” said Kimberly Boyd, vice president of education for BGCA. “We are so grateful to the 495 Darden restaurants for providing grants to local Boys & Girls Clubs within their communities. These grants help ensure our Clubs have the proper resources to continue offering programs such as Diplomas to Degrees, a college-readiness program supported nationally by the Darden Foundation, that address the academic crisis and encourage young people to pursue their dreams. It is because of passionate partners like Darden that our young people are able to achieve great futures.”

Darden’s Restaurant Community Grants program reflects the company’s rich heritage of being of service to others, a concept that began more than 40 years ago with founder Bill Darden. The Darden Foundation embodies these core citizenship values by striving to improve the quality of life in the communities where Darden employees live and serve.

### **About Darden Restaurants**

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), the world’s largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 2,000 restaurants that generate over \$8.0 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, Fla., and employing more than 190,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2013, Darden was named to the FORTUNE “100 Best Companies to Work For” list for the third year in a row and is the only full-service restaurant company to ever appear on the list. Our restaurant brands – Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52, The Capital Grille, Eddie V’s and Yard House – reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit [www.darden.com](http://www.darden.com).

**The Darden Foundation**

The Darden Restaurants, Inc. Foundation is the charitable arm of Darden Restaurants, Inc. The Foundation's mission is to maintain a spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy as defining characteristics of Darden Restaurants. Since 1995, the Darden Foundation has awarded more than \$60 million in grants, with \$7.2 million given in fiscal year 2012. The Darden Foundation carries out its mission by focusing philanthropic efforts and resources on the following program areas: Access to Postsecondary Education, Preservation of Natural Resources and Good Neighbor Grants. For more information, please visit [www.dardenfoundation.com](http://www.dardenfoundation.com).

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