First Watch Launches New Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives, Including the Establishment of Inaugural R.I.S.E. Advisory Council

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New advisory council, scholarship and mentorship programs, training initiatives and more now in place as part of company-wide #BeABetterHuman initiative

BRADENTON, Fla. – September 2, 2020 – First Watch, the high-growth daytime restaurant concept serving made-to-order breakfast, brunch and lunch, today announced the details of its new #BeABetterHuman initiative, designed to build upon, support and grow diversity throughout all areas of the business.

“Since our founding 37 years ago, First Watch has always believed that our people are our greatest asset. We embrace the diversity of our employees, but also realize there is much more work to be done when it comes to the representation and advancement of minority groups,” said Chris Tomasso, President and CEO of First Watch. "We know that we can absolutely do better to speak up, take action and affect positive change, and we stand committed to doing so within the walls of our restaurants, home office and each community in which we operate.”

As the basis for this new initiative, First Watch has established “7 Steps Toward Change” to enhance the Company’s “You First” culture by focusing on mutual respect and acceptance of others and to increase the representation and advancement of minorities. In the first step, the Company appointed employees from various regions and levels across the country to serve on an inaugural **R.I.S.E (Race Inclusion & Support Exchange) Advisory Council**, which advises leadership on how First Watch can advance diversity and inclusion programs, both internally and externally. Members act as advocates and agents of change to help encourage and advance the Company’s community of Black employees. At the end of each Council member’s one year term, a $1,000 donation is placed in their name to a local charity of their choice that supports the Black community as gratitude for their service on the Council.

The members of First Watch’s inaugural R.I.S.E. Advisory Council include Director of Restaurant Technology, Bobby Baker (Bradenton, Fla.); Director of Operations, David Stillis (Atlanta, Ga.); and General Managers Jabbar Salaah (Cincinnati, Ohio), Nicole Smith (Houston, Texas), Gayle Hutton (Bowie, Md.), Sterling Rogers (Cleveland, Ohio), Tim Thompson (Fairfax, Va.) and John Worthington (Boca Raton, Fla.).

In addition to the R.I.S.E. Advisory Council, the #BeABetterHuman initiative will see the following six steps taken in an effort to support First Watch’s efforts to create greater diversity and inclusion across all areas of the Company:

1. **UNCF (United Negro College Fund) and HBCU (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) Scholarships –**First Watch is establishing first-generation scholarships in partnership with UNCF and HCBUs Howard University and Spellman College, to aid students who are the first in their family to attend college. Application details for the scholarships, which will total $10,000 and $25,000 respectively, will be forthcoming.
2. **Unconscious Bias Training –** First Watch has invested in unconscious bias training for all employees to help shed light on the issue and many forms it can take, help ensure a more respectful and inclusive workplace and educate employees on how to handle difficult situations that often arise as a result of bias. The Company rolled-out the training to every employee, in both the restaurants and Home Office in July.
3. **Leadership Training Web Series –** A first-of-its-kind voluntary program for First Watch home office employees, restaurant managers and operations leaders, this six-week live series began in late July and aims to create an interactive and safe environment through which leadership can have important and meaningful conversations about traditionally uncomfortable issues. To encourage participation, all employees who complete the entire series will be recognized for their commitment by having a $250 donation made in their name to the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) – a non-profit organization that works to end mass incarceration, excessive punishment and racial inequity. The EJI protects basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.
4. **R.I.S.E. Mentorship Program –** First Watch leaders will partner with employees from different cultural backgrounds to create powerful bonds while enhancing learning and development of participants, paving the way for the advancement of employees within the Black community.
5. **R.I.S.E. Emerging Leaders Scholarship –** Through a new partnership with the University of Central Florida’s Rosen School of Hospitality Management, First Watch will award a full, four-year scholarship to a qualified and deserving First Watch employee within the Black community. The first recipient will begin classes in the fall of 2021. Nomination details for the R.I.S.E. Emerging Leaders Scholarship are forthcoming. The Company will also continue to invest in a free online high school diploma that is offered to all employees to harness the power of education.
6. **Diverse Applicant Outreach –** As part of its new partnerships with HBCUs, First Watch’s regional talent directors are working closely with school administrators to identify candidates for employment to help increase diversity at all levels. In

addition, First Watch understands that people of color receive more interview opportunities and are employed at a higher rate when “ban-the-box” policies are implemented, and it will continue to ban the previous criminal history box on employment applications in all states, rather than just in the three states that require it.

For more information on First Watch or the #BeABetterHuman initiative, please visit FirstWatch.com.

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About First Watch
First Watch is a high-growth daytime restaurant concept serving made-to-order breakfast, brunch and lunch using fresh ingredients. A recipient of more than 300 local “Best Breakfast” and “Best Brunch” accolades, First Watch offers traditional favorites, such as pancakes, omelets, sandwiches and salads, alongside specialty items like Quinoa Power Bowls, Avocado Toast and the Chickichanga. First Watch was recognized as Nation’s Restaurant News’ top Consumer Pick in the breakfast category as well as the coffee category for its Project Sunrise coffee program in 2019. It was also named one of TripAdvisor’s Best Restaurant Chains for 2019 and one of Business Intelligence Group’s Best Places to Work in 2018. There are more than 395 First Watch restaurants in 29 states, and the restaurant concept is majority owned by Advent International, one of the world’s largest private-equity firms. For more information, visit firstwatch.com.

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