

# YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT LUNCHEON OF CHAMPIONS

## **Chefs Donald Link and Stephen Stryjewski**

In New Orleans, we know Donald Link and Stephen Stryjewski for their James Beard Awards and the world-class tables they set at restaurants including Herbsaint, Cochon, Cochon Butcher, Pêche Seafood Grill, La Boulangerie, Gianna, Á La Mer, and Calcasieu private events. But today, we are honoring them for the table they have built for the youth of our city.

In 2015, Donald and Stephen founded the Link Stryjewski Foundation with a clear, urgent mission to break the cycles of poverty and violence by nourishing, educating, and empowering our young people.

At YEP, we don't just see them as donors, we see them as family. Their partnership has been transformative from the early days of their 2016 Bal Masque to a level of investment that has fundamentally reshaped how we partner with community supporters to create opportunities for our youth.

But their support goes far beyond the checkbook. They've provided countless hours of in-kind support, from annually sponsoring YEP Fest to providing the incredible food that helped us celebrate YEP's 20th anniversary. They've even opened their doors in Calcasieu to host our YEP Educates Graduation Luncheon, showing hundreds of our students firsthand that our city's culinary leaders believe in their potential. The Link Restaurant group has also served as a training ground for young people in our YEP Works programming, providing invaluable access to on-the-job training in a supportive and caring environment. In fact, this commitment is personal, you'll often find Chef Stephen in our Central City neighborhood as a loyal and longtime customer of the YEP Bike Shop.

Chefs Donald and Stephen represent the very best of our region, a commitment to excellence, and a deeply seated belief that every child deserves a path to success. They continue to show our youth that excellence and community are the two most important ingredients for a well-lived life.

Please join us in honoring two leaders who consistently demonstrate that in New Orleans, success is always best when shared at the table, our 2026 Champions, Chefs Donald Link and Stephen Stryjewski.