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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**“Hospitality 101” After School Program Launches Thanks to Strong  
Community Partnership**

*Dinner to be served every Friday in Stonington by donation*

**[Stonington, Maine]** – Healthy Island Project (HIP), Island Central Kitchen, and the Mariners Soar! After School Program have partnered to provide hands-on culinary education to Deer Isle – Stonington High School students. The new program, titled “Hospitality 101,” will take place every Friday inside Island Central Kitchen, located at 36 Main Street in Stonington (the former Harbor Café).

According to HIP Executive Director René Colson, “HIP is excited to partner with Island Central Kitchen – using a beloved kitchen and café space in the heart of Stonington – to engage students and continue to serve the community in new, creative ways.” HIP has been working with students to provide culinary education and tackle food insecurity since 2019 when they acquired local nonprofit Edible Island. The late Ingrid Bengis established Edible Island to provide education and training in the culinary and hospitality arts as a way to expand job opportunities for island youth.

After school every Friday, students will receive an education in hospitality from the team of experienced professionals at Island Central Kitchen, which includes Manager Traci Billings, Chef Kate Conklin, and Founder Max Katzenberg. They’re joined by Healthy Island Project’s Chef Educator Cheryl Wixson, Mariners Soar! Island Fellow Katie Lieberman, and local mentor Teri Rippetto. “I’ve had the pleasure of working with island students for several years,” says program veteran, Cheryl Wixson. “They are creative, resourceful, fearless, hard-working, and eager to learn. This partnership is a win-win economic development opportunity for students and the entire island community.”

“Stonington’s economy in part depends on culinary and hospitality services,” says Max Katzenberg. “We’ve seen first-hand how many young people have been interested in learning the ins and outs of running a restaurant. We are thrilled to offer the educational space and support to benefit local students for years to come.” One of the young people who has worked under Katzenberg is Maggie Bubar. “To have a previous Edible Island student, Maggie, be a part of the team working with this new crop of students is extra meaningful.”

Following each week’s “Hospitality 101” coursework, the students will open the doors of Island Central Kitchen to the public from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. All community members are invited to a “School Night” dinner service, with a rotating menu designed and executed by the students. The menu will focus on local fruits and vegetables and what is in-season on the Island. Dinners are available by a pay-what-you-can donation model, with all proceeds benefiting the “Hospitality 101” program and HIP.

Dinner is served every Friday, beginning Friday, October 27. The community is encouraged to come to 36 Main Street in Stonington on the 27th to learn more about this partnership, support the students, and enjoy a meal.

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**Healthy Island Project** is a community-based organization that provides information, makes connections between people and organizations, and coordinates selected projects to promote healthy living. HIP brings together a cross-section of Deer Isle – Stonington residents to address the broad health of our community. Their edible island programs strengthen local food systems, and people are inspired to create, experience, and enjoy good food in their homes, schools, and restaurants.

**Island Central Kitchen** is a winter initiative with the team behind the former Harbor Café (located at 36 Main Street in Stonington). In addition to providing staff and space for the hospitality education and community dinner program, they’ll be serving a rotating menu for dinner every Saturday.

**The Mariners Soar! After School Program** provides safe, appropriate, sustainable opportunities for students to participate in fun, active, and purposeful learning outside of the regular school day through project- and place-based activities across three sites- Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School, Brooklin Elementary School, and Sedgwick Elementary School.