

Miss Jay's Cafeteria Wins SIUE East St. Louis Café Of Champions Challenge

by Megan Wieser
June 8 2021 9:05 AM



CAHOKIA, IL - Miss Jay's Cafeteria, of Cahokia, has been awarded first place in Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's inaugural East St. Louis food industry business plan competition, the Café of Champions Challenge.

Miss Jay's Cafeteria representatives Cynthia Richardson, Jere Richardson and Shay Jones edged out the other finalists during the final round of competition which included a taste testing pitch. The first-place prize includes \$2,000 and 12-months of rent and utility free space on the East St. Louis Higher Education Campus.

“We are thrilled to have named Miss Jay’s Cafeteria the winner of this exciting, inaugural competition,” said Jo Ann Di Maggio May, director of the [Illinois SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE](#). “The Challenge was met with vigorous enthusiasm from participants, community leaders and our small business development partners.”

“Miss Jay’s Cafeteria stood out to the judges and the SBDC because of their professionalism and dedication,” she added. “The ladies are highly-prepared and have extensive experience in the food industry. Their passion was evident in their presentation and plating, and we are excited to assist and support them as they begin this next phase of their business journey.



The second-place finisher was Susie Q’s Catering, earning a \$1,500 prize. Third place and \$1,000 went to The Crab Trap. Prize money was made possible by the [National Development Council](#), [First Bank](#) and [East St. Louis Center Foundation](#).

Numerous entrepreneurs expressed interest in the local competition, with nine individuals competing. SIUE Learning Resource Center Program Coordinator Ali Vlahos served as the Challenge coordinator.

“We encourage all contestants who considered or entered this competition to access the SBDC’s wide menu of resources and expertise,” concluded Di Maggio May.

The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East assists start-up ventures, as well as existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is funded in part through a

cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and [SIUE](#) as a service to Illinois small businesses.

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs and encouraging new investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large. To learn about the SBDC, contact the [Illinois SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE](#) at (618) 650-2929.