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The \$2 million in special financing KaTom Restaurant Supply received from USDA Rural Development will fund far more than a training center at the company's Kodak headquarters. It will also help build menus for chains across the country, train the next generation of leadership in America's second largest industry, and provide an engine for foodservice development for East Tennessee.

The KaTom Intelligence Center will fill a portion of the company's expansive Kodak headquarters. It will provide hands-on training for everyone from the mom and pop opening their first bakery to the chain operator with hundreds of locations.

Most importantly for KaTom Founder, President, and CEO Patricia Bible, the center will serve as a hub of knowledge and education for the students who will be the next generation of the hospitality industry. The facility is within an hour's drive of four higher-education institutions – Walters State Community College, Pellissippi State Community College, Carson-Newman University, and the University of Tennessee – with world-class culinary programs. It's also just a short drive from a half-dozen or so East Tennessee high schools that offer foodservice education tracks.

"We are so looking forward to being able to open our doors to these students, to provide them a unique opportunity for hands-on training and education in our KaTom Intelligence Center," Bible says. "It means so much for everyone here at KaTom, and especially for me personally, to be able to be part of equipping these students for bright futures in this growing industry."

Details of the KaTom Intelligence Center

- Two large classrooms with seating for 60 and 85
- A full-scale commercial kitchen, including cooking equipment, refrigeration, and a warewashing line
- Presentation outdoor cooking space including a grill, wood-fired oven, and seating for a few dozen
- Operational replicas of foodservice concepts, including a bar, coffee shop, and ice cream parlor
- Meeting and executive conference rooms
- Will have a staff of about 15, including an executive chef, cooks, support personnel, and trainers

Opportunities at the KaTom Intelligence Center

- Corporate events for training, menu development, and consistency management
- Hands-on educational opportunities for students and foodservice operators from across East Tennessee
- First-timers in foodservice can use the operational mock-ups as a model for the equipment and supplies
- Incubation for economic development in foodservice for East Tennessee for generations to come
- Hosting of world-class experts in hospitality for training events