

News Release



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NAU School of Hotel & Restaurant Management and the Coconino County Health Department Introduce Convenient On-line Certificate Program for Food Handlers

The Coconino County Health Department and the Arizona Hospitality Research and Resource Center (AHRRC), part of the School of Hotel & Restaurant Management, at Northern Arizona University, have teamed up to make getting a food handler's certificate a more convenient process for food service workers in the Nation's 2nd largest county.

Thousands of Coconino County residents are required to get food handler's certificates each year. Until now, the process required applicants to travel to the Coconino County Health Department Environmental Services building, pay a fee and pick up a study guide, then make yet another trip to take the test or attend a class.

The new web-based training program created by the AHRRC at the request of the Health Department puts the county's nationally-certified content into the AHRRC's innovative training software, thus allowing food workers to get certified in food safety in a convenient and user-friendly way. Even those who have little computer experience will find this an easy-to-use system. The system, which incorporates features of the AHRRC's award-winning customer-service-training and certification program, has already been developed and tested by AHRRC in profit and non-profit sectors, and has proven to be a user-friendly Internet learning experience.

"We wanted to create a more convenient way for people to train and test for a food handler's certificate. The AHRRC program was the perfect solution to provide an easy to use, convenient, and secure course." Barbara Worgess, Coconino County Health Department Director, said.

Now, anyone interested in training and testing for a food handler's certificate can log onto the Coconino County Health Department website at www.coconino.az.gov/health/asp and follow the link to the NAU website, or they can go directly to the AHRRC site at: <http://www.az-hospitality.org>.

Users will find easy-to-follow instructions. Once the \$18 county fee is paid, (either by credit card directly on the secure site or through direct payment to the Health Department), the applicant will receive a registration code, and can then enter the site and proceed at their own pace

through the course. Once registered, users can enter the site at their convenience and follow the tutorial. The program allows students to store their last entry point and to navigate the site to review material as needed. At the end, they will take the exam and be issued an official Food Handler's Certificate. Perhaps the most innovative feature is a button that allows the person to take the course in either the English or Spanish language – instantly, at the touch of a button.

The Food Handler's certificate program helps food workers understand the science behind the rules regarding hand-washing. The learning development team at the School of Hotel & Restaurant Management designed the training program for adult learners, who, research shows, learn better when reasons and dangers are explained vs. simply being given "Do" and "Don't" statements.



The Food Handler course and certificate are required for anyone who handles food for the public. This includes not only restaurant workers, but also food workers at retail outlets and non-profits, such as schools, churches, and civic groups. The certificate is valid for three years.

Cheryl Cothran, director of the AHRRC, is delighted with the partnership with Coconino County. "One of HRM's greatest goals is to find ways to transfer our practical expertise from the university setting to the public sector. We are proud of the innovative systems we have created to deliver this and other important training through the power of the Internet."

"Another important talent is making the connection," she continued. "Credit also goes to one of our professors, Dr. Wallace Rande, who suggested the potential for this collaboration."

The new system will debut in May 2006. Interested persons can call the Coconino County Health Department at 928-226-2741 for more information.

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