

make money. This is a community. We live here and shop here, and our children go to school here. The wages you pay us circulate through the whole community and make this a better place." United, we can make sure they see us as a community, not just a way for them to get rich.

Bringing the Union to the "W" Hotel

Before I started working in hotels, I was a welder. I helped build the "W" Hotel. But the economy crashed and there were no welding jobs. I trained to become a prep cook and got a job working for \$15 per hour at the "W" Hotel. As a welder, I had been making \$36 per hour.

When I started working at the "W," it was not a union hotel. Working conditions were not good.

They didn't pay overtime. They fired people for no reason. The cocktail waitresses had to wear very short skirts and high heels. They worked 10-hour shifts. They had to put up with a lot of disrespect and harassment.

The housekeepers had to clean 18-20 rooms per day. It is very strenuous work.

We had no set schedule, so we could never make plans because

we never knew when we were working from one week to the next. I was paying \$116 per week for

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Training, Better Pay, and Benefits at Local 26

The most important thing about my job is the feeling that I belong to an organization that cares about my family and me, and puts me at the top of their agenda. Before getting a union job, I had worked as a supervisor in a hotel, and the benefits were almost nonexistent. The medical insurance was expensive, and I had a co-payment every time I visited the doctor.

At that time, my wife who was a union member (Local 26) told me about the opportunity to attend the Basic Culinary Skills class at the BEST Corp. Hotel Training Center. The class was taught by a skilled instructor, and BEST Corp. provided us with a professional mentor who assisted us in making our resumes and applying for jobs.

After this class, I decided to transfer to a union position and I immediately started to benefit from the opportunities the union offers its members. Being a union member opened many doors for me.

Most importantly, Local 26 provided us with excellent medical insurance. With

help from the union's homebuyers assistance program, and legal advice provided through the union benefits, my wife and I were able to buy a home in the fall of 2012.

The Hotel Training Center offers many free classes to union members and their families, such as technology classes, On-Call Banquet Server classes, Food Safety training, Room Attendant training, and the GED. The computer lab gives us the opportunity to study and do research. Being a union member gives us the security that we are backed by qualified professionals who will help us fulfill our dreams and push us to be the best that we can be.



Khalid Jaouahir is the Food and Beverage Supervisor at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Boston, and he is a member of Local 26.