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CAKEABLE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR MERGER

I. OUR UNIFIED VISION

What is happening?

Cakeable Charlotte and ZABS Place have officially decided to formalize years of working together by merging into a single organization. We are joining forces to create a unified home for inclusive job training in the Charlotte region.

Why are you merging?

Early last year, Cakeable reached out to ZABS Place to explore the possibility of creating a unified vocational ecosystem for the IDD community in our region. We both believe in seeing potential where others see disability, so coming together just made sense. By joining forces, we're moving away from working in separate corners and toward a shared future where we can do more good. This change helps us stay sustainable for the long haul and ensures that every dollar possible goes straight into our training programs and the people we serve.

Is this a "takeover" or a "buyout"?

No, this is a strategic merger. While we are unifying our administrative functions to be more efficient, Cakeable Cafe and ZABS Place Thrift Boutique remain distinct and essential training environments. We are coming together to share expertise, not to erase what makes each program special.

Will the Cakeable or ZABS Place names change?

No, both brands are here to stay. You will still see the names you love at the Cafe and in the Thrift Boutique. Our training teams are not going anywhere, and the only difference is that they now have a wider range of resources and opportunities to draw from.

What will the new organization look like?

We are adopting an "Endorsed Brand" model, which allows us to grow while staying true to our roots. Both the Cakeable and ZABS Place brands will remain the public face of our programs. A single executive team will lead our operations and fundraising to reduce overhead. Eventually, we will operate under one tax ID (the ZABS Place EIN) to simplify back-office work, ensuring more of every dollar goes directly to our programs.

What this merger IS NOT:

This is not a program closure. We are not reducing our services or the number of participants we serve; in fact we are growing our reach to help even more families. It is also not a move. Cakeable is staying in Uptown Charlotte and ZABS Place is staying in Matthews. Finally, this is not an exit strategy or a "business as usual" transition. This is a proactive evolution to create a permanent home for our mission in the Charlotte region.

II. OUR SHARED VALUES

Are ZABS Place and Cakeable faith-based organizations, and will that change?

Both Cakeable and ZABS Place were founded by individuals whose faith inspired them to serve capable members of our community who were often overlooked. While we represent different traditions, we share a deep belief that every human being possesses inherent dignity and is created with a unique purpose to contribute to our community. This shared foundation is what brought us together, and it will continue to guide us as

we move forward. We serve from the heart of our respective faiths while remaining fully committed to welcoming everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs.

Does this faith-inspired foundation mean you only work with or hire people from specific backgrounds?

Absolutely not. While we are motivated by our faith to do this work, we are steadfast in our commitment to being an inclusive organization that reflects our unique Charlotte community. We do not discriminate on the basis of faith, race, gender, or disability. Our shared belief in the dignity of every person means that everyone is seen, valued, and welcome in our programs and on our team.

III. OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR PARTICIPANTS

How will this merger affect your participants?

Consistency and relational stability are vital for our Interns (Cakeable) and Special Talent (ZABS). Their daily routines, work hours, and tasks will remain exactly as they are today. They will continue to work with the same Job Coaches (Jacqueline, Agust, Amanda, Meg) and training team members (Rochel, Janee, Missy, Tonya) they trust.

What does "One Training Team, Two Programs" mean for your participants?

Unifying our training team creates a seamless journey for our participants as applicants can choose their training environment. If an Intern at the Cafe discovers a passion for retail or e-commerce, they can transition into specialized training at the Boutique (and vice versa) without needing to reapply, sit on a waiting list, or start over. This "warm handoff" ensures that as a trainee's skills evolve, their support adapts with them.

Combining our teams also increases our placement capacity and community standing, allowing us to help even more people find skills-based, meaningful jobs.

How will you measure the impact of this transition on your participants?

We aren't just looking to build our numbers, but to build trust. We will be surveying our families and partners to ensure that this move makes our programs feel more stable and accessible. Our goal is to maintain or increase our high program completion and job placement rates.

IV. OUR UNIFIED LEADERSHIP

Who will lead the unified organization?

We are bringing the best of both worlds together to ensure that original visionaries from both ZABS Place and Cakeable remain at the helm, guiding our shared mission and preserving the unique culture of both programs. Bentzion Groner will serve as the Executive Director of the unified organization, while Ken Norton will transition to the Board of Directors.

Our unified Board of Directors will guide our shared future; this board includes co-founders and key voices from both organizations, ensuring that our original values remain central to every decision.

How will the leadership team and staff change?

Our priority is to ensure the heart of our work stays the same. The leadership teams and staff from both organizations are joining forces to form a single, unified team. This allows us to combine our expertise and resources to better serve our interns without losing the relationships and job coaching they rely on.

V. OUR SHARED STEWARDSHIP

Will my donations still support the same mission?

Absolutely. Your gifts will continue to directly support the programs and participants you have always championed. By joining forces, we are simply making those dollars go further through shared resources and a wider network of support.

Do I need to update my recurring donations or pledges?

We will work with you directly to ensure a smooth transition. While the legal recipient for tax purposes will eventually shift to the ZABS Place tax ID, any gifts to Cakeable will be restricted to the Cakeable mission as requested.

Will I work with the same people on future donations?

Yes. Please continue to reach out to the same team members you have always worked with at ZABS Place or Cakeable. While our leadership is becoming more unified, our commitment to personal relationships remains our priority. If your primary contact ever changes in the future, we will reach out to you personally to ensure a smooth transition.

VI. OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

What does this merger mean for employer partners?

Our commitment to our partners remains as strong as ever. You will continue to work with the same staff members for intern placement and coaching. By joining forces, we are actually strengthening your talent pipeline by giving you access to a broader pool of candidates trained in both hospitality and retail. Charlotte.

What does this merger mean for vendors?

Regarding billing and records, please continue your current processes for now. Our team will reach out with a formal update in the next two weeks containing our updated tax information.

Will anything change for volunteers?

Our volunteers are the heart of both the Cafe and the Boutique, and your roles and schedules will remain the same. If you currently volunteer at one location and are interested in trying out a new role at the other, this merger makes that easier than ever. We look forward to seeing your familiar faces in both Matthews and Uptown Charlotte.

What should Cafe and Boutique customers expect?

You can still count on the same friendly service and the same great products you've come to love. Your favorite daily routines and the items you enjoy at both the Cafe and the Boutique are here to stay. All existing gift cards will continue to be honored at their respective locations as well. We are simply bringing our two shops closer together to create a more inclusive Charlotte for everyone.

VII. LOOKING AHEAD

How can I celebrate this news?

First, please share the news on your socials!

We'd also love to have you join us for a family-friendly Community Meet & Greet within the next few weeks. We invite you to meet the unified team, enjoy a free drink, and help us toast to a more inclusive Charlotte. Look for more details in an email or on our social media pages.

Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

Our doors are always open. Please reach out to:

- **Bentzion Groner**, Chief Executive Talent, ZABS Place: bentzion@zabsplace.org
- **Ken Norton**, Executive Director, Cakeable: ken@wearecakeable.org
- **Rachel Meisel**, Communications Director: rachel@wearecakeable.org