



+

**CAKEABLE**

## MERGER PRESS RELEASE

---

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Charlotte Leaders in Inclusive Employment Join Forces to Create Unified Home for Vocational Excellence**

**CHARLOTTE, NC** – Cakeable Charlotte, Inc. and ZABS Place are two of the region’s most prominent nonprofits dedicated to vocational training and job placement services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They are proud to announce they have officially merged to create a unified home for disability employment in the Charlotte region. This strategic integration combines Cakeable’s high-energy hospitality environment with ZABS Place’s specialized retail and e-commerce boutique to provide a more robust and diverse vocational ecosystem for the community.

The merger transitions a long-standing informal collaboration into a centralized and efficient structure. While the organizations will unify their executive functions to reduce overhead, they will maintain both distinct training environments. This means the beloved Cakeable Cafe will remain a fixture of Uptown Charlotte and ZABS Place will continue to be a staple of downtown Matthews, both operating under their existing names and missions.

“By joining forces, we are moving from a fragmented landscape to a single, coherent pathway for our participants,” says Ken Norton, Executive Director of Cakeable. “We can now offer our trainees a seamless journey from hospitality skills to specialized training in retail and logistics, creating a more resilient future for the individuals and families we serve.”

## **Key Benefits to the Charlotte Community:**

- **Expanded Reach and Impact:** The combined organization will leverage a shared brain-trust of training specialists to grow their reach and serve more families without reducing services.
- **A Seamless Participant Journey:** Participants can easily transition between hospitality and retail training within the same familiar support system.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Unifying under one administrative umbrella allows a higher percentage of every dollar to go directly into training programs.
- **Enhanced Talent Pipeline:** Charlotte businesses will benefit from a more streamlined recruitment process, gaining access to a broader pool of candidates robustly prepared for the modern workforce.

“Our missions have always been two sides of the same coin,” says Bentzion Groner, Chief Executive Talent at ZABS Place. “This unification allows us to see potential where others see disability on a much larger scale. Together, we are creating a proactive, permanent home for this mission in the Charlotte region for years to come.”

**About Cakeable Charlotte** Founded in 2019 by Renee & John Ratcliffe, Cakeable is a nonprofit workforce development program that equips interns with intellectual and developmental disabilities with barista and customer service skills through its high-energy cafe in Uptown Charlotte.

**About ZABS Place** Established in 2014 by Bentzion & Rochel Groner, Charlie & Caren Gale, and Fred *o.b.m.* & Lisa Shporer. ZABS Place is an upscale thrift boutique and vocational training center in Matthews, NC. It empowers young adults with special talents to transition into rewarding careers through retail, e-commerce, and logistics training.

# #

**Media Contact:** Rachel Meisel Communications Director, ZABS Place + Cakeable  
rachel@wearecakeable.org