

## **Reserva Conchal's dual education program has graduated more than 250 students**

The program began operating in 2014 and has graduated more than 8 generations of students.

The dual education program at Reserva Conchal Beach Resort, Golf & Spa Costa Rica, located in Guanacaste, will celebrate its ninth year of operations this year 2023, training young people in the area.

According to the head of community relations at Reserva Conchal, Adriana Porras Quirós, in an interview with Delfino.cr, this program aims to "reduce the proportion of young people who are not employed and are not studying or receiving training," so the initiative began operating at the hotel long before the Dual Technical Education and Training Law was passed in 2019.

This year we are celebrating 9 years of execution of which the last two are already with the execution of the law as such. What motivated us? It was our idea of generating footprints and positively impacting the community because there was an important issue to work on in terms of territorial development, training and employability".

According to Porras, the rural nature of the area in which they operate makes it "quite complex" for many people to access technical or university training centers, so an initiative of this type "has changed the lives of young people", allowing them not only to access training, but also new jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

We are in a rural area and access here is quite complex for some people, because the communities are a bit distant and therefore the training centers are also far away from us. So, when there was a possibility for us to develop a training program that would allow young people to learn careers that were in high demand and thus be able to contribute to the mobilization of the economy in the region, we took it. That is why we see this as a program that has changed many lives in young people, in the people who are involved in the project and that generates experiences for life, for training and for their daily lives. We have students who start with the program, are trained with us in the disciplines and decide to undertake and this also gives them an additional value in terms of their professional training".

Since its inception, the program has operated in partnership with the National Learning Institute (INA), which in turn is responsible for training mentors (active company collaborators who guide, accompany and share knowledge with the students during their training process). As part of this, at the beginning of 2023, 18 new mentors were trained within the hotel operations.

**Almost 300 graduates**

In these almost 9 years the project has graduated almost 300 youngsters and for this 2023 it doubled the number of students with which it operates, to go from working two training groups for dining room and kitchen, to four in each module.

According to Porras:

"We have 70 youngsters who are being trained throughout the year within our facilities, both in theory as well as in practice and we hope that it will be extremely successful so that all these young people can join the labor market, either with us or outside the organization, but always contributing to their own development and the improvement of the communities".

The program lasts a full year and incorporates both English courses, which are indispensable in the sector, and complementary courses that then go on to be developed a combination of theory and practice. Porras explains:

Here we have a space adapted for the part taught by the teacher so that, for example, during one week we give theories on how to prepare salads or how to set up a table; and then, the following week and immediately, the student goes to the operating areas of our real restaurants, to our real kitchens, to put into practice what they have learned. Then, the following week, the student goes back to the teacher, corrects what maybe he did not get right, takes the improvements, and even goes beyond the basic knowledge that was generated during the practice with the teacher".

In turn, the young participants are considered trainees and are covered by a risk insurance policy, as well as the corresponding medical insurance.

They also receive an economic contribution for their practical hours, which is established as a fixed monthly amount.

We are motivated every day because this is born as a program that helps impact the community. In this process we see the changes and what the opportunities that this program gives people mean to them. It is incredible to see how a person goes from having no knowledge in an area of training, to now being, for example, restaurant managers, chefs and working in in five-star-hotel restaurants. These are young people from our communities who are developing their talent and who, thanks to these opportunities, can achieve their goals, and that is a source of pride for all of us," Porras concluded.

In 2022, the project graduated 13 students, 90% of whom were hired by Reserva Conchal at the end of their training cycle.