

Alex Askew

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Alex Askew believes in the power of connections. He connected to his first employer when he was only 14 years old. That's when he landed a job as a personal chef through his high school's culinary work program.

This early experience sparked a passion within him. It led to a series of restaurant jobs in New York City, and eventually brought him to the Culinary Institute of America. He graduated in 1989.

As a young graduate, Askew realized how hard it could be for young minority students to connect to each other. It was equally difficult to connect to leaders in the food and hospitality industries. So he cofounded the Black Culinarian Alliance in 1993.

"I realized that young people like myself lacked the connections needed to be successful in the industry. They also lacked the skills to build a network," he said.

"Education is important. But you also need to know how to use relationships to create more opportunities."

The organization is now called BCAGlobal, because of its global work. It provides awareness and exposure to more than 150 students each year by connecting education with the food industry. It pairs students with



thriving professionals who give real-life advice. It works to create more career paths within the food service, restaurant and hospitality industries.

BCAGlobal also connects students with the culinary history of African Americans.

"Helping young people understand the awesome legacy of African American cooks, chefs and others in food history builds their confidence. Knowing where your roots start makes it easier to see what's possible and where you can go," he said.

Askew is growing this work through a Kellogg Foundation fellowship in Leadership and Racial Equity Healing. He is working with other leaders to help lift up communities in need. "There's a close connection between racial equity healing, food and the community. A lot of it starts with our mindfulness and appreciation of food. We need to understand food traditions and value in our lives," Askew said. "If we

can get young people excited about food, talking about food, learning to appreciate food and mindful of food, we can raise the spirit of the community.”