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Glitz as Lantana College, Enugu, marks 25 years anniversary

Lantana College, a project of the Women's Board of Educational Corporation Society (ECS), celebrates its 25th Anniversary.

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When the Women's Board of Educational Corporation Society (ECS), a not for profit, nongovernmental organization registered in Nigeria for the

development of Nigerian women, conceived the idea of the Lantana College of Hospitality, Enugu, twenty five years ago, it was to help in the education of the woman and the girl child.

The idea was to give a total education to all women and young school leavers of various backgrounds who came to the school, at the same time as giving them hospitality and soft skills which will enable them to make an impact in their homes and society at large.

Twenty five years down the line, the College has not only survived, it has continued to wax stronger. The ability to meet its expectation has made it the number one choice for those desiring to make a profession in the hospitality industry. Its products are hugely demanded by those in the industry.

Lantana College is an all rounder; taking care of the professional, cultural, human and spiritual formation of the individual. It believes that skill training and personality development are two essentials for raising the standards and for improving the quality of the service industry.

On October 15, this year, the College, domiciled in the heart of Independence layout, Enugu, celebrated its 25 years anniversary and graduation ceremony. No fewer than 65 students who graduated from eight classes were involved in the ceremony that attracted the high and mighty in the society led by former Deputy Senate President of Nigeria, Prof. Ike Ekweremadu. Also in attendance is the Chairman of the Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (ENSUBEB), Chief Ikeji Asogwa, Mrs Sindile Onodu,

who was the guest speaker and many others.

It featured cutting of the anniversary cake, fundraising for the completion of the College 3rd phase, award of certificates and presentation of prizes, long service awards to staff, cultural displays and entertainment among others. The 3rd phase project is to increase space for the many requests for admission into the school.

Ms. Maduabuchi –Okpalla Amaka, the Director of the School, who took time to narrate the 25 years old journey which started at the Uzommiri Study Centre and then in a rented premises as School of Catering in 1995, stated that to “celebrate Lantana is to celebrate the many women and young girls who have passed through the school and are now professional homemakers and many mothers who are putting a

professional approach to the home frontier”.

Speaking on why the College emphasizes skill acquisition, she said: “Skill acquisition is vital for an economy to compete favourably and grow, particularly in an era of economic integration and technological change. Skill needs are widespread in Nigeria and we know that unemployment has been one of the most difficult challenges facing Nigeria today.

“In Lantana, we impart the professional skills needed to take care of these basic needs of man, the career is very demanding; it is not for those seeking a 9 to 5, Monday to Friday work pattern. It is an environment that does not suit this pattern at all because it is an essential service that is given 24 hours, 365 days. It deals with the

human person, that unique and unrepeatable creature”.

She insisted that since it takes care of the basic needs of man, the profession “can only become extinct when man becomes extinct”, stressing that there was shortage of skills as people were no longer ready to learn and serve.

Okpalla Amaka, emphasized that in Lantana, “We combine development of professional expertise with efficient working habits, best practices and cost saving methods, personal grooming, responsibility, management skills and courtesy.

“Students learn how to handle a wide range of equipment and to work to deadlines. We equip Lantana graduates for life through skills acquisition and the high regard we place on social and human skills. We strive to impart these skills of industriousness and ingenuity in

people that come to us whether through the regular courses, modular courses, training and consultancy courses, holiday courses or the weekly Home Economies Club programme we run for secondary school girls. In Lantana, we try to educate the total women, values such as regard for the human person as an individual, attention to his/her needs, service, exceeding oneself and others' expectations by giving more than what is required to ensure that your neighbor, your customer is satisfied, and bringing a smile to your surroundings and workplace are regarded highly", she added.

Mrs Edna Dafe, Project Director, Women's Board Educational Corporation Society, the Parent body of the College, said Lantana is one of the projects of the group. She said the group has four hospitality projects in Nigeria.

She said the school teaches primarily hospitality skills to young ladies to empower them with necessary education so that they can be gainfully employed.

She said the hospitality industry is one of the most vibrant industries in the world. She said the last 25 years had been challenging and from a little beginning, had been able to gain the necessary accreditations to enable it award certificates, had federal government certification to award DNSQ, an internationally acclaimed certification as well as federal government's approval to be part of the N-power programme.

“We hope to be bigger than this and in order to be bigger than this; we decided to have the fund raising attached to our anniversary. Right now we can only admit 25 students but if we get more space, we can admit more. It is a fully residential

programme. At times we get so many candidates but space would always hinder us”, she said

She said students of the school are doing better than those of other schools and that staying with the tutors affords them an all-round training. She said the desire of the school is to continue to produce quality graduates in hospitality that could match their counterparts in any part of the world.

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Lawrence Njoku (The Guardian)

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