



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Our Merger

I. OUR UNIFIED VISION

What is happening?

ZABS Place and Cakeable Charlotte are formally merging into one organization. We are bringing together two of Charlotte's leading IDD workforce programs – hospitality training at Cakeable Cafe and retail/e-commerce/warehouse training at ZABS Place Thrift Boutique – under unified leadership to best focus on our joint mission.

Why are you merging?

Cakeable approached ZABS Place to explore building a unified vocational ecosystem for the IDD community in our region. We've always believed the same thing: every person has potential that too often goes unseen. That shared conviction made this a convincing, "Yes". By joining forces, we move away from working in separate corners and can now focus on building a more sustainable and impactful training program for interest-based employment in Charlotte. As a unified organization more of every dollar will go directly to the people we serve.

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

No. This is a strategic merger rooted in shared values and mutual respect. Cakeable Cafe and ZABS Place Thrift Boutique remain distinct and essential training environments. We are coming together to share expertise and strengthen our mission, 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 Cakeable at the Cafe in Uptown Charlotte and ZABS Place at the Boutique in Matthews. Our participants, families, and community will continue to experience the programs they know and trust, now backed by a stronger, unified team.

What will the new organization look like?

We are adopting an "Endorsed Brand" model that lets us grow without losing our identity. Both Cakeable and ZABS Place remain the public face of their programs. A single executive team, led by ZABS Place, will oversee operations and fundraising, reducing overhead and getting more dollars to the mission. Eventually, we will operate under one tax ID (the ZABS Place EIN) to simplify back-office administration.

What this merger IS NOT:

This is not a program closure. This is not a method of reducing services or the number of participants we serve, we are growing. It is not a move. Cakeable stays in Uptown Charlotte; ZABS Place stays in Downtown Matthews. And it is not a quiet exit or a retreat. This is a proactive, permanent evolution, building a home for our mission that will serve Charlotte for generations.

II. OUR SHARED VALUES

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

Both organizations were founded by individuals whose faith called them to serve community members who were too often overlooked. While we come from different traditions, we share a deep conviction: every human being possesses inherent dignity and was created with a unique purpose. That shared foundation is what brought us together, and it will continue to guide us. We serve from the heart of our faith while remaining fully committed to welcoming everyone, regardless of background or belief.

Does that mean you only work with or hire people from specific backgrounds?

Absolutely not. Our faith inspires our work; it does not define who is welcome. We are steadfast in our commitment to being an inclusive organization that reflects the full diversity of our Charlotte community. We do not discriminate on the basis of faith, race, gender, or disability. Everyone is seen, valued, and welcome in our programs and on our team.

III. OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR PARTICIPANTS

How will this merger affect participants?

Consistency and relational stability are non-negotiable. Our Special Talent (ZABS Place) and Interns (Cakeable) will see no disruption to their daily routines, work hours, or tasks. They will continue to work with the same Job Coaches and training team members they already know and trust.

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

It means more opportunities. Unifying our teams creates a seamless journey: a participant who discovers a passion for retail while training at the Cafe can transition to the Boutique (and vice versa) without reapplying, waiting, or starting over. This "warm handoff" ensures that as a trainee's skills grow, their opportunities grow with them. Combined, our teams also increase our job placement capacity and community standing; helping more people find meaningful, skills-based employment.

How will you measure the impact of this transition?

We aren't just building numbers, we're building trust. We will survey families and partners to ensure this transition makes our programs feel more stable and accessible. Our goal is to exceed our current program completion and job placement rates.

IV. OUR UNIFIED LEADERSHIP

Who will lead the unified organization?

Bentzion Groner will serve as Executive Director of the unified organization. Ken Norton, Executive Director of Cakeable, will transition to the Board of Directors, where his vision and community relationships will continue to shape our shared future. Our unified Board of Directors includes co-founders and key voices from both organizations, ensuring our original values guide every decision.

How will the leadership team and staff change?

Our priority is continuity of care. The leadership teams and staff from both organizations are joining forces as a single, unified team. This preserves the relationships and job coaching our participants rely on, while giving us the combined expertise and resources to serve even more participants.

V. OUR SHARED STEWARDSHIP

Will my donations still support the same mission?

Absolutely. Your gifts will continue to support the programs and participants you have championed. Merging simply makes those dollars go further through shared resources, reduced overhead, and a wider network of impact.

Do I need to update my recurring donations or pledges?

No. The ZABS Place EIN will remain the legal entity, but any gifts restricted to Cakeable will continue to be used exactly as the donor intended.

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. Our commitment to personal relationships is one of the things that defines us – and that does not change. If your primary contact ever shifts, we will reach out to you personally to make sure the transition is seamless.

VI. OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

What does this merger mean for employer partners?

Our commitment to you is stronger than ever. You will continue to work with the same staff for graduate placements and coaching support. Merging actually deepens your talent pipeline, you now have access to a broader pool of candidates trained in both hospitality and retail.

Will anything change for volunteers?

Our volunteers play a vital role at ZABS and Cakeable and your schedules and tasks will stay exactly the same. If you currently volunteer at one location and want to explore the other, this merger makes that easier than ever. We can't wait to see your familiar faces in both Matthews and Uptown Charlotte.

What should Boutique and Cafe customers expect?

Same great products. Same friendly service. Same familiar faces. Your favorite items at both locations are here to stay. All existing gift cards continue to be honored at their respective locations. We're simply bringing our two shops closer together to create a more inclusive Charlotte, for everyone.

VII. LOOKING AHEAD

How can I celebrate this news?

Share it! Post it on your socials and help us spread the word about what's possible when two mission-driven teams decide to go further together.

We'd also love to have you join us for a family-friendly Community Meet & Greet coming up in the next few weeks. Come meet the unified team, enjoy a free drink, and help us toast to a more inclusive Charlotte. Watch for details via email and social media.

Who can I contact with more questions?

Our doors are always open.

Bentzion Groner, Executive Director, ZABS Place: bentzion@zabsplace.org

Ken Norton, Executive Director, Cakeable: ken@wearecakeable.org

Rachel Meisel, Communications Director: rachel@wearecakeable.org