



continuing education opportunities.

Among them is the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals' E-Badge Academy. This nationally recognized certification program offers such workers the opportunity to demonstrate their skill sets, highlight professional achievements and showcase the value they bring to their respective employers. At Richcroft, any direct support professional who successfully completes the certification receives a \$1,000 bonus.

Solanke participated in the first E-Badge Academy class offered by Richcroft, which led to the White House honor. She has since completed an additional, and higher, certification.

"We encourage professional development at every level and have a general philosophy of

promoting from within," Jones said.

To that end, the company launched what it dubbed "Richcroft University," implementing specialized training for front-line supervisors. Ongoing education is provided to improve the management skills of employees, with a goal of reducing turnover and increasing engagement among the workforce.

Richcroft also recently instituted a formal mentorship program. Jones indicated they have partnered on this initiative with Associated Black Charities, a Baltimore-based nonprofit, to train midlevel managers how to identify and guide staffers who exhibit leadership qualities and have interest in career growth opportunities.

Meanwhile, to elicit overall employee feedback, Richcroft hosts biannual town hall meet-

ings and has begun bestowing awards on staffers who have hit milestone years of service.

"Employees received a gift and were recognized at a special lunch hosted by the CEO," Jones said.

For Solanke, the perks are deeply appreciated. "This is a beautiful company – top-notch," she said. "I have never had an experience like this."

Moreover, she feels a deep sense of purpose, particularly when seeing the positive strides made by her clients. Long-term, she aspires to return to school and become a nurse, building upon the skills she's acquired and Richcroft has encouraged.

"Helping people is why I have chosen this path," she said. "It gives me fulfillment and satisfaction on a daily basis."