

Media Alert

For Immediate Release

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Goodwill® to Expand GoodStart Re-Entry Job Training Program in Roanoke

Roanoke, VA – Goodwill Industries of the Valleys knows that individuals who have formerly been incarcerated can turn their lives around and be productive employees. To help with that effort, Goodwill is expanding its work training program for people with criminal backgrounds. The [GoodStart Prisoner Re-Entry program](#) provides training for in-demand jobs in fields such as Advanced Manufacturing and Information Technology. Through a \$4.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to [Goodwill Industries International](#), the program is expected to serve nearly 600 people across the United States. As a sub-grantee, Goodwill Industries of the Valleys will receive more than \$750,000 in funding to provide services locally to an expected 150 individuals over the next three years in Roanoke and select areas of Roanoke County.

“Whether an arrest occurred recently or long ago, individuals with criminal records –and particularly individuals who have recently been incarcerated – face serious and complex obstacles to successful reentry,” states Mary Ann Gilmer, Vice President of Mission Services for Goodwill. “The long-term impact of a criminal record prevents many motivated people from obtaining employment, even if they have turned their lives around. This program addresses that issue.”

Goodwill’s work with people who are coming out of prisons and jails demonstrates that when job training is aligned with employer demand and highly customized support services, people with criminal records can become valued employees. In 2017, Goodwill Industries of the Valleys assisted more than 890 people with a criminal background to reintegrate and reach their education and employment goals. This new grant will allow the organization to serve more local people with a criminal background in 2018.

“This is a highly targeted, evidence-based approach that is working in cities that have significant poverty, crime and low education levels,” said Wendi Copeland, Senior Vice President of Strategy and Advancement of Goodwill Industries International.

With the relatively tight labor market in the Roanoke Valley there is an opportunity for employers in need of workers to hire people with criminal convictions. The GoodStart Re-Entry program partners with local employers to provide apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships to create a pipeline of skilled employees.

For more information on the GoodStart Prisoner Re-Entry program, [click here](#).

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys serves 31 counties and 13 cities in the New River, Roanoke, and Shenandoah Valleys. Its mission is to help people and families in our community achieve a better life through work and independence. In 2017, Goodwill assisted nearly 45,000 individuals with obstacles to success, helped 3,494 people find jobs in our community, and provided training opportunities that resulted in more than 1,300 credentials being earned by individuals participating in Goodwill programs. As of the end of August, Goodwill had assisted nearly 30,000 individuals in 2018.

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Note to reporters and editors: Goodwill can facilitate interviews with people who have successfully reentered the workforce through the Goodwill GoodStart Re-Entry program.

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