
Providing Ex-offenders a Second Chance

The Problem: Recent statistics show that, of the 700,000 people released from jails and prisons each year, two thirds will return to prison within three years. The cycle occurs despite a huge increase in the money spent on corrections. In 1980, corrections expenditures in the United States totaled \$9 billion; in 2002, they reached \$60 billion, a more than six-fold increase. The system is straining municipal and state budgets and lacks a comprehensive method for placing ex-offenders successfully back into communities.

The Re-Entry Policy Council, made up of government entities and foundations, concludes that the vast majority of ex-offenders do not get the help they need to transition to a life of freedom. For many former prisoners, this help includes substance abuse treatment and health services, or job training, placement and post-employment support.

Ex-offenders and Goodwill: Eight out of 10 people who come to Goodwill for help are low-income workers; some of them have a criminal record. In 2007, Goodwill agencies in the U.S. and Canada helped more than 82,132 current and former prisoners through a variety of programs, including job readiness, mentoring, housing, and job placement, and retention services. In St. Petersburg, FL, for example, Goodwill operates a residential facility and helps former offenders find jobs in the community. Through a partnership with the San Francisco Office of the District Attorney, Goodwill Industries offers "Back on Track," an intervention program offering first-time, non-violent drug offenders in San Francisco a comprehensive workforce development program as an alternative to a felony drug sales conviction.

The Solution: As the nation's leading nonprofit provider of job training programs, career placement services and community-based programs, Goodwill Industries International is uniquely positioned to be a leader in the successful reintegration of ex-offenders and former prisoners into mainstream society.

Goodwill agencies across the country work closely with probation officers, courts, jails, prisons, and other shareholders in the community to provide comprehensive services to ex-offenders to reintegrate into society. Goodwill Industries knows that for ex-offenders to re-enter the community successfully, they must have access to safe housing, treatment for substance abuse as well as physical and mental illness, education and skills training, and *jobs*. Goodwill Industries believes that providing job placement and employment services to ex-offenders is a cornerstone toward building a prison service continuum for ex-offenders that will strengthen families and communities and hold offenders accountable for their actions.

Now that the Second Chance Act has been signed into law, Goodwill is urging Congress to fund the Act in the Fiscal Year 2009 federal budget so that organizations like Goodwill can better help communities meet the needs of formerly incarcerated people. Goodwill urges Congress to fully fund the bill so that communities can get the necessary support to meet the needs of current and former prisoners and create long-term employment solutions for the growing number of people returning to their communities.

About Goodwill Industries International:

Founded in Boston in 1902, Goodwill Industries trains people for careers in fields such as financial services, computer programming and health care. To pay for its programs, Goodwill sells donated clothes and other household items in more than 2,200 retail stores, and online at www.shopgoodwill.com, the only Internet nonprofit auction site. The organization also builds revenues, and creates jobs, by contracting with businesses and government to provide a wide range of commercial services, including janitorial work, packaging and assembly, and food service preparation. In 2007, more than 1 million people benefited from Goodwill's career services. Goodwill Industries International channels 84 percent of its revenues directly into its programs.

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