



Goodwill® Q&A

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What is Goodwill, and what does the organization do?

Goodwill is a leading nonprofit social enterprise that generates opportunities for people to achieve economic stability and build strong families and vibrant communities by offering job placement and, training, and other community-based programs for people who have disabilities, people who lack education or job experience, and others who face challenges to finding employment.

Goodwill was rated 11 in Forbes' top 20 most inspiring companies in 2014. Goodwill has been featured as one of Forbes' most inspiring companies for three years. Goodwill is also one of the nation's top five most valuable and recognized nonprofit brands (Cone Nonprofit Power Brand). Goodwill provides on-site and virtual skills, employment training, job placement services and other community-based services, such as career counseling, financial education and résumé preparation.

How was Goodwill founded?

In 1902, the Rev. Edgar J. Helms founded Goodwill in the south end of Boston. Helms, a Methodist minister, early social innovator and entrepreneur, collected used household goods and clothing in wealthier areas of the city, then hired and trained people who were poor to mend and repair the goods. The items were then resold or were given to the people who repaired them. The system worked, and the Goodwill philosophy of "not charity but a chance" was born. From these humble beginnings, Goodwill has witnessed the power of work in people's lives for 113 years. Goodwill is now a secular nonprofit organization with no ties to religious institutions.

How does Goodwill fund its programs?

To pay for its programs, Goodwill sells donated clothes and other household items in more than 3,000 stores and online at shopgoodwill.com. Goodwill uses the revenue earned from these sales to fund job placement, employment training and other community programs. Last year alone, more than 90 million people in the United States and Canada donated to Goodwill.

What is shopgoodwill.com®?

shopgoodwill.com, the nation's first and only nonprofit Internet auction site, is a charitable auction site ranked as one of the top 10 online auction sites and was among Time.com's "50 Best Websites" in 2009. The site has created a window into cyberspace, bringing a whole new world of shoppers and donors in the mission of providing job placement and training programs throughout the United States and Canada.

Every 23 seconds of every business day, a person served by Goodwill earns a good job.

Does Goodwill utilize other forms of giving, such as private and public grants, individual giving or other means of funding?

Goodwill is grateful to partner with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Bank of America Foundation, the Walmart Foundation, Accenture, and the U.S. Department of Labor along with other businesses and public agencies to make innovative job training, placement, financial wellness and other supports available to our constituents. In some cases, these partners provide financial resources and expertise to strengthen our approach to preparing people to build career and financial assets.

Goodwill receives financial support through legacy bequests, online gifts, direct mail, annual giving and other means. These gifts support service programs and operations as well as capital expansion of our social enterprise.

Goodwill alliances with cause-marketing partners, including Bon-Ton, Gap, Hanes, Levi Strauss & Co., Microsoft and Tide, raise awareness of the Goodwill mission and brand.

Goodwill works with a variety of nonprofits to fulfill the mission of connecting people with career opportunities and the resources needed to support success. Some of these partners include Achieving the Dream, Easter Seals, Feeding America, Habitat for Humanity, and SourceAmerica.

How many Goodwill agencies are there?

There are 164 independent, community-based Goodwill agencies in the United States and Canada with a presence in 13 other countries.

What happens when someone walks into a Goodwill looking for career services?

Each Goodwill agency is independent and has its own specific procedures for people looking for jobs. Usually, someone on the workforce development staff or a career counselor will obtain background information, work experience, skills (such as computer or customer service skills) and job interests from the person who is seeking assistance. Based on the information, the person will be presented with the programs that fit his or her needs. Sometimes, Goodwill will have specific jobs in mind for that person, including jobs inside and outside of Goodwill. If he or she is interested, the Goodwill career counselor can help the job seeker apply for the position, write a resume and coach him or her on how to do well during a job interview.

The important thing to remember here is that Goodwill will customize a plan for these individuals based on their interests, skills and education. Each individual will receive the necessary job training and support from Goodwill to be successful at his or her job, earn a paycheck, become self-sufficient and know the independence and dignity that work brings. Goodwill not only trains people for careers, but it also helps many to transition into new fields by teaching new skills.

What are the types of industries in which Goodwill can help people find jobs?

Goodwill provides people with employment, job training and support services in a variety of industries, including banking, health care, technology, retail, manufacturing, construction and many others.

Community-based Goodwill agencies build revenues and create jobs by contracting with businesses and government to provide a wide range of commercial services, including packing and assembly, food service preparation, document imaging and shredding, groundskeeping, and administrative support. Some of these businesses include renowned organizations such as Cintas, the Internal Revenue Service, General Electric, General Motors, SC Johnson, Whirlpool, and the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.

These commercial services build revenue for Goodwill while creating thousands of jobs for people who otherwise might be unemployed. They also save money for businesses and agencies looking to cut costs. Goodwill is a leader in the social enterprise model. Companies rely on Goodwill for employees, and Goodwill provides employment as well.

How many people have found jobs with Goodwill's help?

In 2014, more than 318,000 Goodwill people in the United States and Canada earned a job as a result of Goodwill career services programs.

How often does Goodwill provide job training services?

Every 23 seconds of every business day, a person served by Goodwill earns a good job. Every 1.2 seconds of every day, another person accesses Goodwill opportunities to build careers and strong families.

Does Goodwill offer any other types of services besides job training programs?

Goodwill's philosophy is that it is no longer sufficient to offer job training alone; it must provide holistic, family strengthening programs. Many Goodwill agencies demonstrate a leadership commitment to family strengthening throughout all levels of their organizations, creating family strengthening teams, allocating more financial resources toward programs that support families, and working with community partners to provide a wider array of services for families. These services include child care, financial education, free tax preparation assistance, residential and medical services, transportation, youth mentoring and career services for people ages 55 and over.

How does Goodwill help the environment?

Goodwill is an entrepreneurial leader, environmental pioneer and social innovator of the "reduce, reuse, repurpose" practice, and it creates jobs in emerging industries.

Entrepreneurial: Through its entrepreneurial business model of collecting and selling donated goods, Goodwill helps communities repurpose usable items in environmentally sound ways and prevents the items from piling up in local landfills.

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Goodwill has employed the “reduce, reuse, re-purpose” framework since its founding in 1902.

Environmentally Conscious: Goodwill’s process of selling and reusing used goods creates thousands of jobs and millions in revenues that fund job placement and training programs in communities across the United States and Canada. It’s an environmentally sound process and, at the same time, a sound investment in the economic health of your community.

Socially Innovative: Through partnerships with Dell, county and city governments — as well as other organizations — local Goodwill agencies divert used computers and computer equipment from area landfills and provide consumer education on the importance of environmentally responsible computer disposal. These programs create job training opportunities as well as entry-level and skilled green jobs for people in need of work.

How do I find a Goodwill in my neighborhood?

To find your local Goodwill, visit www.goodwill.org or call 1-800-Goodwill.