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Goodwill launches Soft Skills Academy to match job seekers with employers

Louisville, KY – On Monday, March 19, Goodwill Industries of Kentucky formally introduced its Soft Skills Academy, housed at the Goodwill Center for Education and Employment at 909 E. Broadway. The program has been piloted for several months, serving clients from the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections and several nonprofit organizations, including Volunteers of America.

The event featured a graduation ceremony and presentation of Work Ready Certificates for participants of Goodwill's Soft Skills Academy. Graduates learned critical workplace skills including attitude, conflict resolution, dependability, safety, self-presentation, and team building. During the training and following graduation, Goodwill career coaches work with participants one-on-one to further prepare them for and secure employment, ensuring that the job seeker's skills are matched appropriately with an employer's needs and requirements. After placement, Goodwill career coaches stay engaged with both the employee and employer to assist with any issues that could put the person's continued employment at risk.

Ryan Jones is director of operations for Rev-A-Shelf, Goodwill's inaugural partnering employer for its new service model. He spoke about the company's partnership with Goodwill and introduced Timothy Copas, an employee placed by Goodwill who recently celebrated his 60th day on the job.

"Timothy apologized for coming to orientation soaking wet," said Jones. "It would have been easy for him to wake up that day, think about the rainy walk from the bus stop, and just throw in the towel, but he showed up. We don't get employees like that every day."

Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer attended the event and congratulated the graduates, commenting that Louisville's core value of compassion lends itself to success in both workforce and economic development as time is dedicated to developing job seekers' soft skills and on-the-job character.

"Our community has 20,000 open jobs right now," said Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer. "Some people hear 'soft skills' and think they're not important, but they can be harder to master than technical skills. Employers can teach someone to become a forklift operator, but it's more difficult to form habits of setting an alarm, getting to work on time, and getting along with each other in the workplace."

"We're not satisfied with simply placing people into jobs. It's time to move the needle on poverty in Kentucky," said Amy Luttrell, president & CEO of Goodwill Industries of Kentucky. "Those who have disabilities or other challenges in finding a career path often need extra support to achieve long-term success. Getting out of poverty is a long process and looks different for every person, so Goodwill is strengthening its commitment and partnerships to make the greatest impact we can."

In the 2017 fiscal year, Goodwill placed Kentuckians into more than 3,400 jobs across the state – both inside and outside of Goodwill – and paid nearly \$15 million in wages to Kentuckians with disabilities or other challenges in finding and maintaining employment. Goodwill's programs and employment services are funded through a combination of grants,

corporate and individual giving, and its retail stores, which sell donated clothing and household items at 64 locations across Kentucky.

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