

April 19, 2017  
For Immediate Release

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## **Indianapolis Woman, 47, Earns High School Diploma** *Goodwill honors recent Excel Center graduate for academic achievements*

**INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.** – Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana will honor Brenda Leake, a recent graduate of The Excel Center®, its high school for adults who want to earn a diploma, with its 2017 Education Achievement Award. The likelihood of returning to high school begins to decline significantly once an individual enters their third decade of life, but returning to school at the age of 47 isn't the only characteristic that separates Leake from most of her classmates.

Born with cerebral palsy, Leake was told she would never be able to drive, have children or graduate from high school. Despite these predictions, she's been driving for 25 years and has two sons, ages 20 and 17.

"I have used the negative remarks as motivation to reach my goals," said Leake. "I want to inspire others by showing them that they can do anything they put their minds to."

For Hoosiers with disabilities between the ages of 21-64, 20% lack a high school diploma. When Leake enrolled at The Excel Center three years ago, she was determined to overcome this one last obstacle.

"If I had to sum up Brenda in one word, it would be 'inspiring'," said Kent Kramer, president and CEO of Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana. "She illustrates boundless optimism despite the challenges she has encountered."

As a result of her hard work and persistence, Leake received her high school diploma in January 2017. She has also been employed at the Avon Goodwill store for three years as a productive member of the e-commerce team, selecting items for sale online.

"In her capacities as both a student and an employee, Brenda always strives for excellence," said Kramer.

Leake now plans to earn an industry-recognized Pharmacy Technician Certification through The Excel Center to further expand her career prospects.

"I want to be a role model to my children and show them that sacrifices and hard work pay off," said Leake. "Just because you face challenges does not mean you are incapable of reaching your life goals."

Goodwill will recognize Leake at its upcoming Awards Breakfast, an annual event that celebrates the achievements of its employees, students, families and partners. Leake is being honored with the 2017 Education Achievement Award for overcoming significant barriers to advance her education. The Annual Awards Breakfast is Friday, April 28, at 8 a.m. Register to attend by April 21 at

[goodwillindy.org/breakfast](http://goodwillindy.org/breakfast).

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**About Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana**

Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana changes lives every day by empowering people to increase their independence and reach their potential through education, health and employment. The organization serves 39 Indiana counties and operates more than 70 retail locations, as well as charter schools for adults and youth, a maternal-child health program, a child care center and more.