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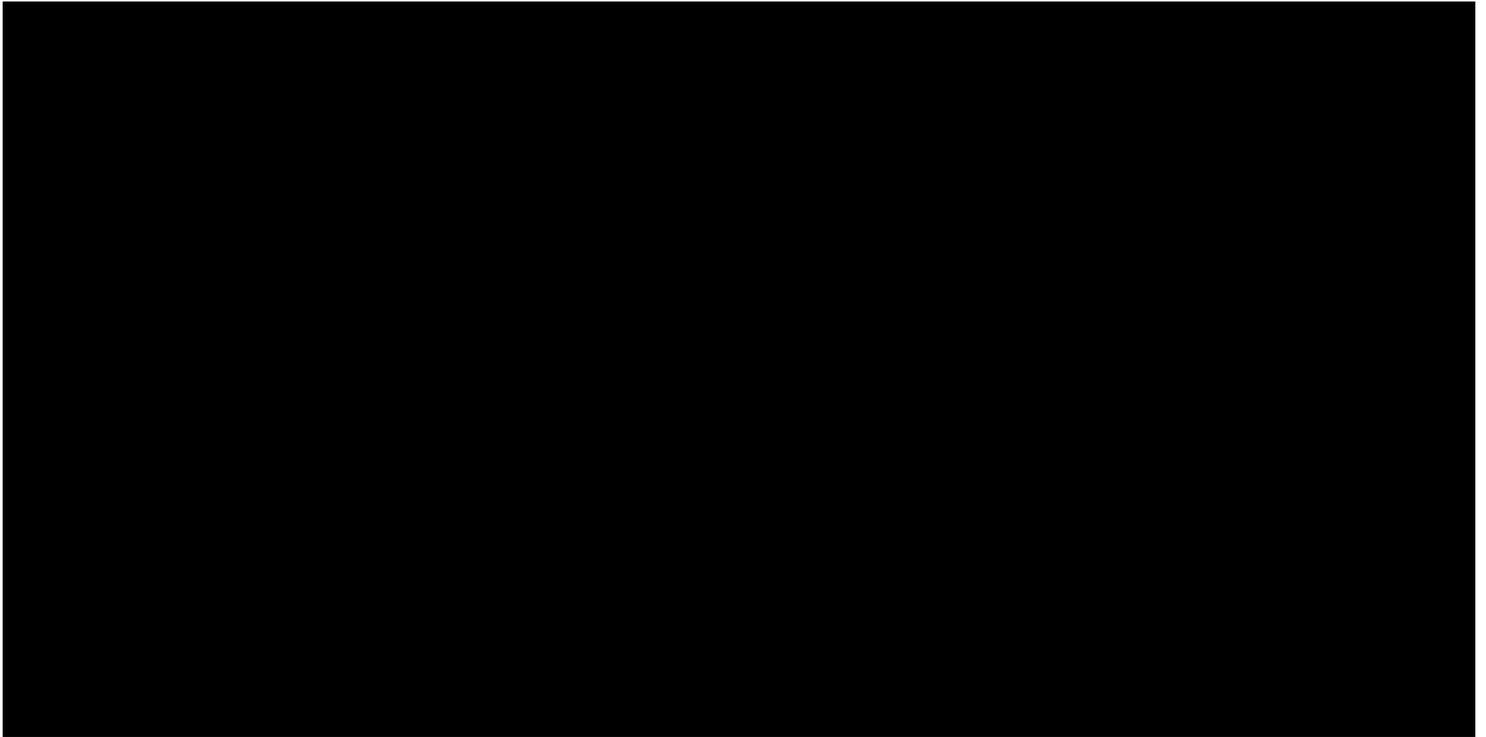
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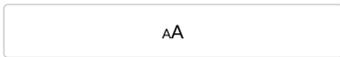
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The Excel Center offers a second chance for adults to earn their high school diploma

by Kristin Bien, WSBT 22 Reporter
Monday, May 8th 2017



WSBT 22





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SOUTH BEND — A free high school for adults is helping change lives for people in our area.

[The Excel Center in South Bend \(https://excelcenter.org/\)](https://excelcenter.org/) has been open for nearly two years. It is run by Goodwill Industries of Michiana and offers adults a second chance at getting a high school diploma.

Art Shivers will soon graduate high school and plans to go to college.

ADVERTISING

You may think this 40-year-old is too "grown up" to be a high school student but he is now getting a second chance to do what he didn't more than 20 years ago.

"I started a relationship with God which is the reason I am here at the Excel center," says Art Shivers who now wants to be a social worker.

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Now, he is getting a second chance to do what he did not do more than 20 years ago: get his diploma. SHOP AND WIN (/SHOP-AND-WIN/BEALSE AB (/11VP) (weather)

"I have overcome a lot. This here this is not an easy job but with the staff you can do it," says Shivers.

Shivers is one of more than 200 adult learners at the center who weren't able to finish high school the first time around.

"What we care about is that they are here, they are motivated to come back and complete something that was left uncompleted in their lives," says Randy Beachy the Executive Director of the Excel Center.

The school, now in its 9th term, is a free, public charter school. The adults have to meet the same requirements as teens in normal high schools.

With a diploma, they will be able to get better jobs, higher pay and even go to college. The center is helping them do it through life coaching, providing public transportation for some, and childcare for others.

Hebly Rodriguez dropped out of high school to take care of her family. "Now it is time for me to take action and live the life I have been wanting to," she says. She wouldn't be able to do it without the free childcare offered by the center.

"I go to my classroom comfortable that I know my child is being taken care of," says Rodriguez.

Because Rodriguez is getting her diploma, the chances of her children graduating are greater too.

That is the kind of inspiration 70-year-old Clark Harper wants to be. He is the oldest student here.

"The fact that so many years past by and eaten inside of me not having a diploma, it just urged me so much I just had to come back," says Harper.

He says he tries to set a good example for the younger generation at the school.

Shivers has been doing that too. He has taken his new lease on life and is helping mentor others at the school.

"At one point in my life, for me, I was like, life sucks. I hated it. But now I see why I went through what I went through. Bcause I can be used in a mighty way. I am able to help out a lot of people in their struggles," says Shivers.

He has been volunteering in local elementary schools and hopes to set a good example of what it means to be successful.

"I thank God for that second chance," says Shivers.

Proof that it is never too late to set goals and reach them.

