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For Immediate Release

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Former Refugee Earns High School Diploma, Pays It Forward
Goodwill to honor former student for overcoming extraordinary barriers

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana will honor Pency Engmawii, a graduate of The Excel Center®, Goodwill's high school for adults, with its 2018 Education Achievement Award. Engmawii grew up with 11 siblings in a small Burmese village where education was difficult to acquire. In 2011, at 21 years old, Engmawii came to the United States as a refugee.

She enrolled at The Excel Center in 2012. English is not her first language, which made passing some of the required tests particularly challenging. Despite repeated setbacks, she persevered, earning her diploma in 2017.

"Her geographical journey gives her a unique appreciation of education that motivates her to continue even in the face of adversity," said Jessamon Jones, education guide at Goodwill, and Engmawii's former English teacher.

Engmawii expresses gratitude for the teachers and staff who encouraged and helped her when she struggled. She has inspired an entire community of Burmese refugees on the south side of Indianapolis to enroll at The Excel Center.

"Earning a diploma has changed my life. I now teach other immigrants English and help them communicate with teachers and staff at The Excel Center," Engmawii said.

In March 2018, Engmawii was granted full citizenship to the United States. Goodwill will recognize her at its upcoming Awards Breakfast, an annual event that celebrates the achievements of its employees, students, families and partners. The annual Awards Breakfast is Friday, May 11, at 8 a.m. at the JW Marriott in downtown Indianapolis. All media are invited to attend. Please contact Cindy Graham at cgraham@goodwillindy.org if you would like to arrange an interview with Pency Engmawii.

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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.