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For Immediate Release

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Syrian Refugee Escapes War and Builds a New Life in Indianapolis
Mentorship at Goodwill provides opportunities and changes lives

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana is celebrating National Mentorship Month this January by highlighting employees and individuals in our programs who shifted the trajectory of their lives and careers through the guidance of one or more dedicated mentors.

Mohammed Alhamawi was 18 years old when his family fled Syria, having endured famines, droughts, disease, chemical warfare and death. They sought refuge in Jordan for three years until their permanent placement in Indianapolis. Upon arrival, Alhamawi was unfamiliar with American culture, but he understood the value of an education.

In 2016, after just a few months in the U.S., he enrolled at The Excel Center®, Goodwill's high school for adults. As an English-language learner, Alhamawi had to put in a lot more work than the average student, but he leveraged all of the resources available to him to be successful.

"Despite having zero credits, Mohammed graduated in less than two years with a 3.2 GPA," said DeAnn Day, College & Career Specialist at The Excel Center. "He also earned a Clinical Medical Assistant Certification."

Upon graduation, Alhamawi began working with a career and life coach — a Goodwill Guide — as well as a job placement specialist through Goodwill. They helped him secure two externships, which eventually led to a full-time job as a medical assistant at an internal medicine clinic in Indianapolis. Mohammed is also enrolled at Ivy Tech Community College where he is pursuing a degree in nursing.

"Mohammed often deflects praise for his accomplishments, but he's the one who continues to put in the hard work," said April Long, Director of Goodwill Guides. "He's an exemplary student and employee."

In addition to recruiting his two sisters to The Excel Center and mentoring them along their own educational journeys, Alhamawi speaks to aspiring graduates about his own journey and the challenges he had to overcome.

“Without Goodwill, I would probably just have a regular job,” Alhamawi said. “It was a dream. Not only did I get a diploma, but also support in choosing a career and resources to be successful.”

In addition to helping people set achievable goals, Goodwill’s mentors provide encouragement and guidance.

“Providing opportunities for mentorship and career coaching is key to empowering people to increase their independence and reach their potential,” said Kent A. Kramer, president and CEO at Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana.

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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.