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For Immediate Release

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Shelbyville Man Achieves Dream of Earning High School Diploma
Goodwill empowers persons with disabilities through education and employment

SHELBYVILLE, Ind. — Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana announced today that it will honor Jacob Barrett, a graduate of The Excel Center®, Goodwill's high school for adults, with its Education Achievement Award. In addition to a visual impairment, Barrett has mild autism and a learning disability. He is also deaf with bilateral cochlear implants.

He graduated from the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired where he pursued a life skills path that focused on achieving independence. He received a Certificate of Completion but dreamed of earning a high school diploma.

"I knew I would have more job opportunities with a diploma," Barrett said.

According to the National Federation of The Blind, only 31% of adults in the United States with visual impairments have attained a high school diploma or GED. Barrett knew he needed additional support to be successful, which is why he was one of the first students to enroll at The Excel Center in Shelbyville when it first opened in 2016.

"The Excel Center was a good fit for me because I was able to work at my own pace and to get the additional tutoring that I needed," Barrett said.

He attended classes and continued working part-time at Goodwill while also honoring his commitments to the Special Olympics and Boys & Girls Club.

"If I had to describe Jacob in one word, it would be 'grit'," said Kent A. Kramer, president and CEO of Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana. "He sets a goal and works until he achieves it."

In 2018, Barrett not only earned his diploma, he also earned an IT Fundamentals certification and is now pursuing a CompTIA A+ certification at Ivy Tech Community College. He has also been promoted to full-time at Goodwill.

"I never imagined I would go to college; now I'm thinking about a career as an IT Support Specialist," he said.

Barrett is being honored for showing significant progress and accomplishment in overcoming

barriers to advance his education. He will be recognized during Goodwill's virtual event series, *Breakfast with Goodwill*, on July 15.

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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.