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For Immediate Release

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Students Are Struggling To Graduate. Goodwill is Ready To Help.

Goodwill Education Initiatives supports students who are in need of individualized attention and support, including adults who wish to finish their education.

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – According to a July 2021 [study](#) conducted by the American Educational Research Association, students are struggling socially, emotionally, and academically throughout the pandemic. While Indiana’s 2020 high school graduation rate remained stable at 88%, experts agree that the sudden onset of distancing and remote learning will continue to impact thousands of students in the coming years.

Goodwill, however, has schools in place to support students who might need individual support and attention.

Students who left high school are able to pick up where they left off and earn a Core 40 high school diploma at [The Excel Center](#)®, Goodwill’s network of 15 adult high schools, which helped over 730 adults graduate in the 2020 - 21 school year. Designed to meet the needs of adults, The Excel Center helps students prepare for life after high school by earning college credits and industry-recognized certifications — all at no cost. The Excel Center Class of 2021 earned a 98% college and career readiness rate. Free onsite child care and transportation assistance are also available to students.

At age 26, Sarah Verhines graduated from The Excel Center while working full time and expecting her first child. Even though she was top 15 in her original high school class, circumstances beyond her control prevented her from graduating.

“Today I graduate with the diploma I was supposed to have in 2013,” said Verhines. “An illness stole this from me a long time ago. Today, I am thankful to say publicly that I am taking back something I worked for growing up then and earned now at The Excel Center while being a single, pregnant mom working full time with the same illness now.”

Goodwill also operates [Indianapolis Metropolitan High School](#), a best-fit school for teenagers experiencing homelessness, pregnancy or parenting, involvement in the criminal justice system and other situations that may present a barrier to graduation.

In addition to free college credits and industry-recognized certifications, Indy Met provides wraparound services to support students on a path to success, including onsite child care, transportation assistance, family empowerment coaching, internship opportunities and more.

“The coronavirus took away our loved ones, reshaped our economy and changed our world forever,” said Indy Met graduate Desiree Segraves. “It was during this trying time that we got a firsthand view of how awesome the teachers at Indianapolis Metropolitan High School could be. They became our coaches, our cheerleaders and our confidants.”

Desiree graduated this year at the age of 16. She has a son, Kameron, who was born on her first day of school at Indy Met.

The Excel Center and Indy Met models have proven to be effective at helping individuals improve their lives and find gainful employment through access to education:

- Since 2010, over 7,000 students have graduated from Goodwill Education Initiatives schools.
- 7,194 industry-recognized certifications have been earned by graduates.
- Over 13,000 dual credits have been achieved by graduates.
- Over 600 devices were distributed to students in need during the pandemic so that learning and communicating with staff members would not be interrupted.

Both The Excel Center and Indianapolis Metropolitan are now enrolling for the new school year. Those interested in learning more or applying, please visit goodwillindy.org/education.

To interview a staff member or graduate, please contact Jennifer Wade at jennifer.rendant@goodwillindy.org for details.

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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.