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For Immediate Release

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Talented and Dedicated Teacher Makes a Difference in the Classroom

The Excel Center Celebrates Teacher Appreciation Week

CLARKSVILLE, Ind. - In honor of Teacher Appreciation Week (May 8 - 12), Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana is celebrating its staff of over 381 education professionals, including teachers, guidance coaches and administrators, some of whom have barriers to employment, like Sarah Schwartz.

Schwartz is a math teacher at The Excel Center, Goodwill's tuition-free high school for adults. She graduated from Indiana University Southeast in 2014 with a bachelor's degree in education. Shortly after, she was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, a disease that causes progressive weakness and degeneration of the skeletal muscles, making it difficult to do things like walking, climbing stairs and sitting and standing. However, Sarah didn't let her disability stop her from pursuing her passion.

"When I learned that Goodwill was opening an Excel Center in Clarksville, I told one of my co-workers that I was going to be one of the math teachers," Sarah said. "I ended up being the first teacher hired at the school."

The Excel Center helps students remove barriers to earning their diploma. Schwartz has had a huge impact on those around her.

"I struggled with math growing up, but Ms. Sarah helped me understand things in a clear way, which helped me build confidence and the belief that I can learn," said Ashley Neal, one of Schwartz's students at The Excel Center.

Schwartz is currently working to complete her master's degree in math education to help with The Excel Center's dual credit program.

"STEM positions are currently some of the most challenging teaching roles in the state to fill, so we're grateful that Sarah chose The Excel Center to share her incredible talents with," said Betsy K. Delgado, Senior Vice President & Chief Mission and Education Officer. "Her students praise her teaching because she helps them understand a difficult subject that they struggled with previously."

Importantly, Sarah's position at The Excel Center provides her with a means to serve by doing what she loves and also allows her to live independently.

“Muscular dystrophy doesn’t define me and won’t keep me from doing the things I want to do,” she said.

The Excel Center directly addresses the unique challenges of adult learners by offering accelerated classes and flexible coursework, helping them complete their schooling within the parameters of their busy lives. In addition, all of our high schools offer a range of wraparound services to students that directly address challenges outside the classroom, including free, onsite child care, transportation assistance, individualized support and much more.

Outcomes at The Excel Center include:

- 7,074 diplomas earned since 2010
- 7,449 industry-recognized job certifications earned since 2010
- 16,911 college credits earned since 2010

To learn more or to enroll, visit excelcenter.org. To schedule an interview with Sarah Schwartz or a representative of The Excel Center, contact Jen Wade at 317.524.4309 or jennifer.wade@goodwillindy.org.

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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. Goodwill 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.