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For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Jennifer Wade, Director of Marketing and Communications

Cell: 317.524.4212

jennifer.wade@goodwillindy.org

The Excel Center Empowers Adult Learners to Overcome Adversity and Earn High School Diplomas

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — The Excel Center®, Goodwill's tuition-free high school for adults, is proud to honor its summer graduating class on Thursday, June 29, and Friday, June 30. Designed to empower individuals to overcome adversity and reach their potential, The Excel Center provides a unique opportunity for adult learners to earn an Indiana Core 40 high school diploma.

Amidst the challenges many residents face in Marion County, Indiana, where more than 12% of individuals aged 18 and older lack a high school diploma, The Excel Center stands as a beacon of hope. Since opening, The Excel Center's Marion County locations have witnessed the graduation of thousands of determined individuals who have joined the workforce or are continuing their education at local universities.

"The Excel Center model is designed to support students and their families so that they can achieve success in education and experience economic mobility because they have a Core 40 high school diploma plus industry-recognized certifications and dual credits," said Betsy K. Delgado, senior vice president and chief mission and education officer at Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana.

Dakota McLaughlin, an inspiring graduate, found a lifeline and a fresh start through The Excel Center's personalized approach and coaching model.

McLaughlin's journey was marked by significant challenges growing up. His mother passed away when he was young, and he was often bullied at school – particularly for his sexual orientation – which left him feeling isolated. After experiencing domestic violence, he made the difficult decision to leave home, even though he had nowhere else to go.

"I dropped out of school and ended up homeless," McLaughlin shared. "I fell in with the wrong crowd and started using methamphetamines. My life quickly spiraled out of control."

His probation officer suggested enrolling at The Excel Center to earn his diploma. Despite initial reluctance stemming from a learning disability, McLaughlin decided to give it a try.

"The Excel Center helped me develop a growth mindset, which alleviated some of the anxiety I was struggling with," he expressed.

Throughout his journey at The Excel Center, McLaughlin received support from a Goodwill mission coach — a dedicated life and career coach — who guided him through the college application and financial aid process. Currently enrolled at Ivy Tech Community College, he is pursuing an associate of science degree in criminal justice and has plans to further his education upon graduation. Watch McLaughlin's [video](#) to learn more.

"What I've experienced does not define me," he firmly stated. "How I use my experience defines me."

With 15 campuses across central and southern Indiana, and another opening in Indianapolis later this summer, The Excel Center has graduated nearly 8,000 adults. Integrating industry-recognized certification training and dual-credit requirements, The Excel Center also positions graduates for careers that offer better-than-average wages.

Date: June 29 and June 30

Time: 6 p.m.

Place: Indianapolis Metropolitan High School - Puma Den
1635 W. Michigan St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222

To coordinate an interview with a recent graduate, contact Jennifer Wade at 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. 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.