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For Immediate Release

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Former Refugee Earns College Degree, Pays It Forward

On World Refugee Day, Goodwill celebrates graduates who overcame significant challenges

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana announced today that it is celebrating World Refugee Day and the adopted Hoosiers who now call Indiana home, including Pency Engmawii. Engmawii is a graduate of The Excel Center®, Goodwill's high school for adults. She grew up with 11 siblings in a small Burmese village where she was denied an education due to her low socioeconomic status. In 2011, at 21 years old, she traveled alone to the United States as a refugee in search of a better life.

She enrolled at The Excel Center in 2012. English is not her first language, which made some of the required tests particularly challenging. She also worked full-time to support herself while attending school, but despite repeated setbacks, she persevered, earning her diploma in 2017.

“Her geographical journey gives her a unique appreciation of education that motivates her to continue even in the face of adversity,” said Jessamon Jones, TalentSource™ work-based learning manager at Goodwill and Engmawii's former English teacher.

Engmawii expresses gratitude for the teachers and staff who encouraged and helped her when she struggled. She has inspired an entire community of Burmese refugees on the south side of Indianapolis to enroll at The Excel Center.

“Earning a diploma has changed my life. I now teach other immigrants English and help them communicate with teachers and staff at The Excel Center,” Engmawii said.

In March 2018, Engmawii was granted full citizenship in the United States. She also completed her associate degree in business administration at Ivy Tech and is currently

working toward a bachelor's degree in accounting and finance at the IU Kelley School of Business.

[Watch for more details](#) on Engmawii's story. Please contact Jenny Kakasuleff at jennifer.kakasuleff@goodwillindy.org to arrange an interview with Engmawii.

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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.