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For Immediate Release

Contact: Jennifer Kakasuleff, Communications Manager

Cell: 317.524.4212

Jennifer.Kakasuleff@goodwillindy.org

Celebrating 33 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Goodwill is one of the largest employers of persons with disabilities in Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana announced that it is celebrating the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by highlighting the stories of some of its most essential employees. Next Wednesday, July 26, the ADA commemorates 33 years of increased accessibility and employment opportunities for people like Kane Sparks, who started working at Goodwill in 2013.

Sparks was born with craniodiaphyseal dysplasia, a rare bone disorder that causes calcium to build up in the skull, disfiguring the facial features and reducing life expectancy. Upon graduating high school, he had a desire and willingness to work, but he was met with disappointment by several employers who declined to hire him. He began to wonder if these denials were related to his disability.

He contacted Indiana's Vocational Rehabilitation for help, and in 2013, he was matched with Goodwill of Central Indiana's Janitorial Training Program (JTP), designed for individuals with barriers to employment who are interested in commercial janitorial work. Upon completing the 480-hour training, Sparks accepted a production role at Goodwill's Commercial Services location on Indy's west side.

"Kane has an extraordinary work ethic and is someone newer employees look up to for support in their own roles," said Kent A. Kramer, president and CEO at Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana. "Persons with disabilities are a huge untapped resource for Indiana's workforce, and I'm proud that Goodwill is helping to illustrate the large contributions they make to employers."

Sparks excelled in his position at Goodwill Commercial Services until 2022 when he transitioned to a janitorial role within Goodwill's AbilityOne program, which exclusively employs veterans and persons with qualified disabilities. Throughout his time with Goodwill, Sparks has been provided accommodations tailored to his needs, such as assistive technology to help with reading and testing. His supervisors have been understanding of his barriers and made additional accommodations for his mental and physical wellness, including anxiety, depression and severe headaches.

"Goodwill has been incredibly accepting of my barriers," Sparks said. "I am truly grateful for the support Goodwill has given me day in and day out."

Nearly 2,000 of Goodwill's 4,700 central and southern Indiana employees report living with a disability. As we reflect on the last 33 years of progress, we encourage employers to recognize the contributions of persons with disabilities and to consider how we can further develop a culture of inclusion while meeting Indiana's workforce needs.

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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 contract manufacturing services, charter schools for adults and youth, a maternal-child health program, a child care center and more.