

Putting People to Work

Goodwill Removes Employment Barriers

When Maggie Hardley joined Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana's "New Beginnings" ex-offender program, she considered the opportunity a second chance.

"It was my motivator," she recalls. "I got discharged from parole on October 22 (in 2011) and they (members of the Goodwill team) were so proud of me because I was determined."

Hardley works as an assembler.

"I'm earning a paycheck. I keep my production up and I just love coming to work," she declares.

Two-thirds of Goodwill's employees have a significant barrier to employment due to a disability, criminal history or lack of a high school diploma; 52% are the primary source of income in their household. The organization helps those individuals develop workplace skills.

Goodwill's Commercial Services division provides outsourcing assistance to businesses in areas such as assembly, kitting, repackaging and manufacturing fulfillment.

"We offer a variety of services, mostly around a customer's supply chain needs," explains vice president of commercial services Jim Humphrey. "For them, there's a benefit in the quality, cost and service equation. And for us, that relationship allows us to provide jobs for people.

"Most of it is labor-intensive work – not a lot of automation. It's more hands-on or manual assembly. We help them (businesses) with their labor needs."

Goodwill's e-commerce division also plays a role in helping employees gain professional experience.

"The fact that we're able to work with a population that might have a more difficult time finding meaningful employment in some instances is a very valuable thing not only for the individuals, but also for the health of the community," asserts senior director of retail support Eric Schlegel.

Over the past four years, Goodwill has created 700-plus jobs in Central Indiana. It employs more than 2,800 people.

Powerful partnerships

Covance, one of the world's leading drug development services companies, is a long-time Goodwill partner.

"One of the things they do is send out

clinical trial information and supplies," Humphrey notes. "We provide them with subassembly and kitting services. We're doing bagging or inspections or sorting – all while meeting their batch control and quality requirements."

Goodwill also collaborates with EHOB, an Indianapolis-based producer of ulcer prevention and healing therapy products, on its inflatable mattresses and cushions.

"We're part of their manufacturing process," Humphrey shares. "They do the sealing, and then they outsource with us to do the stripping and finishing of the products so they're ready for shipment, which they do."

Additional clients include a hydraulics business ("we're doing re-packaging and shipments of screws") and a food packager.

On-the-job training and career development programs also assist employees in acquiring workplace skills. Mock interviews, job search tips and resumé preparation offer guidance on how to transition to employment outside of Goodwill. In addition, guest speakers discuss topics such as how to re-establish a credit score and ways to "dress for success."

"I hadn't worked in 15 years," Hardley states. "Goodwill helped me learn how to work a computer. They put me back into the workforce. I do a lot of different things."

Matching ex-offenders with employment opportunities is an effective way to reduce recidivism.

"There's no doubt that having a job for an individual coming out of corrections reduces the likelihood that they may be incarcerated," Humphrey asserts. "The recidivism



"Sometimes businesses don't have the room or in-house logistics (to accommodate production needs), so it works better for them to have that work done somewhere else – that's where we come in," comments Goodwill vice president of commercial services Jim Humphrey.



An item is photographed for eventual display on www.shopgoodwill.com, while the e-commerce division ships an average of 1,500 to 2,000 books each day.

rate is much less for someone who has a job within the first six months after their release.”

Marlon Turner, also an assembler, began working at Goodwill more than two decades ago through a program for people with disabilities.

Like Hardley, he values the opportunity to earn a paycheck and interact with co-workers. At a recent luncheon celebrating employees with service milestones, he was rewarded with a gift he personally selected: a black, white and red bicycle to ride during his free time.

“Some of our employees may be here 20-plus years, like Marlon, and some others a short amount of time,” Humphrey reflects. “The goal is to provide them with training, skills and work experience and, when they are ready, help them transition into other jobs that will enhance their economic self-sufficiency.

“We’re providing ongoing soft skills (teamwork, customer service) and some of those hard, technical skills (such as working in a lean manufacturing environment) that will be beneficial outside of Goodwill as well.”

Making a difference

Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana operates 51 retail stores (including three outlets) and a vintage boutique. Its



Production line activities featuring new equipment are filmed for training purposes.

e-commerce division consists of two areas: books and media, and an online auction site called www.shopgoodwill.com.

“It runs the gamut,” remarks Kent Kramer, vice president of retail operations, when describing the types of publications the company sells. “It can be a college textbook. It could be an obscure romance novel, a current bestseller or a kids’ book.”

Meanwhile, listings on www.shopgoodwill.com include collectibles, jewelry, clothing, antique furniture, toys and more. Approximately 75 Goodwill stores throughout the country post items. Proceeds help support the organization’s mission to address generational poverty.

Shipping takes place at a 62,000-square-foot facility in Indianapolis. Sixteen percent of merchandise is shipped outside the United States.

Employees occupy roles in leadership, material handling, continuous improvement, safety and other positions. One task involves pre-scanning books to check their value online, which helps determine whether to sell them via www.shopgoodwill.com or at retail stores.

“We see the power of work and what that can do for an individual, so that’s always been an important piece of our mission,” Kramer shares. “Being able to provide options for individuals who have barriers is very important to us. We look at it as a stepping stone – (we want to do) anything we can do to help them provide for themselves or their families.”

Humphrey seconds that.

“Employment provides people with independence. It also provides job skills and training that will make them successful in their next step. There aren’t enough employers who are providing those kinds of employment chances for people who may be ex-offenders or people who may have disabilities. A lot of these people just need a chance.

“That’s what we’re doing – providing opportunities for people to prove themselves and grow and demonstrate that to someone else.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana at www.goodwillindy.org