

GOODWILL WORKFORCE CONNECTION CENTERS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
August, 2010

The city of Milwaukee unemployment rate for June of 2010 was 11.3%, up from 10.7% in May. In addition, Marc Levine from the University of Wisconsin Center for Economic Development now suggests “the black male jobless rate will have climbed well north of 50% by the time the 2009 data are available...perhaps as high as 55-57%.”

In 2008, Goodwill took the initiative to help people with disadvantages find jobs by opening two Workforce Connection Centers – one on Richards Street in Milwaukee and another on Nike Drive in Waukesha. A third center was opened on Milwaukee’s northwest side in May of 2010. These centers were developed primarily to respond to the large number of African-American men who are not in the workforce, and who do not have access to employment resources to help them find and keep jobs. As the recession has intensified, the need for the Workforce Connection Centers has expanded to include displaced workers and recent college graduates.

Workforce Connection Centers are based on the concept of a narrow array of employment-oriented services offered to a large segment of users. These centers are located in community-based, high-need locations and provide:

- 1) Self-directed training needed to conduct a job search;
- 2) Workshops to help job-seekers understand abilities and skill gaps;
- 3) Tools essential to an effective job search;
- 4) Access to resources needed to sustain employment;
- 5) Support through the difficult and often discouraging job search process.

The Workforce Connection Centers are on track to surpass the goals that have been set to help people connect with opportunities in the workforce in 2010. At the Richards St. center, only six months into 2010, Goodwill had already served 83% of the number of people projected for the entire year. The Waukesha center has already surpassed its goal for the year and is looking to expand workstations and staff to serve the growing need. At the new center recently launched at the James O. Wright facility, 764 individuals were served in the first two months of operation – 51% of its goal for the year.

The Workforce Connection Centers are different from other employment services in the following ways:

- **Flexibility:** The program model calls for a basic set of services to be available at each of the centers. Goodwill is able to adapt the model to meet the needs of each community. For example, in Waukesha, there are a large number of individuals who speak Spanish. The Center manager in Waukesha is bilingual/Spanish.
- **Dual customer model:** In addition to job-seekers, employers are also viewed as customers of the Workforce Connection Center. The center will provide employers with a free resource they can use to more efficiently identify and pre-screen job candidates. Center staff will work with an employer to match individual candidates to a specific job; other times employers meet multiple prospective employees at on-site recruitment events.
- **No criteria needed** to use centers and participation is voluntary: People do not need funding from a government source in order to use the center -- all are welcome. The centers attract individuals who do not receive services through W-2 -- especially men. With guidance from center staff as needed, individuals who use the centers decide for themselves which services they need to conduct an effective job search.

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- **Inviting design:** The professional, contemporary design of the centers is an important program component. The intent is to present a business-like environment and encourage people to visit as often as needed.
- **Goodwill has extensive business relationships** in the community, and the Workforce Connection Centers leverage those relationships to connect jobless and underemployed individuals to work.
- **Goodwill is able to place people into jobs** within its own operations.

For more information, please call Yvonne Sellers, Director of Workforce Connection Centers at (414) 962-4148.