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## Goodwill Industries of Arkansas Receives Grant to Expand Mental Health First Aid Training with Focus on Younger Populations

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (August 26, 2024)** — Goodwill Industries of Arkansas (GIA) is excited to announce it has received a subgrant through the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (OSAMH) to expand The Academy at Goodwill Industries of Arkansas’s Mental Health First Aid training and services. This grant assists in the education and training of a broad array of community members who may encounter persons potentially experiencing a mental health crisis across the state.

Mental Health First Aid classes will be available at no cost through The Academy at Goodwill to aid those front-line individuals in a position to make an impact. The Academy is currently offering free training in the courses focused on common signs and symptoms in adults, and a newer option for adults who work with adolescents (age 12-18). Registration is now open for Mental Health First Aid for Adults and Youth Mental Health First Aid at [GoodwillAR.org/Academy](http://GoodwillAR.org/Academy). Classes will begin September 10.

Preparations are being made to allow the Academy to provide Teen Mental Health First Aid training which will be available at a later date. Teen Mental Health First Aid teaches teens between the ages of 14-18 how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among their friends.

“We are excited to receive this grant,” said Sr. Vice President and Chief Mission Officer Edie Stewart. “The grant will allow our Academy to continue to expand our training and prepare even more first responders, teachers and other individuals to become better equipped to tackle the critical challenge of mental health well-being in our state.”

The grant funds, which total \$499,950, will allow The Academy at Goodwill to ensure Goodwill staff are certified to perform trainings in specialty Mental Health First Aid categories specific to younger populations including the following:

- 1) Trainers will obtain certifications needed to implement *Mental Health First Aid for Youth* training. The course is primarily designed for presentation to adults who regularly interact with young people between the ages of 12 and 18. The course introduces common mental health and substance use

challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a five-step action plan for how to help young people in crisis and non-crisis situations.

- 2) Trainers will obtain certifications needed to implement *Teen Mental Health First Aid* training. This course is primarily designed for presentation to adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 (grades 10, 11 and 12). The course introduces how to assist similar aged peers and classmates to engage in open conversations about mental health and substance use changes, teaches common signs and symptoms of mental health and substance abuse challenges, provides education on the impact of school violence and bullying on mental well-being, and teaches adolescents how to seek help from trusted and responsible adults.

The Academy at Goodwill is a partner organization with the National Council for Behavioral Health providing Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training throughout the state. The Academy MHFA training prepares individuals to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The Academy MHFA training gives individuals the skills needed to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to appropriate care.

#### **About Goodwill Industries of Arkansas**

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to changing lives through education, training and employment. In the last fiscal year, our career services team helped 498 people find work at companies around the state. Through our various education, training and employment programs, GIA provided services to 6,345 Arkansans. Since opening in 2017, 190 adults in Arkansas have graduated high school and earned their diplomas through The Excel Center®, Goodwill's high school for adults 19 years or older. The Academy at Goodwill, licensed by the Arkansas State Board of Private Career Education, is a trade school that provided training and certifications to 2,524 individuals in FY23 to secure new employment and advance careers. Goodwill also offers reentry services for those coming out of justice-involved situations to help train and find employment. Visit [GoodwillAR.org](http://GoodwillAR.org) for more information.