

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Educational Opportunities Grow at Goodwill

### *Expansion Begins at The Excel Center®*

**Little Rock, AR** (February 24, 2020) — In 2017, a new state law allowed Goodwill Industries of Arkansas to open The Excel Center®, Arkansas’s only high school for adults ages 19 and older. Less than three years later, the school is expanding. Construction is now under way.

“More than 315,000 adults over age 25 in Arkansas do not have a high school diploma. In order to provide them educational opportunities, we needed to be able to accommodate more students,” said Kerri Nettles, Goodwill Industries of Arkansas Community Engagement Manager.

The current high school, located at 7400 Scott Hamilton Drive in Little Rock, is equipped to accommodate 125 students. When the new 33,430-square-foot facility is finished, enrollment will be able to grow to 350, nearly tripling in size. The new school is being built in what is currently an unused portion of Goodwill’s Scott Hamilton campus. Construction is scheduled to be complete when the new school year begins in July.

“We are excited about the opportunity to help more adults in our community earn their high school diploma. Families and communities are strengthened when individuals have access to the support they need to overcome barriers to their education and the pursuit of their career goals.” said school Director Greg Wertenberger.

The Excel Center operates on a year-round schedule, offering accelerated 8-week terms. Unlike GED programs, The Excel Center offers courses similar to traditional high schools, while meeting

students where they are in their education. In addition to hands-on instruction, The Excel Center provides free drop-in childcare, tutoring, life coaches and transportation assistance. Since its inception, 32 men and women have graduated. Fourteen more are expected to receive their diplomas in June.

Goodwill's long-range plan includes the construction of several more schools around the state, expanding educational opportunities to those outside Central Arkansas. Our goal is to have five schools operating by 2027, Goodwill Industries of Arkansas's centennial anniversary. It's estimated Arkansans without a high school diploma earn on average \$10,000 less every year than those who completed high school.

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

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to changing lives through education, training and employment. In the last fiscal year, our Career Services team helped 7,598 people find work at companies around the state. Goodwill provided various services to 18,635 Arkansans.

### **About The Excel Center**

The Excel Center is Arkansas's only tuition-free, accredited high school designed for adults. Goodwill Industries of Arkansas opened the school in October of 2017. Classes are offered from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The school is also open Friday for extra tutoring if needed. The mission of The Excel Center is to provide adults the opportunity and support to earn a high school diploma while developing career paths that offer greater employment and growth opportunities. Our school "meets students where they are" in their education by providing a flexible structure and supportive relationships to help students manage work, life and family as they achieve their educational goals.

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