



PRESS
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Goodwill Arkansas Partners with AR Kids Read to Host Family Literacy Workshop at The Excel Center®

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (February 16, 2026) — Goodwill Industries of Arkansas is proud to announce a new partnership with AR Kids Read to support early childhood literacy through a family-focused workshop at The Excel Center® in Little Rock. The literacy workshop will be held on Thursday, February 19 and is designed to equip parents with practical tools to help foster reading and literacy skills at home.

Every child deserves the chance to grow into a confident reader—and families play a critical role in that journey. This workshop will empower parents of readers with strategies, resources and confidence to support literacy development beyond the classroom. The event aligns with Arkansas’s LEARNS literacy focus, which recognizes that too many children are not on grade-level reading and that empowering families to support early literacy at home is essential to improving reading outcomes statewide.

What Families Will Gain:

- Practical, easy-to-use strategies to support literacy at home for 1st–3rd grade readers
- Connections to local literacy resources, including libraries and community partners
- Guidance on understanding school literacy assessments and standardized scores—and how to confidently advocate for their readers

This collaboration marks AR Kids Read’s first literacy workshop partnership and aligns with Goodwill’s mission to break down barriers and strengthen families through education and training.

“Arkansas may face literacy challenges, but together we are building solutions,” said Michael Barger, program director at AR Kids Read. “Through our first literacy workshop partnership with Goodwill, we are able to serve families enrolled in Goodwill’s education programs, providing them with resources and support to nurture early literacy at home for their little ones.”

“Strong partnerships like this one with AR Kids Read allow us to support families in meaningful, lasting ways,” said Brian Marsh, president and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Arkansas. “Nearly 70% of our Excel Center students are parents. We know education doesn’t stop at the classroom door—it continues at home, and we’re proud to help parents feel prepared to guide that journey.”

Media are welcome to attend and capture B-roll and interviews with presenters, students and Excel Center administrators.

About AR Kids Read

AR Kids Read has a singular focus – to work towards a time when EVERY child reads on grade level. With the power of community members, we can change the game for students and stack the deck for their success and the long-term health of our community.

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 870 people find work at companies around the state. Through our various education, training and employment programs, GIA provided services to 8,417 Arkansans. Since opening in 2017, 351 adults in Arkansas have graduated high school and earned their diplomas tuition free 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 1,151 individuals in FY25 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.

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